

IS THE CURRENT US NAVY PACIFIC BASING STRUCTURE  
ADEQUATE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY?

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Strategy

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

IS THE CURRENT US NAVY PACIFIC BASING STRUCTURE ADEQUATE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY? by LCDR Domingo B. Alinio, USN, 104 pages.

This thesis examines the adequacy of the current US Navy Pacific Fleet (USPACFLT) basing structure for the twenty-first century. It reviews the history of the USPACFLT and highlights the significant role it has played in pursuing American interests in the region. Despite its unresolved issues with Taiwan, territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas, and its ambiguous reaction to North Korea, China continues with its significant naval modernization through an active procurement program of Russian-built ships and armaments, and updates on indigenous designs. Given this trend, a possibility exists that China's People's Liberation Army Navy could collide with the USN in the future. However, based on the assessment of PLAN's current and near-term capabilities, the study concludes that current USN Pacific basing structure is adequate until 2016. Given this, the paper recommends that the USN maintains and strengthens its Pacific Fleet's capabilities to counter China's potential maritime threat. Furthermore, as overseas basing access becomes more restrictive, and given the possibility of unforeseen events in South Korea and Japan, US policymakers must forthrightly address the implications of concentrating its "nest egg" of forces on Guam and establish alternative locations in existing regional treaty-ally nations and emerging partner states.

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## ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CSG	Carrier Strike Group
ESG	Expeditionary Strike Group
HN	Host Nation
LHA	Amphibious landing ship
PLA	People Liberation Army
PLAN	PLA Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
US	United States
USN	United States Navy
USPACOM	United States Pacific Command
USS	United States Ship



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

From its origins in the mercantile and agrarian age, the development of the US Navy has been closely intertwined with the evolution of the nation as it spread across the continent and became a two-ocean maritime power. The US Navy has been the key executive agent in protecting the nation's strategic interests in both coastal defense and overseas commerce and trade. This has been especially true in the Asia-Pacific area.

With the introduction of steam propulsion and better ordnance in the 1840s, the United States began to expand its commercial interests overseas in the natural-resource-rich areas across the Pacific Ocean. As a dutiful servant to the nation and its people, the US Navy facilitated a bold shift from the traditional continental naval strategy of coastal defense and interdiction of commerce raiders to a more aggressive venturing beyond its immediate shores. However, while it is true that steam propulsion brought about greater speed, significantly shortening the time it took to reach distant destinations, the US Navy very soon learned that steam-driven ships were not as self-sufficient as the old square-riggers. This realization prompted the US Navy to see the need for workshops and coal depots on distant stations in order to provide for necessary upkeep and repair (Hagan 1991, 109).

As the United States continued its overseas commerce and trade in the Pacific region, naval bases were established in Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines. In 1854, under the Treaty of Kanagawa, Japan also granted the United States basing rights for three naval depots (O'Connor 1969, 126). These overseas naval bases played an integral role in

the United States pursuit of its national interests in the region. After World War II, the capabilities achieved from the combined US Navy bases in Hawaii, Guam, Philippines, and following World War II, Japan greatly enhanced the US military presence in the region. This military presence, the US Navy to be specific, significantly facilitated US efforts to deter the spread of communism by the USSR and China over the fledgling democracies in the Asia-Pacific region.

At the end of the Cold War, with new fiscal constraints, and without an Asian continental power clearly capable of mounting a credible military and naval threat to America, a reassessment of the United States policy in the Pacific became inescapable. In line with the nation's new imperatives in the region, the government prudently moved to re-look its base structure. This reassessment necessitated a realignment of US overseas naval bases specifically within the Southeast Asian region. In 1991, the century-old outcry of the Filipinos over sovereignty issues focused on the presence of US bases in their country, galvanized by the devastating effects of Mount Pinatubo's eruption on Clark Air force Base resulted in the closure of the US Naval base in Subic Bay, Philippines.

Realizing the continued importance of US military forward presence for the protection of its national interests in the region, however, the US Navy bases in Hawaii, Guam, and Japan hosted new roles and missions. This was necessary in order to replicate the capabilities lost due to the withdrawal of US Forces from Subic Bay. At this same time China began to emerge as a major economic power. China also aggressively launched its military modernization, which included an aggressive naval buildup. This buildup has raised concerns in Congress and elsewhere about the potential implications

for US Navy capabilities (O'Rourke 2005, 1). The loss of the US Naval base in Subic Bay, Philippines and the effects of subsequent Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) initiatives in the Asia-Pacific theaters of operations are significant. This thesis examines the question--Does the US Navy have adequate overseas bases to protect the nation's Pacific interests, and specifically, to counter the Chinese expansion in the Pacific?

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the current US Navy basing structure in the Pacific in order to determine its adequacy for the twenty-first century in light of the China's aggressive naval modernization--the "worst case" threat.

### The Research Question

Is the current US Navy's Pacific basing structure adequate to meet the rising threat of China's continuing naval buildup?

### Secondary Questions

1. What are the United States strategic concerns for Southeast Asia in general and China in particular?
2. How does China's naval buildup affect the US Navy's Pacific basing structure?
3. What are the challenges, perceived or real, of the current US Navy basing structure in the Pacific?
4. How supportive are host nations (HNs) where current US naval bases exist?
5. How do existing mutual defense treaties help in promoting continued positive bilateral (US-HN) relationships?

The intent of this study is not only to contribute to a better understanding of the US Navy's basing structure in the Pacific but also its effect on the United States strategic

interests. The US Navy has been and continues to be a champion of American goals abroad. In particular, US Pacific Fleet forces have played an integral role in furthering those goals by providing a stabilizing influence in the vast Asia-Pacific ocean areas during periods of tension and conflict. Much of its success as a key instrument of foreign policy depended upon robust overseas and forward-basing structures from where it could efficiently and effectively carry out its operations. In order for the United States to continue championing its strategic interests in the region, the US Navy must have the same robust basing and access structures and support. However, with changing political climate within host and ally nations, basing and access rights have significantly turned more and more challenging.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The literature review begins with the history of US Naval basing in the Pacific from 1840 to the present. Then this review will look at the US Navy's current posture and future requirements for basing. Next, the review will consider the potential threats that a rising China could pose to US regional strategic interests. Finally, it will conclude with a discussion of treaties with friends, allies, and emerging relationships.

#### The History of US Naval Basing in the Pacific

For the history of US Naval Basing in the Pacific, the author consulted the following: *The People's Navy* by Kenneth J. Hagan; *Command of the Sea* by Clark G. Reynolds; *Mahan on Sea Power* by William E. Livezey; *Pacific Destiny* by Richard O'Connor; and *Pacific Destiny* by Edwin P. Hoyt.

Hagan, in his *The People's Navy*, presented a whole sweep of the American naval experience from its origins in the wooden-ship Continental Navy to contemporary projections for the service's high-technological mission in the twenty-first century. Drawing on a vast store of original sources, including memoirs, congressional testimonies, and government documents, Hagan analyzed how the American Navy has evolved in peace and war and what considerations--military, economic, and political--have shaped its development.

Reynolds, in his *Command of the Sea*, portrayed naval development and influence as a long continuous historical phenomenon. He stated that maritime nations that have

understood this phenomenon have been able to exert their traditional command of the sea. In essence, he covered the strategic applications of naval power as early as the Minoan navy but closed at the Soviet-American naval rivalry during the Cold War.

Livezey's *Mahan on Sea Power* discussed the doctrines of sea power and the principles of naval strategy along with its implications for the United States according to Alfred Thayer Mahan. Additionally, it illuminated, among other maritime related concepts and regulations such as general reception and foreign utilization, the US Navy's development in the Caribbean, Hawaii, Philippines and the Far East in general.

O'Connor, in his *Pacific Destiny*, told the story of those Americans who have been most closely identified with the growth of the United States as a Pacific power. He accounted for the men who shaped and directed America's Pacific ambitions from the earliest voyage of US merchant marine vessels to the Far East through the height of the Viet Nam conflict in 1969.

Hoyt, in his book under the same title *Pacific Destiny*, also delved into the military and foreign policy history as far back as the days of the clipper ships and whalers. He discussed the impact of the Pacific on America and of America on the Pacific world. The book, published over ten years after O'Connors', includes post-Viet Nam conflict and Cold War events.

#### The Threat (To Deter, To Defeat, To Maintain the Peace)

*Chinese Grand Strategy and Maritime Power* by Thomas M. Kane; "China's Quest for Security in the Post-Cold War World," a monograph by Samuel S. Kim; *The Dragon Awakens: China's Military Modernization Trends and Implications* by Lawrence E. Grinter, Editor; *China's Nuclear Weapons Strategy* by Chong-Pin Lin; "FY06 Report



to Congress on PRC Military Power” and “CRS Report for Congress” by Ronald O’Rourke provide the initial basis for assessment of the potential threat posed by China’s naval buildup.

Kane discussed that People’s Republic of China (PRC) is systematically using the resources at its disposal to build up its power upon the seas. He suggested that Beijing’s maritime expansion is central to a larger policy aimed at putting China among the foremost global powers and that China’s regime is following a broad course of action aimed at general goals. He mentioned a key goal is the creation of conditions in which it can act as a maritime power. He concluded by describing China’s national strategy as appearing to be following Mao Zedong’s protracted war on a global scale. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Dr. Kim, in his monograph, argued that while China is a growing regional military power, it is almost paradoxically, a weak state both pretending and trying to be a strong one. He further asserted that what the world sees in China as a modernizing, economically robust, and assertive regional hegemon and world power “want-to-be” is at least in part a façade. He concluded, however, that despite the limitations China has, it will be an immense factor in the strategic balance of power in the Pacific.

Grinter provided an edited form of four essays that analyzed broad trends in Chinese military modernization. The four essays looked at the whole pattern of Chinese military modernization--strategy, doctrine, and weapons acquisition, and mobility changes in China’s nuclear, space, Information Warfare (IW), ground, naval and air forces. All four essays reached the same conclusion. While the PLA, which includes the navy, air force and Second Artillery Corps, is acquiring “pockets” of modern capabilities

through all sorts of endeavors, these selective acquisitions do not offset the overall obsolescence of most of China's armed forces.

Dr. Lin examined the nuclear weapons strategy of the PRC's in the context of Chinese strategic tradition. His book focused on four considerations: the asymmetry between perceived importance and acquired understanding of China's nuclear force; the complication of superpowers' nuclear deterrence and arms control; the potential contribution to the inquiry on continuity and discontinuity of strategic tradition; and the dynamics between military capability and intention. Dr. Lin concluded that although not appropriately categorized by any western term, China did have a nuclear strategy. He asserted, further, that China will continue to improve its nuclear arsenal which eventually might have a direct relevance to the PLAN's modernization.

Lastly, the "FY06 Report to Congress on PRC Military Power" covered China's military key developments between 2003 and 2004 along with in-depth views and discussion on what is driving China's force modernization, what the scope and resources are; the trends in military strategy, doctrine and training and the security concerns in the Taiwan Straits. The major categories of the developments between 2003 and 2004 include political, defense economics, People's Liberation Army (PLA) training and exercises, logistics, defense industries and military modernization, space capabilities and missile forces development. All these will be covered in more detail in chapter 4.

#### US Navy's Current Posture and Future Requirements for Basing

As reaffirmed by the recently released US Navy Operational Concepts (NOC), the *2006 Navy Strategic Plan*, the CNO's Guidance for 2006, the *2006 National Security Strategy* (NSS), and *2006 National Military Strategy* (NMS) provide the overall guidance

on the mission and roles of the Commander, US Pacific Fleet (USPACFLT). The latter's website provides the most precise picture of the current posture of the US Navy and its area of responsibility. The website describes Pacific Fleet strategy as protecting the sea lanes that link Pacific allies with the United States, projecting a stabilizing influence overseas, supporting allied forces ashore and performing any additional mission directed in support of allied interests. It did not, however, make any reference to the issue of tyranny of distance. Mainland Japan (Yokosuka) is the closest homeport of US Navy ships should a crisis requiring a rapid response arise. Because of the time and distance factor, it would take at least a week for a US naval ship to get to the region from San Diego, the home to the Third Fleet which represents the bulk of the naval force in the Pacific. This fact makes United States basing strategy considerations even more significant.

