

Mao Zedong Sends Telegrams to Chen Yi, Deng Zihui, Zhang Yunyi, and Others on Defending Against a Nationalist Offensive on Xiamen and Shantou (January 13–29)

On January 13, Mao Zedong sent a telegram to Chen Yi, Rao Shushi, Deng Zihui, Tan Zheng, Ye Jianying, and Fang Fang, giving the following instructions:

1. According to reliable intelligence dated January 8, He Yingqin (Chairman of the Strategic Advisory Committee of the Taiwan Kuomintang authorities) went to Tokyo at MacArthur's invitation as Chiang Kai-shek's representative. He carried a plan approved by Chiang to use 200,000 to 250,000 troops to seize Xiamen and Shantou, and was to discuss the plan and expected outcomes in detail with MacArthur. The next day, Zheng Jiemin (another Kuomintang strategist) also secretly flew to Tokyo with intelligence about the distribution of armed bandits on the mainland and their contacts with Taiwan. This intelligence also indicated that MacArthur might inform Chiang by the end of January that the restrictions on attacks from Taiwan to the mainland would be lifted.
2. Mao instructed Chen Yi to consider increasing defensive forces in Xiamen, strengthening fortifications, artillery and anti-aircraft capabilities, stockpiling food and ammunition, and assigning capable commanders. Plans should be made in advance for reinforcements from the mainland to Xiamen to ensure that enemy attacks are repelled and Xiamen is secured.
3. Two armies must be quickly deployed to the Shantou and Hailufeng region. This should be done by transferring one full army (three divisions plus HQ) from the three armies stationed in Guangdong to this area. In addition, the 46th Army from Hunan should move immediately to the region, and a command agency should be established to lead the two armies.
4. Bandit-suppression operations in Fujian and Guangdong must be hastened and completed without delay.

On January 16, Mao cabled Chen Yi and notified Rao Shushi, stating that Xiamen must be secured at all costs. Grain and ammunition stockpiles should be increased, active air defense deployed, political mobilization carried out among troops, and deep-layered fortifications built to ensure the long-term defense of Xiamen. Besides Fujian (with Xiamen as the main expected target), the coastal regions of Jiangsu and Zhejiang also needed to be prepared for enemy attacks. All troops in East China not involved in anti-bandit operations must remain on high alert, strengthen training, and prepare for enemy engagement.

On January 24, Mao telegraphed Deng Zihui and others, stating that in the past, fortifications were built blindly without proper inspection or design, resulting in significant waste — a lesson to be learned. In the future, all expenses related to construction of fortifications, roads, buildings, warehouses, etc., must be planned, inspected, and budgeted in advance, then approved by the central authorities before construction begins. No fortifications or strongholds should be built along the coastal line from Shantou to Daya Bay or in other coastal areas. If the enemy comes, let them land; then lure them deeper inland and concentrate forces to annihilate them. Troops should be stationed away from the coastline, positioned for such encirclement-and-destruction tactics, and should engage in training rather than defending the coasts. The task of identifying and eliminating infiltrating spies or small landing parties should be left to security and local forces. Only four locations — Humen, Xiamen, Zhoushan, and Wusong — and certain islands near the Pearl River estuary must be securely held and defended against enemy intrusion. The rest of the coastline should not be defended, but rather used as bait to lure the enemy in.

On January 29, Mao cabled Zhang Yunyi and others, reaffirming that “luring the enemy in deep and annihilating them in concentrated force” was the PLA's traditional and proven tactic. Building fortifications everywhere and defending all areas leads to a passive posture and a loss of initiative — a completely wrong approach. In Guangdong, only Humen and a few islands near the Pearl River estuary should have necessary fortifications. No fortifications should be built elsewhere, and the coast should not be defended — instead, it should be used to draw the enemy inland for destruction. In East China, fortifications should only be built at necessary points in Xiamen, Pingtan, Zhoushan, and Wusong. Nowhere else. Guangxi is located inland and far from Taiwan, with minimal numbers of fleeing enemy troops — thus, there is nothing to fear and no need for fortifications.

On the same day, Mao also sent a telegram to Chen Yi and others regarding coastal fortifications in East China, stating that this round of fortification work must be properly guided in advance.

Specifically:

1. Do not build anything without prior study and design, as it leads to waste.
2. Even in designated areas, only build what is absolutely necessary — not everything.
3. Do not build fortifications anywhere on the mainland coastline or interior.
4. Mainland troops should be stationed inland, allowing the enemy to land and then seizing the opportunity to destroy them — avoid full-scale defensive deployment and do not try to block landings.
5. Necessary building materials should be supplied as needed, but waste should still be avoided. Recycling and frugality should be emphasized.

Let me know if you'd like a condensed summary or want to focus on just one of the telegrams.