

LIN HU (林 虎)

***The Fight to Protect
Our Motherland's***
AIRSPACE



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THE FIGHT TO PROTECT OUR MOTHERLAND'S AIRSPACE

— In Memory of New China's

National Air Defense Operations 1949–1969

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FOREWORD

Under the leadership and command of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Chairman Mao, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had fought bravely for four years until May 1950 when they annihilated 8.07 millions of troops of Kuomintang (KMT), Nationalist Party of China, and occupied Nanjing, signifying the overturn of the reactionary dominance of KMT government lasting twenty-two years. The PLA then liberated all the rest of the Chinese territory, except the islands of Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen, Dachen and Mazu, winning the Liberation War, which was crucial to China.

However, Chiang Kai-shek and his government, supported by the United States of America, were not conceding their defeat in Mainland China. Chiang Kai-shek ordered the remains of his air force to raid all the important coastal cities on the Mainland, aiming at violating the construction of New China. In June 1950, taking advantage of the breakout of Korean War, the Americans forces invaded Taiwan, a Chinese territory, and sent warplanes into our eastern coastal areas for reconnaissance. In 1953, US president Dwight D. Eisenhower took office. He had a preference for the anti-communist policies of Chiang Kai-shek, and signed the Common Defense Treaty with Taiwan,

blocked and restrained Mainland China, provided KMT with military supplies, equipped KMT Air Force with jet warplanes, let CIA personnel and American military advisors in Taiwan control and plan KMT AF operations to penetrate into the depths for strategic reconnaissance and to frequently harass Mainland China. This caused the two coasts on the Straits to fall into a tense military confrontation and a continuous state of war for a long time that took air engagement as a main mode. From 1949 to 1969, our young air and naval aviation forces, anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) force and surface-to-air missile (SAM) force performed air defense operations for 20 years, defending the territorial air and sea, and fighting the spy planes of USAF and KMT AF controlled by the Americans.

During the period from May 1949 to the time before the breakout of Korean War, being completely depleted from supplying Chiang Kai-shek, the American government was disappointed by the KMT government, its armies and it issued the white paper Relationship between United States and China. US president, Harry S. Truman, published the declaration to "abandon Chiang Kai-shek", which said that Taiwan should be returned to China according to the Cairo Conference and the Potsdam Declaration; US wouldn't set up any military bases in Taiwan, not intervene in the actual situation in Taiwan, nor offer any military supplies and military advisors to the Chinese armies in Taiwan. Truman's declaration seemed to be a destructive knock to Chiang Kai-shek and his men, who fell into a full panic. Chiang Kai-shek's last hope to rely on US for saving his defeat was shattered. He was

flustered, frustrated, disheartened and agitated. In an effort to stabilize the moral in Taiwan and to show the world that he still kept enough military power to “counterattack the Mainland”, he gave the order for KMT AF to upgrade the scale of bombardment on Shanghai and other cities. In January and February 1950, Shanghai was bombed successively eight times. Among them, the bombardment on 6 February was the biggest in scale. The air composite formation of 17 warplanes including B-24 and B-25 of KMT AF, having taken off from the air bases in Taiwan, Dinghai and Daishan in Zhoushan Islands, launched the in-turn bombardment on Shanghai Power Company, Hunan and Zhabei Hydroelectric Companies, resulted in terrible damage to the city of Shanghai and left 1,400 people dead. In addition to the sabotage by some KMT secret agents in Shanghai, the inhabitants were very much disturbed. This was the Bombardment Event of February 6, 1950, of Shanghai, which shocked the world.

The Central Committee and the Central Military Commission, CPC, attached great attention to the air defense over Shanghai. Just after the liberation of Shanghai on May 27, 1949, they gave immediate instructions to the Huadong Field Army to set up an air defense section cooperating with the Shanghai Police Bureau for Shanghai air defense. They set up an air surveillance-intelligence system and assembled the anti-aircraft guns of the Field Army to form an anti-aircraft defense system. Nevertheless, without the active support of fighter aviation, they failed to effectively prevent the violent bombardment by KMT AF.