There are also numerous Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports submitted to Congress relative to the salient issues of the US Navy's current structure, realignment plans and acquisition programs. For instance, "CRS Report for Congress" by Ronald O'Rourke, specifically addressed China's naval modernization and its implications to the US Navy's force structure and basing arrangements. Some of the implications O'Rourke enumerated are the size of the fleet, division of fleet between Atlantic and Pacific, forward-homeporting in the Western Pacific, number of aircraft carriers, and attack submarines and antisubmarine warfare-capable (ASW) ships and aircrafts, all tremendously affect basing strategy.

Richard Halloran, a former *New York Times* foreign correspondent in Asia and military correspondent in Washington, in his article "The Tyranny of Distance in the

Pacific Command Operations” summed up the US Navy Pacific Fleet’s concern regarding the “tyranny of distance” in its area of operations. To provide the reader a clearer picture of distances and times involved, the author of this thesis will quote a table from Katherine Webb’s dissertation entitled “Are Overseas Bases Worth the Bucks?”

Conveniently quoting Admiral Fallon, then Commander of the US Pacific Command, saying “Guam is American Territory,” Halloran believes that Guam provides a genuine advantage. Because Guam is a US territory, the island does not have the political restrictions, such as those South Korea’s President said his country would impose, that could restrict US moves in an emergency. He countered, however, with some disadvantages. Such disadvantages include the run-down state of the island’s infrastructure and its vulnerability to typhoons. Webb, on the other hand, addressed the time and distance factor solely as a way of determining the monetary value of having the US Navy base in Subic Bay as opposed to relocating it somewhere else while replicating same capabilities.

“Sea Basing Program,” published by AMI International, provided an assessment and outlined why the United States needs a Sea Base. It also identified initial conceptual schemes and discussed how the plan will likely be implemented. There are also an abundance of relevant news articles published in the *Navy Times*, magazines, newspapers, journals and internet that continue to address the emerging issues of future ships acquisition and the associated funding, which ultimately poses a bigger challenge when taken to congress for approval.

For information on the most current politics, geography and services available from both the US territories and the HNs, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Fact

book and Country Watch Organization websites are instead used as primary references. These resources will provide updated political, geographic and services data needed to analyze how they affect the formulation of current or future basing and access rights in the region.

### Friends, Allies, Treatises, and Emerging Relationships

For the most part, literature used to describe this section includes the following books: *US Allies in a Changing World* edited by Barry Rubin and Thomas A. Keaney; *Australian and US Military Cooperation* by Christopher Hubbard; *The ANZUS States and Their Region* edited by Richard W. Baker. Where there are no books published covering new or emerging partnerships between the US and other Asian nation, the CIA Factbook, Country Watch Organization, Heritage Foundation and several other websites were consulted.

Rubin and Keaney explored the development of the United States alliances from the American perspective, as well as from that of its most important allies. They considered how the relationships have changed in the tumultuous international environment of the past half century, as well as looking at their present situation and the likely future direction of each country's link to the United States.

Hubbard provided a historical overview of the military alliance between the United States and Australia, commonly known as ANZUS. He suggested that, for over fifty years since that treaty came into being, the relationship has not been devoid of concerns or potential for dispute. However, when the going gets rough, each country has been able to count on the other for support, whether military, diplomatic or otherwise. He

concluded that Australia, being in the “arc of instability” will play an important role supporting United States strategic interests.

Baker provided insights on regional economic and security policies and the inter-relationship of Pacific Islands and the United States. He pointed out that despite changes and differences in focus, it is virtually certain that security cooperation among the ANZUS allies will continue for the foreseeable future.

### Conclusion

There is a significant body of literature covering the history of the US Navy Pacific Fleet, its roles and missions; past and present basing structure; and projected future requirements based on the emerging threats within its area of responsibility (AOR) balanced with concurrent political, geo-strategic and economic realities. Likewise, numerous articles and reports have addressed and continue to put emphasis on the perceived potential threat posed by China’s aggressive military modernization, particularly its naval and maritime programs. However, there is no specific work that looks at US Naval basing in relation to the emerging Chinese naval posture.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In light of the potential threat that could emanate from China's military modernization in general and the PLAN buildup in particular, the process of determining the adequacy of the US Navy basing structure in the Pacific requires an unbiased assessment to be useful. The fundamental key to an objective assessment of the US Navy basing structure in the Pacific is a thorough examination of the US Navy's current posture; its future planned acquisitions of ships, weapons systems and associated programs; overseas and forward-basing access and support structure, and future deployments. To facilitate this endeavor, the analysis begins by laying out a brief historical background of the US Navy Pacific Fleet (USPACFLT) and how the United States became a Pacific nation and maritime power.

The analysis next follows a methodology depicted in figure 1. This methodology is a derivation of the Strategic Estimate model taught at the US Army Command and General Staff College. Whereas a typical, full-blown strategic estimate model would be more encompassing, the modified model presented here provides a more simplistic approach to analyzing and synthesizing data to arrive at plausible answers to the primary and secondary questions of this thesis. The first column lists security issues that engender in China a heavy reliance on a more robust and able maritime force to carry out what is best for its national interests. Outside the military aspect, of course, the author recognizes the importance of the economic element as another instrument of national power and the changing place of China in the global economy, its rise as an industrial power and trading

partner of many states worldwide. However, it is beyond the scope of this study, and therefore, not included. The second column represents the US Pacific Fleet as a whole along with the bases and places it uses during operational deployments. Finally, the third column depicts the analysis and conclusion section.

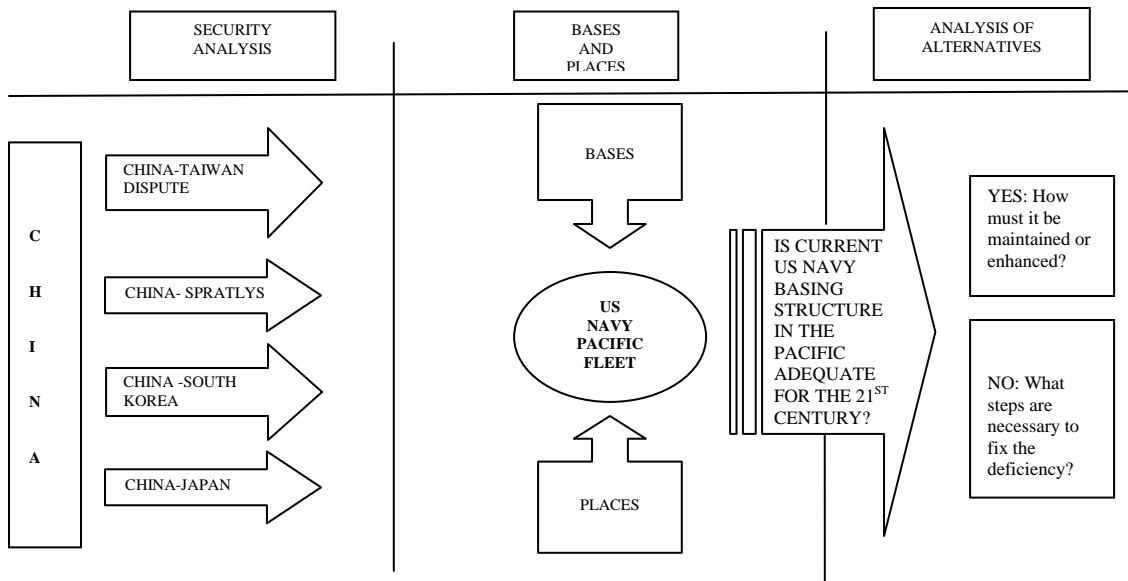


Figure 1. Flow Diagram of Analysis

Chapter 4 starts with a brief synopsis of China’s geopolitical setting. The synopsis considers four potential sources of regional conflicts which may involve the United States relative to the protection and pursuit of American strategic interests in the region. The purpose of identifying these four potential flashpoints is not so much to assert their inevitability as security threats to the region and US national interests, though they are certainly plausible, but mainly to present a complex array of scenarios from which the issue of adequacy of US Navy basing structure in the Pacific can be analyzed. This



chapter also covers a detailed discussion of China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) strategy and modernization development along with its current and projected force structure and capabilities. While it is true that there are other navies in the region, such as those of India, and Japan representing the major ones, to have chosen China's PLAN as the model enables this paper to set a high benchmark against which the US Navy could assess the adequacy of its current basing structure in the USPACFLT areas of operation. Besides, among the Asia-Pacific states, it is an unchecked China that has the strongest potential to threaten the current regional balance of power which could ultimately test the US Navy.

Chapter 5 examines the US Navy Pacific Fleet basing structure, the bases and places it uses to support operational deployments in carrying out its assigned roles and missions. The analysis of the US Navy Pacific Fleet roles and missions lays the background for the assessment of its current posture and future requirements for basing in relation to the potential flashpoints discussed in chapter 4. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of United States' friends, allies and emerging relationships and illuminates their impact on US regional strategic formulation. Friends and allies included in this analysis are Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Australia and the Philippines while nations that have an emerging or improving relationship with the United States include Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and India. In presenting each nation's impact on the United States in general and to the US Navy Pacific Fleet in particular, the implications of applicable bilateral defense treaties will also be examined. Additionally, this paper analyzes the impact of China's PLAN buildup on US friends and allies in the region and look at indications that could change the overall alliance posture in the region.

Using the criteria discussed in the section that immediately follows, the final chapter provides the conclusions, recommendations and answers the thesis questions of this study--whether or not the US Navy Pacific Fleet current basing structure is adequate vis-à-vis the potential threat that a rising China PLAN could pose. The only two possible answers are either the current US Navy basing in the Pacific is adequate or not--if yes, then how to maintain and sustain it; if not, then what steps are necessary to fix the deficiencies.

### Criteria

As with any study of military forces capabilities a good set of criteria is not only indispensable, but an integral part of a thorough strategic estimate process. The sixth and final chapter of this paper uses the following criteria to measure the adequacy of the current USPACFLT basing structure vis-à-vis that of China's PLAN: force ratio, redundancy, and time-distance.

Force ratio as used here deals not only with a quantitative comparison of the number ships or airplanes but rather a more holistic approach, which includes the qualitative aspects as well. This criterion is essential in the projection of future ships acquisition and deployments. Both the US Navy and policy makers involved need to have the clearest idea possible of what types and in what mix-ratio of future ships and weapons are required. This is especially true as fiscal constraints are fast becoming the norm. This information is critical in planning for the long-term effort to counter or deter a possible US-China military confrontation in the region.

Redundancy is not only of available weapon systems, but basing as well as support structures. This measure compares the current US Navy Pacific Fleet basing

structure relative to China's growing maritime forces. It will help determine whether the US Navy has sufficient basing or access rights granted by friendly HNs where the USN does not have a permanent naval base.

Time-distance factor is also a critical point of comparison. Given that any future hostility within the region between the United States and China will invariably involve the US Navy and with the inherently vast areas of the Asia-Pacific region to traverse and maintain ships on station, China will have a home court advantage. In which case, the time and distance factor illuminates the significance of the need to plan for future ships' deployments and corresponding force strength robust enough to maintain and support a strong naval forward presence. Having set the methodology and the parameters this study next examines the threat.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE THREAT

#### China's Geopolitical Setting

For centuries China stood as a leading civilization, outpacing the rest of the world in the arts and sciences, but in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the country was beset by civil unrest, major famines, military defeats, and foreign occupation. After World War II, the Communists under Mao Zedong established an autocratic socialist system that, while ensuring China's sovereignty, imposed strict controls over everyday life and cost the lives of tens of millions of people. After 1978, Mao's successor Deng Xiaoping and other leaders focused on market-oriented economic development and by 2000 output had quadrupled. For much of the population, living standards have improved dramatically and the room for personal choice has expanded, yet political controls remain tight.

