

'55 Dulles Testimony Gives Plans on China

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The United States was prepared to make limited attacks on mainland China and "take a risk of war" in defense of Taiwan in the mid-1950s, then secretary of state John Foster Dulles told the Senate, according to secret testimony released yesterday.

But the newly declassified Senate documents showed that Dulles also assured Congress that the United States did not intend to use its might to restore Nationalist Chinese President Chiang Kai-shek to power in Peking.

Testifying before the Senate Foreign relations Committee on Jan. 24, 1955, he said Chiang had promised that his forces would not attack China without U.S. permission, and knew that any unsupported mainland invasion would be "suicidal."

The potential for a U.S. attack on China emerged when Dulles was expressing his fears that Chinese communist attacks on the islands of Quemoy and Matsu might be the prelude to an attack on Taiwan, the Nationalist base.

He was supporting legislation — later approved by Congress — permitting the use of U.S. forces for "protecting the security of Formosa, the Pescadores and related positions and territories of that area."

Sen. Alben Barkley (D-Ky.) asked, "Is there anything in . . . the plans of the government at this time to use the armed forces of the United States to attempt to restore Chiang Kai-shek to control of the mainland of China?"

"Absolutely nothing," Dulles replied. "There is no thought on the part of anyone of landing troops on the mainland."

But, he added: "There is a possibility that if there are built up concentrations which are apparently directed against Formosa, there would be the possibility of striking at that from the sea and air before the actual attack developed.

"The existing orders," he said, "include hot pursuit, which might take our planes over the mainland."

At another point, Dulles bluntly discussed the risks of war with Peking.

"We have got to be prepared to take a risk of war with China, if we are going to stay in the Far East," he said. "If we are not willing to take that risk, all right, let's make that decision and we get out and we make our defenses in California."