Up to then, the Air Force Command, PLA, had been officially set

up (November 11, 1949) for less than three months. It was doing its best for setting up six new aviation schools on the base of the Northeast Aviation School (established on March 1, 1946), accelerating the steps to train the aircrews and ground crews. Only one recently-built squadron was capable to engage in the air. Equipped with less than twenty P-51s and taking some ancient KMT rebels as the main part, it was in charge of the security of Beijing, Capital of New China, but incapable of a nationwide air defense operation. Then, the Chinese government asked the Soviet Union to send some aviation troops to assist in air defense. From February 1950 to July 1951, one composite aviation group and eleven fighter divisions from the Soviet AF arrived, successively, in China, garrisoning respectively in Shanghai, Xuzhou, Shenyang, Beijing and Guangzhou, taking on the mission of air defense. The composite aviation group, headed by Lt-general Badiski, arrived in Xuzhou and Shanghai on March 13, 1950. The Soviet contingents coordinated and cooperated closely with China's air defense units and troops, under the unified command of Chen Yi (陈毅), commander of Huadong Military Region (HMR) and mayor of Shanghai. They shot down eight enemy planes over Shanghai, Hangzhou and Xuzhou within only two months and six days. KMT AF's arrogance to raid violently our coastal cities was put down.

Approved by the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the People's Republic of China, Composite Brigade 4, PLA AF, was set up in Nanjing on June 19, 1950, and soon its brigade HQ and two fighter regiments were garrisoned in Shanghai on 8 August the same year.

With the help of the Soviet AF and after two months' transition training, the fighter regiments began to take over the air defense mission over Shanghai starting at 00:00, on October 19, 1950. Meanwhile, the Soviet AF withdrew successively from China.

At the same time when Composite Brigade 4 was set up, a civil war broke out in Korea, one of our neighbor countries. The American government made an immediate decision to intervene by force and sent many aviation forces into the Korean theater. In order to feed the demand of the Korean government, the Chinese government decided to form the Chinese People's Volunteers to offer a hand to the Korean people in the resistance against the American invaders. Soon, the Air Force of the Chinese People's Volunteers engaged in the war.

At the beginning of November 1950, Composite Brigade 4 was authorized to send its Fighter Regiment 10 (equipped with Mig-15s) to the Northeast. It was enlarged into Fighter Division 4 and then joined the battle in Korean War as the first aviation force. The original Fighter Regiment 11, that was merged into the newly-built Fighter Division 2, was then Fighter Regiment 4, keeping in charge of air defense over the zone of Shanghai.

The People's AF not only engaged in Korean War, but also was in charge of the domestic air defense mission. It realized that only two or three divisions were not enough for the mission and then enlarged the training scale in the aviation schools, providing some condensed and shortened courses for the cadet pilots in order to accelerate the establishment of the aviation troops. Up to November 1951, 11 fighter

divisions were set up (most of them were equipped with Mig-15), successively joining the rotation in Korean War. Meanwhile, they were also in charge of the key-point air defense in East China. At the same moment, Air Force Command of the Chinese People's Volunteers, as well as the air commands of Huadong, Zhongnan, Xinan, Huabei, Xibei Military Regions were set up.

To unify the control of the city air defense and strengthen the national air defense, CMC decided to set up Air Defense Command of PLA on December 16, 1950 (in 1955 it was renamed Air Defense Force Command, becoming an independent service) and the air defense headquarters in many important cities. They were provided with some AAA troops and a few searchlight detachments, which co-established an air defense joint command post with the fighter aviation troops. The air defense radar intelligence network was initially established from the east of the Northeast area to the coastal regions of Shanghai and Guangzhou. CMC defined definitively that National Air Defense should be under the centralized command of Air Defense Command, PLA. The highest chief of the aviation troops in charge of air defense took the position as the deputy commander of the local air defense command, responsible for the concrete command of the aviation troops. Up to now, in the regions having major important cities on the Mainland, formed the initial air defense system.

Up to the beginning of 1954, with support of the Soviet Union, the People's AF had, while training, constructing while fighting, totally set up 28 aviation divisions (including 15 fighter divisions) and had 3,000

aircraft of many different types, jet-planes as main part.

The naval aviation force is one of the main arms of the People's Navy, as well as an important component in the air defense force of PLA. In April 1952, the Naval Aviation Department was set up in the Navy Command, PLA. In June 1952, the first naval aviation force, Naval Aviation Division 1, was set up in Shanghai, which was also a composite aviation division. By 1955, the Navy Aviation Force had established six divisions (three fighter divisions included) with various types of aircraft, numbering 300.

Then, up to 1955, the aviation forces of the People's AF and Navy grew more powerful in quantity and in quality than KMT AF in Taiwan. At that moment, KMT AF had about 400 propeller planes supported by US in the Liberation War in China, including less than 200 warplanes and about 300 pilots capable to engage, among whom about 200 pilots flew for more than 1,000 flight hours. Due to the lack of spare parts and aviation fuel, only half of them were available for the short-term operation.