Today, even as it continues its track of significant economic growth and development, China remains at odds over Taiwan's bid for independence despite active diplomatic efforts and other confidence-building measures. China continues to assert sovereignty over the entire Spratly Island group. Other Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) states including Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, and possibly Brunei also lay claim to all or part of this strategic area. With Japan, China's dispute over Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands remains unresolved. This section now examines these contentious issues and disputes in an attempt to establish a rationale behind the aggressive People's Liberation Army (PLA) military modernization, particularly that of the PLAN.

## The Two Sides of the Taiwan Strait

The overall outlook for stability across the Taiwan Strait has improved. Thanks to the combined effects of a reinvigorated local political opposition to President Chen Shui-bian's pro-independence leaning, increased economic integration, and perhaps, more importantly, the manifest strong US determination to deter both the provocative tendencies of Taiwan seeking independence and China threatening to use force against any attempt by Taiwan to separate permanently. However, how far Taipei and Beijing might go in easing tension and resolving differences over the next few years is less certain. The Chen government remains strongly committed to a pro-independence agenda and the US leadership, while favoring dialogue, is not willing to take extraordinary measures to mediate or resolve differences. Rather, the US maintains its "One China" policy to moderate Taiwan and engage China to seek resolution via peaceful means (ICG 2005, 1).

While President Chen Shui-bian, his ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), and their more radical allies in Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) continue to push for strengthening Taiwan's status as a country permanently separate from China, PRC maintains its long-term objective of reunification ((ICG 2005, 2). Although there have been varying degrees of urgency in achieving this goal, the Taiwan issue remains on top of Beijing leaders' priorities and concerns. As a measure of China's seriousness on its objective of reunification, it has left little room for doubt that a declaration of independence by Taiwan will be met with force. By the same token, with Chen's strong push for independence, it would only seem likely that Beijing's goal, at least until 2008

when Chen's term of office ends, is to prevent further steps towards permanent separation (ICG 2005, 2).

While Beijing defines the Taiwan issue as a domestic affair of China, it is stepping up diplomatic pressure on Chen's administration by urging the international community, particularly Japan and the United States, to oppose Taiwanese independence. Although Beijing appreciates the US "One China" policy which supports Taiwan's unification with mainland China through peaceful means, it recognizes America's long standing friendship with Taiwan and its continued sales of modern military equipment. Hence, it continues to modernize its military, particularly the PLAN. Moreover, although it appears that the principal focus of this modernization is China preparing for potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait, writings of Chinese military strategists further suggest that control of Taiwan would enable the PLA Navy to move its maritime defensive perimeter farther seaward and improve its ability to influence regional sea lines of communication (OSD 2006, 10). This could potentially threaten the vital sea lines of communication (SLOCs) through the South China Sea, and along the East China coast to Japan.

#### South China Sea Territorial Dispute

The South China Sea issue centers around the Spratly Islands dispute, which involves the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC or Taiwan) along with four ASEAN states claimants – Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, and, possibly, Brunei, which has established a fishing zone that overlaps a southern reef, but has not made any formal claim (CIA Factbook 2006). Also important are the Parcel Islands dispute, which involves only the PRC, Vietnam and Taiwan, and the Natuna Islands dispute which involves a conflict between China and Indonesia over the extent of

the latter's Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) (Nugroho 2000, 74-76). The disputed islets in the South China Sea are not currently habitable nor even visible all of the time due to tidal effects. However, as China and the Southeast Asian nations continue to industrialize, their need for energy sources to fuel their industrialization increases. This is when the issue of dispute particularly over the Spratly Islands, which is believed to have sea beds rich in both oil and natural gas deposits, comes into the forefront. Shortly after energy firms began speculating about the size of the resource field and its potential outputs, all claimants either made or reasserted declaration of their claims and all but Brunei and Indonesia deployed military forces to patrol their waters (Jackson 2005, 1).

A relatively small numbers of five Asian military forces currently occupy portions of the Spratly Islands; China occupies seven reefs, Malaysia five reefs, the Philippines eight islets, Vietnam twenty-four reefs and islets, and Taiwan maintains a garrison on one islet (Nugroho 2000, 74-76). While the dispute over the claims of sovereignty on the islands have existed for hundreds of years, the clashes for staking ownership did not begin until the 1970s following the initiation of a series of surveys of potential oil and gas fields in the region. Over the past three decades, there have been thirteen military encounters in the South China Sea region, nine of which involved the PRC, although the region has been relatively free of military action between the states-claimants since 1999, when a Philippine warship sunk a PRC fishing vessel and PRC in turn harassed a grounded Philippine naval vessel.

While it appears that most of the claimants were willing to militarily assert and defend their claims to the South China Sea territory until 2000, since then most if not all have been willing to address the disputes through more peaceful means. The most notable

development is the 2002 “Declaration on the Conduct on Parties in the South China Sea,” the first multilateral security document between China and ASEAN. Also, in March 2005, the national oil companies of China, the Philippines, and Vietnam signed a joint accord to conduct marine seismic activities in the Spratly Islands. For China to achieve its national interests; to have an assured source of the much needed energy source, and to have stronger control of the sea lanes in the region, it must have a modernized naval force that is capable of conducting operations beyond its traditional coastal and green water operations.

#### China-Japan Dispute over Senkaku

While multilateral approaches and confidence-building measures relative to the South China Sea issues and over the Spratly Islands seem to indicate at least a cooling of tensions, the East China Sea looks more troublesome. PRC faces another longstanding territorial dispute with Japan as both nations claim the Senkaku or Diaoyu Islands, the Japanese and Chinese names respectively. The situation in the East China Sea heated up in 2005 as China and Japan began drilling near the Senkaku Islands. China responded to the Japanese drilling announcement by dispatching PLAN ships to the area on the guise of a “routine exercise” and the foreign ministry released this statement, “China has set up a reserve vessel squadron...in [the] East China Sea. The fleet is aimed to promote the capacities of [the] Chinese Navy on emergency handling, urgent mobilization, speedy grouping, maritime support and malfunction-resolving” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 2006).

While China has sent patrols through the South China Sea for clearly the same reason, the navies in South East Asia are less of a threat to the PLAN than the Japanese



Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF). Japanese naval forces are perceived to be the best equipped and trained sailors in the Asia-Pacific region. However, despite this overwhelming capability, the Japanese have since agreed, at least in principle, to joint development. As the dispute with Japan over the Senkaku Islands appears to be calming down, China's action could indicate a perception in Beijing that oil and gas deposits are potentially worth ratcheting up military tensions, even against a modern and highly capable force such as JMSDF. As in the case of the South China Sea, the ulterior interest of the PRC over the dispute of Senkaku Islands is rooted in energy sourcing and control of SLOCs. Likewise, it supports the argument for China to have a robust, modernized and highly capable PLAN force structure if it were to stand a chance of becoming a maritime and global power capable of opposing Japan, a longtime ally of the United States.

#### China-South Korea Strategic Factor

From the outbreak of the Korean in 1950 China and South Korea have had a relationship locked in mutual hostility and suspicion. It was not until the late 1970s, that two significant developments helped the two countries break their long noncontact relationship. First, China adopted reforms and its open-door policy in 1978, marking the start of unofficial and indirect trade between China and South Korea, albeit slowly. Secondly, there was an improvement in the Sino-Soviet relations, which had the effect of undercutting the rationale behind their rivalry over North Korea.

Beijing's decision to normalize relations with South Korea was primarily motivated by the domestic economic imperative along with the expansion of diplomatic influence in the region. South Korea's motives were also diplomatic as much as economic and political. South Korea hoped to bring China's influence on North Korea to

bear on facilitating North-South Korean dialogue, opening up the North Korean society, and restraining North Korea's provocative actions against South Korea.

Sino-South Korean relations have warmed markedly in recent years (Bergsten et al 2006, 25). Bilateral trade reached \$8.2 billion in 1992--the year diplomatic relations were officially established, doubled to \$16.9 billion in 1995 (Yi 1995, 124), up to \$27.5 billion after the first seven months of 2003 (People's Daily, 2003), and \$111.9 billion in 2005, making China South Korea's leading trade partner (Bergsten et al 2006, 25). This trend clearly indicates further growth in the future as China continues to bolster positive economic growth. Despite these changes, however, most ROK observers concluded that there have been no major positive outcomes in its political or security relations with North Korea. The ROK's security challenge remains remarkably unchanged (Kim 1998, 52).

South Korean security planners are still apprehensive of China for several reasons. First is China's continuing military-to-military relationship with North Korea. Second, in stark contrast to the remarkable progress in economic and diplomatic contacts since 1992, institutionalized military-to-military relationships between ROK and China have yet to develop. Third, with the preponderance of Chinese and South Korean population and industrial centers concentrated on the opposing sides of the Yellow Sea, there is the concern for maritime accidents could result from potential tensions between the two countries as both seek to secure maritime resources and SLOCs. Neither side has agreed as to the official international boundary line in the Yellow Sea. At present, China maintains that the continental shelf is the natural extension of its territory while ROK insists on the median, which is also recognized by many international organizations. The

last, but certainly not the least, of ROK's security concerns is the long-term implications of China's expanding military force. The mere vastness and strategic reach of China coupled with reduced US regional presence could complicate ROK security planning in spite of its aggressive pursuit of a more self-reliant defense posture. So long as the above reasons persist, ROK security planners must remain vigilant of China's growing military power and influence (Kim 1998, 54-56).

In the context of China being considered as a threat to the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region, this paper has so far examined its current geopolitical setting and found some possible common threads that provide linkage to China's grand strategy which in turn has resulted in the ongoing military buildup. The next section briefly discusses these common threads, China's grand strategy as perceived by the author, and then, specifically, examines China's maritime strategy and naval capabilities.

#### People's Republic of China Grand Strategy

In the 1990s several Chinese experts denied that China had any kind of coherent foreign policy. However, Mr. Thomas Kane, along with several others argued that China has had and continues to have a grand strategy (Kane 2002, 6). Just as American Enterprise Institute's Mr. Lin concluded in his 1988 book, that China did have a nuclear strategy (Lin 1988, 137), one can just as easily infer that China had practiced grand strategies, and continues to do so. Not only does Chinese tradition support this supposition, but also numerous Chinese classics on war and statecraft, of which Sun Tzu's well-known *Art of War* is only the most popularized.

A 2006 Office of the Secretary of Defense's (OSD) Annual Report to Congress notes that China's grand strategy, as it defines it, is one of maintaining balance among

competing priorities for sustaining momentum in national economic development, and maintaining favorable trends in the security environment within which such economic development can occur (OSD 2006, 9). It draws direction from PRC's enduring national goals of national sovereignty, state power and ideological independence. While Beijing appears to fully recognize such goals, it also acknowledges its limited resources for achieving them. Therefore, in concert with its grand strategy, at the fundamental level, the Beijing government has learned to leverage these limited resources to achieve a position of greater strength. At the strategic level, Chinese military leaders had made national policies to focus on scientific and industrial modernizations that would allow them to achieve new levels of readiness and proficiency, and at the diplomatic level, Beijing has astutely sought alliances with outside organizations whenever it finds it expedient on her behalf (Kane 2002, 58).

More critical to this study, Chinese leaders also recognize the indispensability of a strong fleet to its coordinated program of military and economic development. As Kane suggested, any naval buildup will benefit from general economic and scientific advances. Conversely, without a capable fleet, the overall modernization effort may be doomed (Kane 2002, 63). PLA Colonel Peng Guangqian also noted in 1994 that "Deng Xiaoping always considered China's development in the context of the overall world strategic situation, and has always adopted an active posture in international society" (Kane 2002, 63). To adopt such a posture presupposes China's ability to act internationally, and this in practice, will be largely a matter of seapower.

## Twenty-first Century People's Liberation Army Navy Strategy

For its part in the overall China's military strategy, PLAN is focused on protecting state sovereignty and national integrity and it appears to be increasingly thinking about regional contingencies, including the protection of maritime resources and SLOCs--also expressed in geographical terms as the "two island chains" strategy (OSD 2006, 15). The first of these chains consists of the Ryukyus, Taiwan, the Philippines and Borneo. The second includes the Marianas, Guam and the Carolines (Kane 2002, 73).

Historically, China's navy has been weak and outdated (Grinter1999, 5). However, the PRC has actively pursued to increase the PLAN's capabilities by developing new projects domestically and upgrading indigenous designs, and continuing its aggressive arms acquisition from foreign sources, which include France, Israel, Ukraine and most notably Russia. There are three primary objectives behind the PRC's naval modernization program. The first, and perhaps the most significant, is attributable to the tensions within the Taiwan Strait. The second is the perception of an increased threat posed by the Japanese Self Defense Forces (JSDF) with its potential amendment of Article IX of its constitution coupled with the recent strengthening of the US-Japan alliance (Bergsten et al. 2006, 25). And finally, is the desirability to develop a blue-water naval capability (Shambaugh 2002, 265).

To accommodate these goals, the PLAN continues with its modernization program in a more selective manner focusing on strengthening and overcoming its current weaknesses particularly in antisubmarine warfare (ASW), antisurface warfare (ASUW), amphibious warfare and missile delivery systems capabilities. Through the combined output of its domestic ship-building industry and the acquisitions of Russian

military equipment, the PLAN is in the midst of developing state-of-the-art ASW and ASUW programs. This is being realized through the incorporation of Russian *Sovremenny*-class destroyers, Russian-made antiship missiles, domestically built amphibious and fast patrol boats (FPB), ASW destroyers, second generation Russian diesel submarines and indigenous third generation new nuclear attack submarines (NSSN). Achieving this modern capability would put the PLAN in a solid position to pursue its maritime objectives.

### PLAN Command Structure

What follows is a discussion of People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy command and control structure. As depicted in figure 2, PLAN's headquarters is located in Beijing and consists of three fleet commands, each of which consists of seven to ten coastal defense zones. Functionally, the PLAN comprises five different types of units: naval ship units, submarine units, naval aviation units, coastal defense units and marine units. The small naval air force has detachments in all three fleet commands; and the two marine brigades consisting of rapidly deployable infantry, artillery, armor and reconnaissance units, are both under the South Sea Fleet.

The North Sea Fleet (NSF), headquartered at Qingdao in Shandong Province, has an area of responsibility (AOR) from the Yalu River in the north down to Lianyu Harbor in Jiangsu Province. This area encompasses the Beijing, Shenyang, and Jinan Military Regions (MRs) and includes responsibility for the Bohai Gulf and the Yellow Sea. In addition to the principal bases location in Qingdao, NSF has at least twelve other bases and facilities dispersed within the AOR.

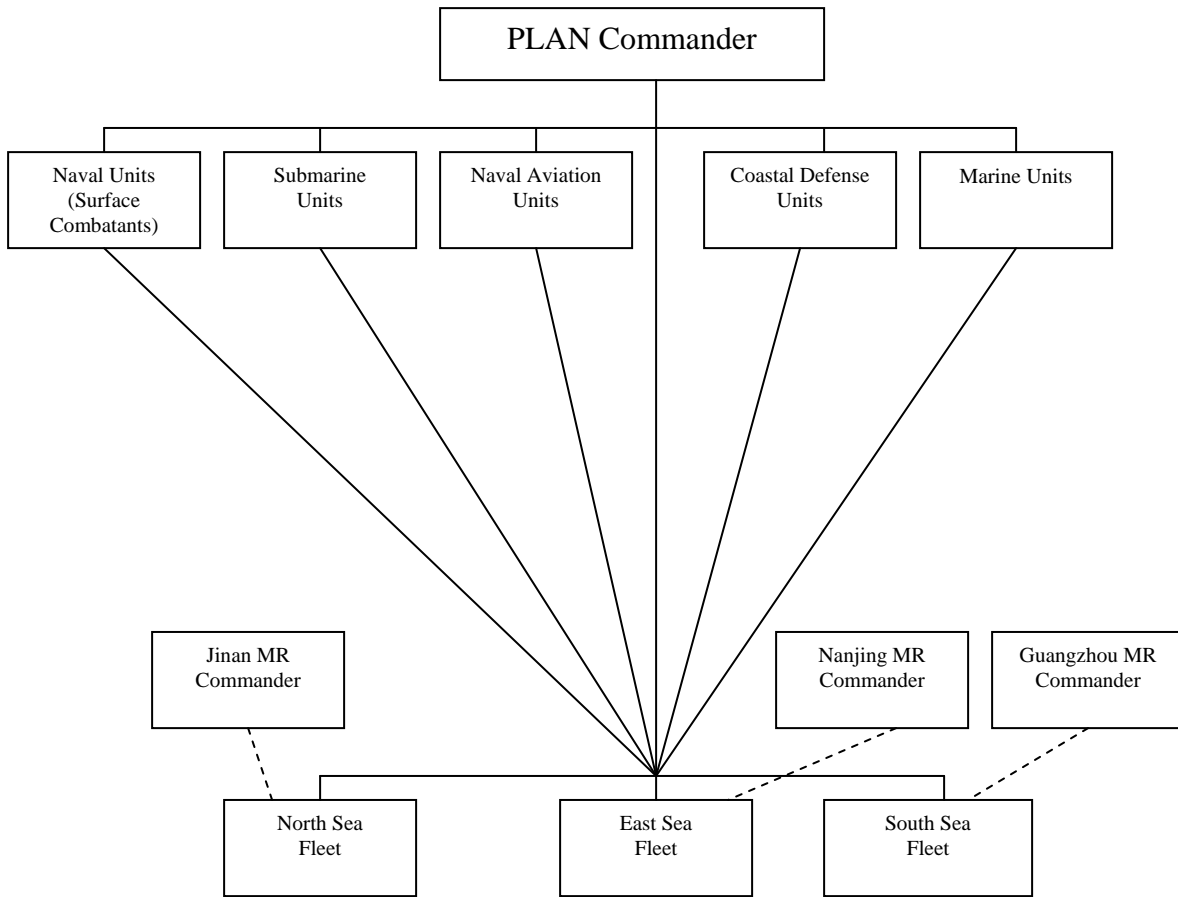


Figure 2. Command Structure of the PLA Navy

Source: Reprinted from David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 164.

The East Sea Fleet (ESF) headquarters are at Ningbo, near Shanghai. This fleet's AOR stretches from the southern half of the Yellow Sea in the north down to Dongshan in Fujian Province. Included within the AOR are the entire East China Sea and the sensitive Taiwan Strait. It also parallels the Nanjing MR. There are at least ten other principal operational bases within this area in addition to Ningbo's (Shambaugh 2002, 163).

The South Sea Fleet (SSF) headquarters are at Zhanjiang in the Guangdong Province. The AOR includes the entire South China Sea (including the disputed Parcel and Spratly island groups), the Beibu Gulf near Vietnam and Hainan Islands, and the remainder of the Guangzhou MR. Operational bases under this command number at least twelve, including a facility in Hong Kong. Also, as mentioned earlier, the two PLAN marine brigades consisting of approximately 7,000 men (as of 2002 reported figures) are attached to this fleet command. These brigades are trained for various amphibious operations, and are supported by amphibious tanks and APCs, howitzers, and multiple rocket launchers (Shambaugh 2002, 164)

Each fleet possesses surface, subsurface and naval air units. Three People's Liberation Army Naval Air Force (PLANAF) divisions with eight planes each make up the naval air units. The surface combatants which includes the most recent additions of destroyers of the *Lulu*, *Luhai*, *Sovremenny* and *Luyang I/II* classes are distributed fairly equally among the three fleets (O'Rourke 2005, 11). Likewise, each of the three fleets has a complement of frigates, coastal patrol craft, mine warfare vessels, amphibious assault ships, and various transport and support vessels. For submarines, Professor Bernard Cole of the US National War College previously identified six or seven flotillas of submarines in the three fleets (Shambaugh 2002, 164).

Each fleet commander serves as a deputy commander of the relevant military region(s) [MR] and has a dual responsibility to PLAN Headquarters in Beijing and the MR Commander, who is usually a ground force commander (GSD). In wartime, this chain of command is strengthened, and the PLAN commanders in MRs and theaters of operation are firmly subordinated to the GSD ground force commander. This system may



pose a critical vulnerability in time of war as it is not conducive to combat agility and freedom of maneuver. A change in this subordinate command and control structure in the future could signal a rise in the PLAN's status and the importance of the navy in China's security planning.

Although the PLAN is described as relatively small, with an estimated total of 255,000 personnel (IISS 2006, 266), it is certainly a growing and increasingly important service. Its equipment is being modernized more quickly relative to the other services, and its budget has increased more rapidly in recent years than those of the ground or air forces. Furthermore, because of China's growing regional security interests, as well as Taiwan contingencies, the PLAN's importance and resources are only likely to continue to increase (Shambaugh 2002, 165).

#### Surface Combatants--Destroyers and Frigates

The Military Balance 2006 report shows PLAN having a total of twenty-seven destroyers. Of these, PLAN now has three of the four Russian-built *Sovremenny* destroyers with delivery of the final expected by the end of 2006 or early 2007. The *Sovremenny* class vessels are the most advanced within the PLAN inventory, displacing 7,500 tons and capable of playing both ASW and ASUW roles. Although primarily designed to protect the PLAN's nuclear submarines (SSNs), they also could improve China's sea control capability. It contains a balanced armament that consists of antiship and anti-aircraft missiles, long-range guns, and ASW capabilities with a helicopter complement (Moore 2000). Its most lethal weapon is the SS-N-22 ASCM. With its present force, the delivery of the fourth one expected soon, and an additional order for eight more, the *Sovremenny* class is the flagship of the PLAN (O'Rourke 2006c, 12).

Additionally, China since the early 1990s has build five new classes of destroyers which are substantially more modern in terms of hull designs and propulsion systems, sensors, weapons, and electronics. A common key improvement in the new designs is their anti-air warfare (AAW) technology. They are also armed with ASCMs (O'Rourke 2006c, 13).

China since the early 1990s has also built three new classes of frigates that are more modern. The latest Military Balance shows that the PLAN has built or been building a total of seventeen frigates--four *Jianwei I*, ten *Jiangwei II* and three *Jiangkai* classes since 1991 (O'Rourke 2006c, 14). These new classes, like the new destroyer classes, feature improved AAW capabilities, and are better equipped than their predecessors in terms of engines, command and control, and armaments. However, they reportedly lack sophisticated equipment such as electronic support measures (ESM), electronic counter measures (ECM), and air defense systems, which might expose them to enemy attack on a sustained, high sea mission (Kim 1998, 56). Other than the fact that the Chinese have purchased several decommissioned carriers--HMAS *Melbourne*, the *Varyag* and the *Minsk* from Australia, Ukraine and Russia respectively, there are no credible reports to substantiate that PRC plans to purchase or construct an operational carrier. Besides, forming just one carrier battle group would require a complement of destroyers, frigates and submarines as escorts in order to be capable of extended sea control operations (Shambaugh 2002, 270).

#### Antiship Cruise Missiles

China's PLAN and PLANAF have or are acquiring nearly a dozen varieties of ASCMs, from the 1950-era CSS-N-2/STYX to the modern Russian-made SS-N-22 (*SUNBURN*) and SS-N-27 (*SIZZLER*). The pace of indigenous ASCM research,

development, and production complemented with foreign procurement has accelerated over the past decade (OSD Report 2006, 29).

Considered by many observers to be the most threatening ship-launched cruise missile in service today, the SS-N-22 antiship missile, code named *Sunburn* by NATO alarmed both the US Navy and the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) because it could counter its Aegis missile defense system. Traveling at two and a half times the speed of sound, it skims twenty-three feet above the surface of the water making it able to evade radar detection as it flies the final three to four nautical miles to its target. The SS-N-22 missile uses active and passive radar guidance and can be armed with a 660-pound conventional warhead or (in the Russian Navy) a 200-kiloton nuclear warhead. The question is if Russia sold the missiles to China with only conventional warheads, would it want (and be able) to design a nuclear warhead for the missile and successfully integrate it into the missile's design? Equipping the SS-N-22 with a nuclear warhead would greatly increase its lethality including the destruction of all types of US naval surface vessels including its aircraft carrier (Kan, Bolcom and O'Rourke 2000, 53-55). The newer and even more advanced *Sizzler* is projected to complement the additional eight *Sovremenny* destroyers that PLAN has ordered from Russia.