That New China was able to organize, within four years, an air force on such a large scale and with such combat capacity is due largely to that the fact that CMC selected and sent to the AF and Navy a lot of air-ground crews and all of the officers of fully-organized divisions and regiments of the Army. These people had experienced the cruelty of wars for a long time, and not only had good political sensibility, strong capacity for combat and organization, but also brought excellent military traditions and morality, which produced a profound influence upon

the operation and the construction of our air defense force.

To make clear the concrete history, the combat characteristics in different periods (adversaries, conditions, modes and areas) within 20 years of air defense operation after the foundation of New China, the history will be narrated in four phases, though some of them are intercrossed in time, which is naturally difficult to avoid in the military struggle. Each had its outstanding characteristics and the essential time limit. These four phases are as follows:

Phase I: from 1959 to 1953, we struck the American reconnaissance aircraft along the coastal areas of Shanghai and Qingdai.

After Korean War broke out, the American president Truman boldly published a declaration intervening in Korea and invading Taiwan, the Chinese territory, and demanded Taiwan to keep neutral. After that, the American military planes were approved and authorized to take their frequent spy flights along the mainland's coast and invade the air over Shanghai and other cities. Our People's AF actively adjusted its air defense deployment and enforced the intelligence support. Our pilots, with no training over the sea, fought bravely the enemy, at very low altitude over the sea and with quick wits. On September 20, 1952, they shot down one American reconnaissance plane transformed from a B-29, a heavy bomber, at 100 m above the sea, and won the first air defense operation. The next year they shot down another three American warplanes and wounded two; shot down one KMT warplane and wounded one, which rendered large big blows to the USAF and KMT AF.

Phase II: from 1954 to 1958, our air and naval aviators enlarged

their defensive zones to strike the reconnaissance planes of the KMT AF harassing the Mainland.

In January 1953, after taking office, the American president, Eisenhower, declared to remove the neutralization of Taiwan and to stop limiting the actions of KMT armed forces which were to harass the Mainland. In June 1953, the US resumed the rush of supplies to the KMT AF. Until the end of 1955, the US provided KMT fighter troops with the made-in-US F-84G and F-86F, its reconnaissance aviation troops with some jet reconnaissance planes of the first generation and the high-altitude reconnaissance planes transformed from the bombers, such as the RT-33, RF-84, RF-86, RB-57A and RB-57D, which replaced all of their propeller fighters and reconnaissance planes. Transformed and equipped with an improved combat capacity, KMT AF, with the planning by its American advisers, restarted harassing the Mainland in 1954, by means of the following: the revenge bombardment and the heavy strafes to some coastline cities and ships of the Mainland, the reconnaissance over our military maneuvers along the southeastern coast and the airfields located at the first and second lines, to harass and damage our peaceful construction. By an incomplete calculation, within five years, KMT AF sent more than 5000 sorties, among them more than 400 sorties of bombardment and strafe.

After having liberated the coastal islands along Zhejiang Province, coordinated by the army and the navy in 1955, the air and naval aviation troops moved to the south and garrisoned Luqiao and Quzhou in Zhejiang Province, Huiyang in Guangdong Province, and Xincheng

in Jiangxi Province. They enlarged the combat radius up to the Fenghuo Islands in the direction southeast of Fujian and to Shantou, east of Guangdong, and intercepted and struck there the reconnaissance planes which belonged to Squadrons 4 and 12 of Flying Group 6, KMT AF. From July 1954 to June 1958, there were a total of six enemy aircraft shot down or forced to crash into the mountains, the sea or to land in Hong Kong, eleven wounded, by our warplanes. In addition, two enemy aircraft were shot down, as well as three wounded, by our AAA. In total, we shot down and wounded twenty-one enemy aircraft.

Phase III: from 1956 to 1968, we struck day and night the aircraft of three spy squadrons, KMT AF, which penetrated into the depth and the coastline areas of the Mainland for executing electronic surveillance and aerial photography.

Since 1952, KMT AF Intelligence Section cooperated with the American CIA agency in Taiwan to set up and train three aerial specialist spy units, which were a Technologic Research Team, publicly Squadron 34 (or Bat Squadron), and Squadron 35, publicly Meteorological Reconnaissance Squadron (or Black Cat Squadron). These two squadrons were the strategic reconnaissance aircraft force under the direct control of CIA. In addition, Squadron 6 was a tactical reconnaissance unit supplemented with Squadron 4 which was organized on the base of the Tactical Reconnaissance Aircraft Squadron 12. The American advisors, working in Joint Operation Center (JOC) of KMT AF, directly controlled it.