#### Squall Torpedo

The squall torpedo specification and delivery capabilities for the most part are unknown. What is known, however, is this rocket-powered torpedo travels underwater at speeds above 270 knots (approximately 312 miles per hour on land), which is easily five to six times the speed of all other torpedoes. Its cutting edge technology includes a coating effect on the weapon so water never touches the torpedo itself. Like SS-N-22

antiship missile, observers believed that this new torpedo is capable of destroying any ship within the USN and Allied fleets. It is also thought that the reason American and Allied intelligence agencies were so well informed about the *Kursk* disaster (Marcus 2000) was because it was suspected carrying a new type of torpedo. The report further stated “Some Russian reports speak of the *Kursk* carrying a new type of torpedo--unpopular among submariners--because of its highly volatile fuel” (Marcus 2000). Given Russia’s record in selling modern naval technology and armaments to the PRC, it is indeed a source of potential concern for American and Asia-Pacific regional navies that the mysterious squall torpedo could eventually fall into the PLAN’s hands.

Although China is increasingly purchasing ready-made weapons, it has also started adapting technology from these foreign-acquired weapons incorporating it into their own future indigenous production. This has the ultimate effect of reinforcing PRC’s domestic shipbuilding modernization program and decreasing the degree of its heavy reliance from foreign sources most notably from Russia.

### Submarines

Latest estimates (table 1) show China possesses sixty-nine submarines of various types. Of these, most noteworthy are the four second-generation *Kilo* class boats purchased from Russia in the 1990s. On top of this, China is also taking delivery of eight more Russian-made *Kilo*-class non-nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) believed to be an advanced version of the initial ones. China is also building four other indigenous classes of submarines that are expected to be more modern and capable than its aging older-generation submarines. One of them is the *Shang*-class SSN or Type 093. Type 093 is a third-generation SSN capable of firing a submarine launched ballistic missile

(SLBM) version of the SS-N-22 antiship missile. As a result, the Type 093 SSN is capable of deterring any USN aircraft carrier (Kan, Bolkcom, and O'Rourke 2000, 53-55). The latest report from OSD shows PLAN as having two boats of this type. Construction of a third submarine may have already started. The progress of 093's development will continue to be of keen interest to the DOD.

Type of Vessel	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Submarines	63	61	63	71	65	69	69	69	69	69
Destroyers	18	18	18	18	20	21	21	21	21	27
Frigates	36	36	35	35	40	42	42	42	42	44
Patrol and Coastal Crafts	830	830	747	676	368	368	368	368	331	254
Mine Warfare	121	121	119		119	39	39	39	34	69
Amphibious	55	71	73	70	59	56	56	56	50	76
Logistics and Support	164	165	167	160	159	163	163	163	163	163

*Source:* International Institute of Strategic Studies: *Military Balance, 1996-2005* (Extracted from various pages of ten *Military Balance* annual reports. London: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group).

China is also building a new class of SSBN known as the *Jin* class or Type 094. The first two boats will enter service in 2008 and 2010. The *Jin*-class design features an armament of twelve JL-2 nuclear-armed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). Observers believe these missiles have a range of about 4,320 to 6,480 nautical miles, which the latter figure could permit the *Jin*-class SSBNs to attack targets in most of the continental United States (CONUS) while operating in protected bastions close to China (O'Rourke 2006c, 74).

### Fast Attack Craft

In addition to its 190 older fast attack craft which include thirty-seven armed with ASCMs, China in 2004 introduced a new type of ASCM-armed fast attack craft built on a stealthy, wave-piercing, catamaran hull that is one of the more advanced hull designs used by any navy in the world today. At least three of these are now in service, and additional units are expected (O'Rourke 2006c, 15). As PRC advances towards a fleet capable of blue water operations with the Type 093 submarines, the *Sovremenny* destroyer and *Kilo* class diesel attack submarines playing a significant role in the ASW and ASUW departments, the new fast attack crafts will be of maneuverable significance throughout the South China Sea area. This combination of naval capabilities will give the PLAN a credible threat to the USN, and most certainly, to all the regional navies. Hence it is possible to consider that by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the PLAN may very well be in a superior position within the region, and a peer competitor to the US Pacific Fleet.

### Amphibious and Mine Warfare Ships

China is currently building three new classes of amphibious ships and landing craft, all of which began construction in 2003. Between these three classes, China built a total of nineteen amphibious ships and eight amphibious landing craft in 2003 and 2004 (O'Rourke 2006c, 15). Most current estimates show that China now has a total of seventy-six landing ships and 158 landing craft (IISS 2006). In the mine warfare ships category, China has a total of sixty-eight mine countermeasures (MCM) and one mine layer ships (IISS 2006). PLAN is also building a new class of MCM ship. The first unit

was expected to enter service in 2005 (O'Rourke 2006c, 15). Regarding naval mines, ONI states:

China is developing and exporting numerous advanced mines of all types. One example is the wireless remote controlled EM57, a mine that offer many tactical options. For example, the mine can be activated and deactivated to allow safe passage for friendly vessels (ONI 2004, 19).

In the preceding decade, China's PLAN increased its number of submarines by six, principal combatants, which include destroyers and frigates by seventeen, and amphibious ships by twenty-one. This aggregate numerical increase is a testimony of China's determined effort to strengthen the PLAN, which PRC deems necessary for its strategic goal of achieving green-water, and eventually, blue-water capability. The PLAN realizes and, by all available indications, highly desires to possess an operational aircraft carrier to complement its recent gains in submarine and surface combatants' capabilities. However there are no signs of China having success in this regard. The numbers of patrol combat craft and mine warfare ships, on the other hand, decreased. The decrease would seem anomalous but because of the difficulty in obtaining reliable data on China's PLAN, it could only be speculated that there was an overestimation in prior years' data reported.

#### Offshore Bases: Myanmar, Pakistan, Et Al

Regarding base access and support facilities to support more distant PLAN operations, China is reportedly building up military forces and setting up bases along sea lanes from the Middle East to project its power overseas and protect its SLOCs. A report produced by defense contractor Booz Allen and Hamilton as released by the *Washington*

*Times* stated that “China is adopting a ‘string of pearls’ strategy of bases and diplomatic ties stretching from the Middle East to Southern China” (Gertz 2005, 1).

The report further stated among other things that China is operating an eavesdropping post and building a naval base at Gwadar, Pakistan, near the Persian Gulf; building a container facility at Chittagong, Bangladesh, and seeking much more extensive naval and commercial access in Bangladesh, and building naval bases in Myanmar, which is near the Strait of Malacca, and PRC is considering funding a twenty billion dollars canal that would cross the Kra Isthmus of Thailand, which would allow ships to bypass the Strait of Malacca and permit China to establish port facilities there. China also signed a military agreement in November 2003 to provide Cambodia training and equipment. Cambodia in turn is helping Beijing build a railway line from southern China to the sea (Gertz 2005, 1). These activities will positively enhance China’s power projection capabilities and unquestionably reinforce its territorial claims and regional desires.

In summary, China has several historical disputes with its neighbors over territories believed to have rich energy deposits. Although Beijing has actively pursued positive diplomatic efforts with her claimant-neighbors, these unresolved territorial disputes are potential flashpoints for conflict, which could cause a disturbance in the regional balance of power and ultimately put the US Navy on a collision course with PLAN. In pursuit of its national interests, China has made sizeable investments in defense spending over the last decade, particularly for its PLAN buildup. Beijing views that it needs a strong seapower in support of her still rising economic development. Many military analysts and experts, however, suggest that while it is true China has made big



defense modernization investments, the PLAN's sustained combat power by Western standards remains limited at best and it will take years before it could pose a formidable threat to the US Navy arsenal.

While there are certainly problems in command and control and a penchant to share assets equally with each of its three fleets, China acquisitions to improve its navy have been impressive and significant. China will likely have the assets and have in three to five years to make it a regional naval power in terms of modernized ships and systems. Without experience, exercises, and stepped up routine multiship deployments, the PLAN may be a true peer competitor of the US Pacific Fleet in ten to fifteen years. Having laid out the nature of the China threat, this paper now examines the current USPACFLT basing structure.

## CHAPTER 5

### CURRENT US PACIFIC FLEET BASING STRUCTURE

#### Brief History, Mission and Area of Responsibility of the US Pacific Fleet

To better understand the context of current and emerging geopolitical situation particularly affecting the political, economic and military relationship between the United States and China, one needs first to look at the historical perspective of the United States' presence within the Asia-Pacific region.

Throughout the history of the United States, the US Navy has been a dutiful servant of the nation and its people, and a champion of American goals abroad. The US Pacific Fleet has played an integral role in furthering those goals by providing a stabilizing influence in a vast ocean area during periods of tension and conflict. The United States took its first step toward opening trade routes in the Pacific and Asia as early as 1784, when the ship *Empress of China* left Manhattan Harbor and sailed the long journey to Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province in southern China and formerly known internationally as Canton. Encouraged by Thomas Jefferson and financed by Robert Morris, this voyage brought hopes of opening commerce and the riches of Asia to American business. More significantly, the United States established itself as an Asia-Pacific trading nation (O'Connor 1969, 13).

The US Pacific Fleet's contribution to the US Navy's heritage dates back to 1821 with the establishment of the Pacific Squadron, the first permanent US Naval presence in the region. This small force confined its activities initially to the waters off South America, and then expanded its scope to include the Western Pacific in 1835, when the East India Squadron joined the force. The extent of its responsibility was further enlarged

in the 1850's when California and Oregon were annexed (Hagan 1991, 101, 112 & 131-137). The importance of US Pacific Naval forces as an instrument of foreign policy blossomed in July 1853, when Commodore Matthew C. Perry delivered a letter from President Fillmore, seeking diplomatic and trade relations between the United States and Japan. Eight months later, in March 1854, Commodore Perry negotiated and signed a treaty between the two countries, opening doors in Japan, and later China, to trade with other nations for the first time in 300 years.

By the end of the US Civil War, trade with Asia was significant and the Navy followed the merchant marine in terms of presence. The industrial rise after the Civil War led to an expanded role in world commerce and rise of modern US Navy and naval profession with the establishment of the Naval War College on 6 October 1884 (Hagan 1991, 161-192). From these humble beginning, evolved the need for protecting the new regional interests of the United States. To provide for this protection, it became necessary to have a US naval presence in the region which in turn required the establishment of overseas coaling stations for the new steam navy.

In 1878, the United States received an exclusive right to a naval station in Pagopago, Samoa (Hagan 1991, 194), and later in the Philippines, Guam and Hawaii following Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American War of 1898 (Hagan 1991, 227) naval bases were established both as coaling and repair stations. The Spanish-American War of 1898 resulted in further expansion of American naval power in the Pacific. Commodore George Dewey led America's Asiatic Squadron into Manila Bay for the first engagement of the war on 1 May 1898. The battle was over in seven hours and eight Spanish warships were destroyed. Two months later, off the coast of Cavite, Philippines, Commodore

Dewey issued the famous order, "You may fire when ready, Gridley." (Hagan 1991, 220) and dealt the final blow to the remaining Spanish fleet. This decisive victory left the United States in possession of former Spanish-held territory in the Philippine and Marianas Islands. More importantly, however, it established the United States as a major maritime power.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the United States began adopting the Mahanian precepts of capital ships, fleet engagements, and command of the seas and joined a small club of seapowers, long dominated by Great Britain, which also included Germany and Japan (Hagan 1991, 228-229). During the ensuing years, Japan continued to rise as a formidable naval power and in 1902 signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Fundamentally, the alliance assured Tokyo of Britain's neutrality in the event of war between Japan and one other power. Coupled with the later victories of Japan during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, the United States became more concerned should a conflict with Japan arise. Such concern lent more credence to the need for the United States to expand and improve the undeveloped bases in Guam, Philippines and Hawaii for support of large scale naval operations in the western Pacific (Hagan 1991, 234).

The Asiatic and Pacific squadrons remained separate commands until 15 April 1907, when they combined to form the United States Pacific Fleet. Likewise in 1922, the Pacific and Atlantic Fleets merged to form the United States Fleet which positioned a main body of ships in the Pacific and a scouting fleet in the Atlantic. For the first time, the major weight of American seapower was assigned to the Pacific.

The fragile peace during the years between the world wars began to wither in the late 1930s with the emergence of Germany and Japan as military threats. With the fall of France and England standing alone, the possibility of American involvement in the war saw the US Navy again split into two separate fleets. The Pacific Fleet established its new headquarters at Pearl Harbor on 1 February 1941. Ten months later, on 7 December-- America's dreaded "Day of Infamy," U.S Pacific Fleet ships were under attacked at Pearl Harbor, thrusting America into World War II.

The Pacific theater produced some of history's finest naval commanders whose legendary names include Nimitz, Halsey and Spruance. Likewise, America's most decisive blows toward achieving total victory in World War II were struck here. This dark chapter in world history would finally end with the formal surrender of the Japanese aboard USS *Missouri* (BB 63) (Hagan 1991, 328). Five years of peace following World War II came to an end on 26 June 1950, when North Korean troops attacked South Korea. The USPACFLT responded with air strikes from offshore aircraft carriers, and conducted the infamous amphibious assault at Inchon. Control of the seas once again gave allied forces the decisive advantage and a Korean armistice was signed on 27 July 1953.

Following a decade of peaceful operations, the USPACFLT was again called upon to go to war, this time in Southeast Asia. By mid-1968 the USPACFLT was actively engaged in the Vietnam conflict, with 225 ships committed to operations in the South China Sea. In addition to providing air support from aircraft carriers operating off the coast, Pacific Fleet sailors patrolled the Mekong River in gunboats. The Vietnam cease-fire was signed and implemented on 27 January 1973. In the post-Vietnam period,

the USPACFLT increased operations with friendly and allied navies, thereby ensuring freedom of the seas for all nations. Pacific Fleet responsibilities expanded to include the Indian Ocean, where aircraft carrier battle groups operate in support of vital US national interests in that volatile part of the world.

On 4 August 1990, the USPACFLT Navy and Marine Corps assets began deploying to the Persian Gulf and North Arabian Sea, in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. More than fifty Pacific Fleet ships, including USS *Independence* (CV 62), USS *Midway* (CV 41), USS *Ranger* (CV 61) and USS *Missouri* (BB 63) battle groups and approximately twenty amphibious ships, were deployed. The ships and personnel were initially used to support economic sanctions set up against Iraq after it invaded Kuwait. Operation Desert Storm began on 16 January 1991, after Iraq failed to meet the 15 January 1991 deadline to leave Kuwait (USPACFLT PAO, 2006, 1).

Ships of the USS *Tarawa* (LHA 1) Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) demonstrated the flexibility of US Naval forces in May 1991. While returning from combat duty in the Persian Gulf, the *Tarawa* ARG served as the centerpiece of humanitarian relief operations in cyclone-devastated Bangladesh. In the summer of 1991, Seventh Fleet ships converged on the Philippines to evacuate US military and families after the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. During Operation Restore Hope in 1992-1993, USS *Rushmore* (LSD 47) spearheaded the Joint Task Force landing for the humanitarian effort to end starvation in Somalia. Naval forces also continued vital presence operations in the volatile Persian Gulf region, supporting Operation Southern Watch (US PACFLT PAO, 2006, 1-3).

In December 1998, ships of the USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) Carrier Battle Group and Carrier Air Wing Eleven participated in Operation Desert Fox, striking key military targets in Iraq with a combination of attack aircraft and Tomahawk cruise missiles, launched from USS *Antietam* (CG 54), USS *Princeton* (CG 59) and USS *Paul Hamilton* (DDG 60), among others (US PACFLT PAO, 2006, 1-3).

Following devastating terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September, 2001, Pacific Fleet units again answered the call. On 7 October 2001, less than a month after the attack, aircraft from the USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70), and surface ships conducted the first strikes on terrorist strongholds inside Afghanistan, launching Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). In the following year, dozens of Pacific Fleet ships would serve time on station in the Arabian Sea, including USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63), USS *Constellation* (CV 64), USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74), and USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72) (US PACFLT PAO, 2006, 1-3).

In January 2003, Pacific Fleet units continued the fight against terrorism, deploying a seven-ship Amphibious Task Force West to the Central Command Area of Responsibility, led by the USS *Boxer* (LHD 4) and USS *Bonhomme Richard* (LHD 6). In February, the USS *Kitty Hawk* Battle Group was also ordered to the Central Command AOR, serving alongside the USS *Abraham Lincoln* and USS *Constellation* Battle Groups (US PACFLT PAO, 2006, 1-3). In December 2004, the USS *Lincoln* (CVN 72) carrier strike group, the hospital ship USNS *Mercy*, and several Military Sealift Command (MSC) ships along with Marine elements from Camp Pendleton in southern California participated in the Operation Unified Assistance providing massive relief to the six countries across the south and southeast Asia coastlines struck by the tsunami.

Today, the Pacific Fleet is still the world's largest naval command, extending from the west coast of the United States to the east coast of Africa, from the North Pole to the South Pole, encompassing two oceans, six continents, and more than half the surface of the earth. Charged with protecting the sea lanes that link Pacific allies with the United States, projecting a stabilizing influence overseas, supporting allied forces ashore, and performing any additional missions directed in support of allied interests, the Pacific Fleet encompasses approximately 178 ships, 1,500 aircraft, and 159,565 Sailors and Marines (Military Periscope 2006)--a powerful, modern, active fleet; prepared and vigilant; a cornerstone of freedom, protecting our national interests in this vital region of the world (US PACFLT PAO 2006, 1-3).

#### US Pacific Fleet Mission

The mission of Commander, US Pacific Fleet is to support the US Pacific Command's (USPACOM) theater strategy, and to provide interoperable, trained and combat-ready naval forces to USPACOM and other US unified commanders. This mission reflects changes since 1986, when the US Congress passed the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 to engender more cooperation and "joint-ness" between the armed services. Commander, US Pacific Fleet's (COMPACFLT) role has transitioned from that of war-fighter to that of force provider, sustainer, and trainer for the unified commanders. The net effect of this change is that the operational chains of command are now shorter and more direct, while COMPACFLT and other force providers are able to focus on maintaining readiness (USPACFLT PAO, 2006).



### US Pacific Fleet Area of Responsibility

The US Navy's Pacific Fleet area of responsibility covers more than fifty percent of the earth surface, encompassing just over one hundred million square miles. Each day, USPACFLT's ships are at sea in the Pacific, Indian, and Arctic Oceans, from the West Coast of the United States to the Arabian Gulf (figure 3). The Pacific Fleet encompasses approximately 178 ships, 1,500 aircraft, and more than 159,565 sailors, marines, and civilians. Together they keep the sea lanes open, deter aggression, provide regional stability, and support humanitarian relief activities (USPACFLT PAO 2006).

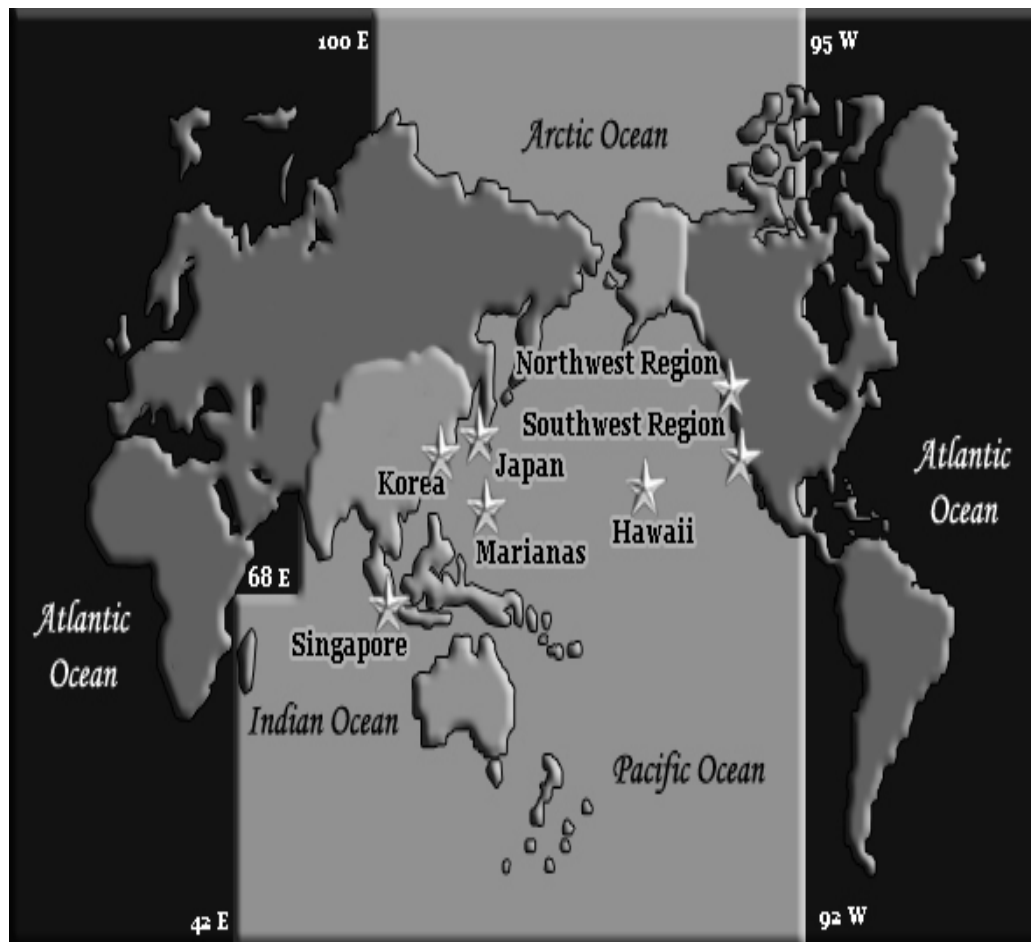


Figure 3. Pacific Fleet Area of Responsibility  
Source: US Pacific Fleet Public Affairs Office Website, 2006, 2.

In carrying out its roles and missions, the USPACFLT operates using bases located in its territories of Hawaii and Guam, and complemented by existing forward overseas bases such as the ones located in Japan, Singapore, South Korea in the Asian region, and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Located on these bases also are extensive arrays of support facilities and structure which are necessary for the conduct of operations to achieved previously mentioned roles and mission. Following section provides an unclassified version of these bases' characteristics, capabilities, and services they bring to bear in support of the Commander, US Pacific Fleet's overall reason for being and as an integral part of one of the national instruments of power.

#### Current US Pacific Fleet Naval Bases Structure and Support Facilities (Bases and Places)

As discussed above, the full composition of the US Navy Pacific Fleet includes all those units and commands operating in the area ranging from the West Coast of CONUS to the Persian Gulf. However, examining only the basing structure, support facilities, capabilities, and services provided by US Navy bases located outside of CONUS including Hawaii will suffice for the purpose of this study.

#### Hawaii

Realizing the ever increasing difficulty of having an overseas basing access and rights granted by friendly nations in the region, Hawaii is the linchpin in so far as naval infrastructure support in the Pacific Fleet goes. Besides hosting the Fleet headquarters it is also the home for other major naval operational, training, and logistics commands, which include Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Pacific Missile Range Facility, Naval

Computer and Telecommunication Area Master Station (NCTAMS), AEGIS Training and Readiness Center, Military Sealift Command (MSC), Commander Submarine Force Pacific, Naval Submarine Training Center Pacific, Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility, and Fleet and Industrial Support Center just to name some.

Excluding the Military Sealift Command Strategic Sealift ships, there are a total of twenty-seven surface combatants and submarines assigned homeport at the US Naval Station, Pearl Harbor on the operational side. These submarines and combatant vessels are pre-assigned to a certain task force or group. They could be tasked to steam independently or in convoy. However, without going into the realm of classified information, the employment and deployment of these ships and submarines could be described simply as complementary to those of the remainder of the surface and submarine combatant forces in the Pacific Fleet. To sustain maximum material and operational readiness of these ships, the island is also outfitted with very robust naval training, logistics, and ship repair/refit facilities and support structures.