Squadron 34 used mainly B-17 and P2V aircraft. From 1956 to

1964, they took advantage of low and very low altitudes on moonlit and moonless nights, under cover of their own inboard electronic jamming apparatuses, to fly into our depths for their electronic reconnaissance activities. The night operations against these activities for almost ten years were the most complicated and hardest time in our air defense operation. Our air and naval aviation troops and AAA troops did their best to execute Chairman Mao Tse-dong's instruction: "We must spare no efforts to annihilate the enemy who invades us". Working as a team, they improved and recreated many tactics, bravely overcame many difficulties, and then won the battles with a total of six enemy aircraft (sixty-one aircrew members died) shot down and two wounded. This Bat Squadron was forced to disappear in 1966!

The U-2, mainly used by Squadron 35, penetrated into our depths at an altitude of above 20,000 m to spy on our research work on the nuclear weapon and the missile. At the beginning, our AAA and fighters were incapable of shooting it down, because they could not reach the flight ceiling of U-2. Later, equipped with five sets of SAM systems imported from USSR, our SAM troops, under the direct leadership of the AF chiefs and the guidance of Mao Tse-dong's Military Thought, invented some effective measures of "laying ambushes on maneuver", "tactic of close-up and rapidity" and "anti-electronic jamming". During the eight years from November 1959 to November 1967, they successfully shot down one RB-57D, five U-2s and captured two pilots alive. Our SAM troops moved their positions up and down, experienced a very hard life, overcame many unexpected

obstacles and finished the glorious mission to protect the motherland's national airspace with excellent achievements.

From 1960 to 1968, Flying Group 6 used RF-101 and RF-104 to employ the aerial photographic reconnaissance of our southeastern first-line airfields from the north at Luqiao to the south at Shantou, at low and high altitudes in daytime. From January 1960, its Squadron 4 began to send RF-101 to take photographic reconnaissance at very low altitude and high speed in surprise flights. However, after one RF-101 was shot down by our AAA over Fuzhou in August 1961, the following RF-101s were outbound at low altitude over the sea, then, when approaching their targets, suddenly rushed up and took photos at high altitude at high speed. The RF-101 had to stop being used after being shot down twice by our fighters. Then, RF-104 of Squadron 12 took its place to continue the photograph reconnaissance at high altitude. On 13 January 1967, our fighter shot down one of the planes of the escort formation near Shangwu in Fujian Province. Since June 1968, Group 6 stopped its spy actions along our coast. Within these eight years, our forces shot down in total three RF-101s, wounded four; shot down one F-104 and captured one pilot.

Phase IV: from August 1964 to the end of 1969, we resisted against the American aircraft to protect the southwest land and the airspace over Hainan Island.

In 1961, USA launched the war to invade Vietnam. After their failure of Special Operations in South Vietnam, in order to cut down the support from the north to the south, USA had the intention to push the

war to the south. On August 4, 1964, the US Navy created the Event of Beibu Gulf. Since the following day, the US began to bomb North Vietnam on a large scale, meanwhile sending their high-altitude reconnaissance drones to invade the air over Guangxi and Yunnan, where we shared the same border with Vietnam, and Hainan Island for the aerial photograph reconnaissance, and then sending their fighters into our national air since April 1965. Our air force and naval aviations, SAM and AAA troops resisted these invaders in great anger. During the five years and four months from August 1964 to the end of 1969, we shot down twenty high-altitude reconnaissance drones (including three by the Naval aviation troops over Hainan Island); shot down thirteen RB-66, F-4B, F-104C and A-4B, wounded two and captured two pilots (including five shot down and one pilot captured by the Naval aviation unit).

Until 1968, the Vietnamese people, supported firmly by the socialist countries, fought bravely in the spirit of “Winning by the decisive engagement” and struck heavily the American and the puppet armies in the air and on the ground, in the North and South, and won the war, which consisted of 600,000 troops from the US Army, AF and Navy to get bogged down in this war and thousands and thousands of the young Americans died in it. This aroused strong anti-war waves of the American people. The American president Lyndon B. Johnson, stuck in this awkward predicament had to declare on October 31, 1968 to cease, completely, the bombardment of South Vietnamese and to continue the peace negotiations in Paris with Vietnam. Up to now, the