In sum, while the populace and government of Hawaii are generally supportive of being a host of the US naval activities on the State, there exist the potential for nuances typical to any other states in CONUS. Some possible sources of concern include environmental, political, and economic issues. Given that, though, the benefit of having a forward naval base (and all its associated operations and infrastructure) in Hawaii is that it is only one of two places (Guam is the other) in the Asia-Pacific region where the US Navy can have access to bases without the political restrictions that have become increasingly prevalent in other Asian nations which in the past cordially hosted the US forces, particularly the US Navy.

## Guam and Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands

Second to Hawaii in terms of the overall base structure and support level is Guam. With time and distance considerations, as will be shown later, and the fact that Guam is an American territory with no political restrictions that United States government has to worry about in case a friendly HN denies basing and access rights, the island has the capacity to bring to bear a higher strategic impact than Hawaii both in terms of maintaining forward presence and the ability of the US Navy to rapidly respond to crisis situations in the region.

Guam is the headquarters for Commander Naval Forces Marianas, which falls under USPACFLT. On a smaller scale compared to Hawaii, the island is a host to various US Naval commands which includes Naval Base Guam, Military Sealift Command (MSC), Maritime Pre-positioning Ship (MPS) Squadron, Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station, Defense Supply Center, US Naval Hospital, Special Warfare, Mobile Mine and Security units. Two Los Angeles class submarines and a Repair Ship are also homeported at Naval Base Guam.

Because of recent developments in realigning US forces in Japan, Guam has been identified as the site of relocation for 7,000 US marines, including the headquarters of the III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), from the Japanese island of Okinawa where friction between Marines and the local Okinawans (Halloran 2006, 2) has been a constant irritant to US-Japanese relations. One can easily sense the rationale behind the site selection. As mentioned earlier, being an American territory and, from a naval operation perspective, Guam is the best choice to overcome the challenge posed by the tyranny of distance. Guam presents itself a viable, if not at present, the only alternative. The remarks

made by Admiral Fallon, then Commander of the US Pacific Command, “the island is a primary staging area through which troops, ships, and planes would surge towards contingencies in Asia” (Halloran 2006, 1) is a testimony of the strategic importance of Guam.

However, there are also negative attributes that tend to pull down Guam’s advantages despite the inherent merits mentioned. Halloran’s article stated further that Guam’s infrastructure--the roads, electrical system, water supply, piers and airfield runways--are currently in a rundown state (Halloran 2006, 3). Upfront investments are critically needed to improve and increase the capacities and capabilities of existing facilities. Since the island is highly prone to typhoons, power lines should be laid underground. Additionally, the ships’ maintenance and repair output capacity of facilities must be refurbished and expanded so that the ships in the fleet could be serviced without having to return to home ports on the West Coast (Halloran 2006, 1).

In the case of the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands, the United States, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, collectively known as the Freely Associated States (FAS), renewed the Compact of Free Association (CFA) in June 2004. The signing of the renewed CFA allows extension of the United States’ use of critical missile defense related installations and facilities located on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

#### Japan and Okinawan Islands

After the closure of the US Subic Naval Base in the Philippines in September 1992, Japan remains the biggest of the forward naval overseas bases in the Asia-Pacific region. In this capacity, Japan continues to play a vital role in the pursuit of US strategies,

specifically those focused on the region. Established on four of its prefectures are various US Armed Forces headquarters and operational commands.

On Japan's mainland prefecture of Kanagawa, the US Navy alone has seven major commands: Commander, US Naval Forces Japan (CNFJ), Naval Air Facility, Atsugi--the home-base for Carrier Air Wing Five, Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY)--the home port of eleven USN ships including one Carrier Strike Group (CSG) and the Commander, US Seventh Fleet's flagship USS *Blue Ridge* (LCC - 19), and the US Naval Hospital at Yokosuka. In the northernmost island of Hokkaido is Naval Air Facility, Misawa, the home-base for a Patrol Wing Squadron, while in the southern islands of Kyushu and Okinawa are located the Commander, Fleet Activities Sasebo, homeport to an Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) and Mine Countermeasure ships (MCM/MHC), and headquarters to the Commander Amphibious Task Force 76, respectively. The US Naval bases in Japan have an overall robust infrastructure for fleet support including logistics for fuel and ammunition, ships repair and maintenance, dry-docking, and training facilities. The country also has a rich pool of skilled labor both for administrative and technical support.

Japan has been a key to forward-deployed US naval strategy in the Pacific and continues to be a staunch supporter of US national interest in the region not only because it shares the burden of the US-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, but also because it makes good political sense. Of very high significance, Japan spends more than \$4 billion annually in HN support to help defray the cost of maintaining forces in Japan. The US-Japan alliance remains the cornerstone of the defense of Japan and of US security strategy in East Asia. In April 1996, President Clinton and Prime Minister

Hashimoto issued a joint security declaration which noted the achievements of the bilateral alliance in promoting peace and stability for all nations in the Asia-Pacific region. In September 1997, the United States and Japan approved new guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation. These new guidelines will facilitate greater cooperation in areas such as logistical support, and search and rescue operations following disasters (Global Security Organization Website 2006).

As part of the Overseas Military Bases realignment program, in January 2003, Japan and the United States reached a basic agreement to start talks on the return of idle land in four US military facilities in the Yokohama area--Kamiseya, a communications facility, Negishi, a residential zone, Tomioka, a storage facility and Fukuya, another communications facility. An important condition contained in the agreement is that a number of military bases in Japan designated for use by both Japanese Self Defense Force (SDF) and US troops may be increased as part of the planned realignment of US military capabilities. More recently, the Japanese government that had previously banned the US Navy from homeporting a nuclear-powered vessel in any of its ports, has agreed to allow the USS *George Washington*, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, to replace the soon-to-be-decommissioned USS *Kitty Hawk*, a conventionally-powered aircraft carrier (Global Security Organization Website 2006).

Labeled by early explorers as the “Keystone of the Pacific” since Taipei, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul, Manila and Tokyo all lie within a 1,500 kilometers radius of the islands, Okinawa is currently the home of US Navy’s Commander Task Force (CTF) 76. Okinawa lends strategic value in its proximity to potential regional trouble spots which promotes the early arrival of US military forces due to shorter transit times and

reduces potential problems that could arise due to late arrival. If there is a trouble spot in the Pacific, specifically in the East Asia (as Guam would be a more strategic location if conflict is in Southeast Asia), and the Department of Defense (DOD) needs to move forces quickly, Okinawa has the facilities to support that response. The forward deployment on Okinawa significantly shortens transit times, thereby promoting early arrival in potential regional conflict such as the Korean Peninsula, a significant benefit in the initial stages of a conflict. For example, it takes two hours to fly to the Korea Peninsula from Okinawa, as compared with about five hours from Guam, eleven hours from Hawaii and 16 hours from CONUS. Additionally, the Okinawa Islands' location is an ideal zone for fleet exercises and training (Global Security Organization Website 2006).

The US military presence in Okinawa (and Japan) began at the end of World War II. Although the US occupation of Japan ended in 1952, US administration continued on Okinawa until 1972 when control of Okinawa reverted to Japan. Since the end of WWII, US forces have mounted major operations from Japan, when needed. Among the most important of these operations was the initial defense of South Korea in the 1950-53 Korean War, when US Army units left occupation duties in Japan to help defend South Korea. The United States again used its bases in Japan and on Okinawa to prosecute the Vietnam War. Elements of the III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) deployed from their bases on Okinawa to the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s, and finally, the USS *Independence* Carrier Battle Group took on equipment and supplies at White Beach during the 1996 dispute between China and Taiwan.



However, discontent among the people of Okinawa, particularly landowners, regarding the US military presence and its impacts has been rising for years. According to the US military, less than one percent of the 32,000 landowners object to military use of ‘their’ land (Global Security Organization Website 2006). Their chief complaint is that the Okinawa Prefecture hosts over half of the US forces in Japan and that about seventy-five percent of the land US forces occupy in Japan is in Okinawa. This very same group of protesters believes that U.S military presence has hampered economic development. A previous incident involving the abduction and rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl in September 1995 by three US Service personnel just exacerbated the issue. To mitigate the impact of US presence on the people in Okinawa, the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) developed recommendations to realign, consolidate, and reduce US facilities and adjust operational procedures (Global Security Organization Website 2006).

In December 1996 the governments of Tokyo and Washington and their representatives on SACO produced their final report wherein the United States agreed to return to Japanese control about twenty-one percent of the land in Okinawa used by US military bases (Global Security Organization Website 2006, 3). The implementation of the realignment has been ongoing since. A major move addressed in the above-said report is the relocation of US Marines. The Boston Globe article of 31 May 2006 quoted “Some 8,000 US Marines will leave Okinawa for Guam under a proposal approved by Tokyo” (Boston Globe, 2006). This, of course, would alleviate some of the complaints of people in Okinawa and the government of Japan will shoulder about sixty percent of the estimated \$10.3 billion cost of the move. Without snubbing the relatively big chunk of support from Japan, the greater implication of the move though is Japanese role in the

security of Asia (East Asia to be specific). In the same issue of the Boston Globe, then Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe (Japan's current Prime Minister) said "The sweeping change approved by the Cabinet will give Japan greater responsibility for security is Asia" (Boston Globe, 2006). The bottom line is Japan remains a critical basing platform for USPACFLT in terms of overseas forward-basing structure and support in the Asia-Pacific region.

### South Korea

Since the early 1950's until the end of the successful U.N. campaign against the intrusion from the Communist North, South Korea has been a willing host to US forces presence on her territorial sovereignty. Although more robust during earlier times (post-WWII), the number of US Navy commands permanently assigned in the country now consists of only the Commander, Fleet Activities Chinhae (CFAC), which was reorganized in 1984, and, as a tenant activity of the latter, the Commander, US Naval Forces, Detachment Chinhae. Notwithstanding though, the CFAC mission to maintain and operate facilities, to provide services and materials in support of tenant activities and units of the Operating Forces of the US Navy remains relevant as an effective instrument of US foreign policy.

Being co-located with the largest Republic of Korean Navy (ROKN) Base, CFAC in particular and the US Navy in general, benefit much from this relationship. Chinhae has excellent naval logistics support and facilities. The harbor has several pier, quays and anchorages that are open for the U.S Navy's use. ROKN began construction of a submarine base in Chinhae Harbor in 1993 as well. Although beyond the scope of this paper, it can only be speculated that the new submarine facility will provide not only an

additional capability to the ROKN but, as US ally, also as an excellent stopping point, for repairs or simply for port visits, for US submarine forces operating in the region.

Ultimately, as part of the current US-ROK security agreement, the enhanced capability the submarine facility brings to bear will only benefit both the US and ROK (Global Security Organization Website 2006).

### Singapore

Singapore has long had close ties with the United States. Its location, straddling the Strait of Malacca, one of the world's most critical choke points, is a key US strategic interest. Through the Straits' waterway passes eighty percent of the oil and petroleum products destined for Japan and the Republic of South Korea and is a chokepoint for other international commercial and warship vessels. Besides being a key United States trade partner, Singapore was one of the outspoken Asian supporters of the United States attempt to defeat the spread of communism in Indochina (Conboy 1992, 2).

When the Philippine Senate turned down a new basing agreement with Washington in September 1991, ultimately leading to the closure of the US Subic Naval Base, Singapore's Prime Minister Goh signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United States allowing the latter access to several Singaporean military facilities including airfields and sea ports. The agreement in principle was to support a "naval logistics facility" which became known as Commander Task Force (CTF) 73 operating at Sembawang, Singapore under the overall command of the US Seventh Fleet (C7F). Besides arranging for ship repairs, logistics replenishment and port visits to Singapore, within the C7F staff CTF 73 is also the key US Navy command responsible for coordinating warships deployment in the Pacific region (Conboy 1992, 8).

When Singapore granted the United States access to basing facilities, albeit limited compared to what the US had in the Philippines, the belief of most nations in the region was that such a structure would help offset potential military expansion by mainland China, India or even Japan; deter conflict in the South China Sea (SCS); and allow continuous patrolling of the region to ensure that vital trade routes between the Strait of Malacca and Northeast Asia remain open (Conboy 1992, 9). Whether these contentions materialized is arguable. Given current information, it is easier to rationally argue that the first two did not materialize. There were conflicts in the South China Sea, however minor they may have been, by and between the claimant states. For China's military expansion, O'Rourke describes their modernization program as have raised strong concerns in the US Congress (O'Rourke 2005, 1). In contrast, success in keeping the sea lines of communication open has been more evident.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to find a direct correlation between the effects of having access to basing facilities in Singapore and the occurrence or non-occurrence of the events mentioned above (China's military expansion and conflicts in the SCS), this paper relinquishes it as another field of study. It would suffice to say, however, that as it becomes increasingly more politically restrictive for once-receptive ally nations to offer up their basing facilities for access, the best way for the United States to keep and maintain military presence in the region would be to maintain access to the overseas bases (in Singapore and Japan) that it already has and build relationships ultimately aimed at achieving a bilateral agreement that favors basing access that is beneficial to both the United States and the HN.

## Other Allies and Emerging Relationships

Although it is not the primary focus of this paper, the purpose of the following brief discussion of the existing US alliances, associated mutual defense treaties and emerging relationships among some Asian states is to show the areas in which the US Navy has been cooperatively interacting with, and where potential future security partners are.

Australia has been one of the United States' closest and most loyal allies. Although the Australia, New Zealand and United States (ANZUS) Treaty of 1951 is the official basis of the alliance, this relationship effectively began in December 1941 when then Prime Minister John Curtin declared "Without inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom" (Rubin and Keaney 2001, 250). Desmond Ball, however, submitted that the real fundamental basis of the US-Australian alliance is not the ANZUS Treaty but the UK-USA Agreement of 1947-48 which concerns signal intelligence (SIGINT) cooperation and exchange, and the maintenance of "joint facilities" in Australia. The United States-New Zealand connection of the ANZUS was severed in the mid-1980s due to issues related to visits by US nuclear-powered and/or nuclear-armed warships. Issues like this still exist but are not as controversial. Since then, a majority of the Australian populace have agreed that the benefits have been worth the costs and risks (Rubin and Keaney 2001, 272). Australia today remains a very close and loyal ally. It continues to work along side the United States not only in regional security matters, but also in the economic field as well. For the overall mutual benefit of the two

nations, the US-Australian alliance must remain as strong and relevant in order to face the challenges of the new century.

The post-US bases era has seen the US-Philippines relations improve and broaden. Although the focus was more prominently on economic and commercial engagements, maintaining the importance of security dimension was always at the forefront. For one, it was expedient to Philippines domestic political stability to ensure a stable stream of foreign investment in the country. The other, which has a more binding effect, rests on the US-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951 (Global Security Organization Website, 2006).

Under the Treaty, the Philippines and the United States each agreed that “an armed attack in the Pacific Area on either of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety.” Both nations pledged that in such an event each “would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional process.” The United States government guaranteed to defend the security of the Philippines against external aggression but not necessarily against internal subversion. Such guarantee, however, does not extend outside of sovereignty of the Philippines. The United States manifested its reaffirmation of non-obligation in such a case when it decided not to intervene during China’s occupation of the Philippine-controlled Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands in December 1995 (Global Security Organization Website, 2006).

As relationships between Washington and Manila rekindled, the Philippine Senate, under President Fidel V. Ramos, approved the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) in 1999. This new agreement, without the pretext of re-establishing US military bases in the Philippines, instead renews the relevance of the Mutual Defense Treaty, that is to

provide mutual military assistance in case of an armed attack against one of them. It in essence provides the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), effects and regulates the number of visits of US troops into the country. It provides the general provisions for military exercises held jointly within the archipelago by the Philippine and US military to ensure both forces have a well-coordinated operation when the need arise (Global Security Organization Website, 2006).

Following the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States and the Philippines have been cooperating in its efforts to combat the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The United States has since provided the Philippines increased security assistance in the form of training and equipment, and military education exchanges aimed at improving the Philippine Armed Forces' capabilities to fight the country's insurgency and the associated terrorist groups. Moreover, the two countries have cooperated in conducting joint military exercises and training, and intelligence sharing, relatively more frequently than prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. The Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) currently operates in southern Philippines, the stronghold of the terrorist groups Abu Sayyaf (ASG) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Although there are currently no official US Navy facilities in Thailand and Malaysia, both countries have been cooperative in terms of military to military engagements. Thailand has one its air base at Utapao open for use by US military airplanes. Likewise, Malaysia provides ship and aircraft repair facilities to the US Navy. Specifically, naval dockyard at Lumut performs in-theater ship repairs for the US Navy. Additionally, an average of fifteen to twenty US Seventh Fleet ships make visits to

several Thailand and Malaysian ports annually which is usually in association with joint military exercises such as the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT), Cobra Gold and Southeast Asian Cooperative for Antiterrorism (SEACAT). These visits and exercises are examples of multilateral engagements that promote cooperation, dialogue, peaceful development and recognize shared interest. (USPACOM Website 2006)

India, Vietnam and Indonesia represent nations with which the United States has emerging relationships in the Asian and Indian Ocean region. The U.S Navy has been pursuing cooperative military to military engagements in the form of joint naval exercises, port visits and educational exchange programs. Considered as an emerging economic and naval power, and projected to surpass China's 1.31 billion (CIA World Factbook, 2006) population by 2045 (Brown and Halweil, 1999), India is one of the important states that the United States has been building relations with. On the military side, the US Seventh Fleet, under the auspices of USPACFLT, recently began engaging in several joint-naval exercises and sending a number of its ships for visits to various Indian Navy ports such as Goa and Cochin in the Arabian Sea Coast and Chennai in the east coast (US Seventh Fleet Website, 2006).

Likewise, the US has made a breakthrough in striking a new relationship with Vietnam. A major event in this new relationship was the visit of the frigate USS *Vandegrift* (FFG 48) to Ho Chi Minh City in November 2003, making it the first US Navy to visit Vietnam in the last thirty years (Gordon 2003). This was followed with two other visits in 2004 and 2005 by the destroyer USS *Curtis D. Wilbur* (DDG 54) and the frigate USS *Gary* (FFG 51) respectively. Commander Rob Marin, Gary's commanding



officer said, “It shows that our two countries are serious about developing a bilateral relationship” (Koons 2005). Though it does not have a formidable naval force yet by Western standards, Vietnam’s location offers some strategic value that the United States could tap into in relation to its interests in the security and stability of the South China Sea and the freedom of navigation along the SLOCs therein. The US Navy used to have an operational base at Cam Rahn Bay. For both economic and security motives, the Vietnam government generally has a positive attitude towards a vibrant relationship with the United States. A closer military relationship with Vietnam, however, would likely cause a significant adverse reaction from the Chinese leadership.

Indonesia, like Malaysia on the eastern side, also straddles a major stretch of the Straits of Malacca, and therefore, also plays a big part in the security and freedom of navigation in the strategic Malacca Straits, the second busiest waterway in the world. It has a critical role also in the South China Sea. Indonesia has upgraded its air and naval facilities at Ranai (Natuna Besar) near Kalimantan. Under some circumstances arrangements could be negotiated with Jakarta, although it would require overcoming significant political obstacles on the US and Indonesian sides (Rabasa 2001, 202).

### Presence and Suasion

The US strategic framework in the Asia-Pacific region hinges on peacetime engagement. This includes forward presence, rapid crisis response, and builds on forward-stationed forces. If necessary, fighting and winning any conflict that might develop will very much depend on the circumstances of conflict. However, mechanisms to carry out operations within this strategic framework are embedded in the regular

contacts and engagement activities that the United States carries out with friends and allies in the region.

As the United States principal military executive agent for protecting and achieving its national interest, USPACOM through Commander, USPACFLT has steadily maintained a forward presence in the vast Asia-Pacific region. Ever mindful of the criticality of a strong US military presence in ensuring regional security and stability, the leadership at USPACOM aggressively took innovative actions in ensuring a seamless transition in replicating the capabilities lost as a result of the closure of Subic Bay US Naval base in 1992. The same level of professionalism and dedication continues especially as China persists in its projection as an emerging global power. The US Navy recognizes that an aggressive PLAN modernization could potentially create an imbalance in regional power distribution.

Recognizing the persistent rise of China's naval strength and without a close equal from among the ASEAN navies, either singly or combined, to countervail, the United States position must anticipate problems in maintaining a forward presence in order to preserve security and stability in the region. In this regard, the United States has engaged the Chinese government through application of all its instruments of power.

For its role, USPACOM continues to develop mutual trust through dialogues and actions with its Chinese counterpart. In his address to the Asia Society Hong Kong Center on 16 May 2000, Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, the Commander in Chief of the US Pacific Command (PACOM), reiterated Mr. Berger's (The National Security Advisor to President Clinton) statement "The United States is a Pacific nation. Our future is tied to Asia. And the stability of Asia--economically, politically and militarily--is inextricably

entwined with the stability and direction of China” to emphasize the sincere hope of the United States for a closer and more cooperative relationship with China (Speech of Fargo, 2000). However, the collision incident in 2001 involving a Chinese fighter and a US surveillance plane once again broke off the then rekindling military to military relationship between the two countries.

However, efforts to promote a more positive military relationship with China and PLAN did not cease. Rather, Admiral William Fallon, Commander of the US Pacific Command, continued to push hard to upgrade ties, visiting China in May and inviting Chinese officers to observe US naval exercises in the Western Pacific. As a result, the latest demonstration of warming military ties between China and the United States, on 12 September 2006, a Chinese warship held exercises with the US Navy off Hawaii. This small achievement would seem to be a great step to better understanding of mutual interests (Reuters, Beijing 2006). Nevertheless simultaneously, to reflect the political, economic and military developments in the Pacific, the Pentagon plans to change the strategic force positioning and posture of US naval forces. This change will include the provision of six operationally available carriers and the repositioning of up to sixty percent of the submarine force to PACOM (IISS 2006, 14).

### Overcoming the Tyranny of Distance

Table 2 depicts the distances and time it takes in days to transit from one US Navy port to another. Even a cursory examination of the figures reveals the critical challenge which distance, so inherent in the vast Asia-Pacific region, poses. For example, it will take a warship traveling at a sustained speed of twenty knots ten and a half days to transit from San Diego to Yokosuka, Japan and another six days to Singapore all under

the assumption that normal sailing conditions are present (good winds and weather and no mechanical breakdowns).

Table 2. Distances Between Ports and Transit Times (in days at 20 knots)								
NAVY PORTS	SAN DIEGO	PEARL HARBOR	YOKOSUKA	GUAM	SUBIC BAY	SINGAPORE	DIEGO GARCIA	BAHRAIN
SAN DIEGO	-	4.5	10.5	11.5	14	16.5	21	24
PEARL HARBOR	2275	-	7.5	7	9.5	12.5	16.5	20
YOKOSUKA	4915	3380	-	3	3.5	6	10.5	14
GUAM	5380	3333	1348	-	3	5.5	10	13
SUBIC BAY	6564	4781	1709	1512	-	3	7.5	10
SINGAPORE	7741	5877	2882	2581	1356	-	4.5	8
DIEGO GARCIA	9928	7973	5069	4677	3543	2187	-	5.5
BAHRAIN	11401	9537	6542	6241	5016	3660	2579	-

Source: <http://www.distances.com/distances.php>. Internet. Accessed on 25 September 2006.

The Asia-Pacific region includes two oceans connected by one of the world's most strategic (SLOCs)--the Strait of Malacca, which serves as vital route for the transportation of oil supplies from the Middle East to East Asia and North America. Because of this expansiveness, the often talked about phenomenon of tyranny of distance truly poses huge challenges for US naval planners and policy-makers to overcome in its gigantic task of achieving maritime control to enforce freedom of navigation and to keep the SLOCs open for commerce (Halloran 2006, 1).

Tyranny of distance raises issues salient to both an effective and efficient US maritime strategy such as logistics support structure, access to ship repair facilities and training locales. Historically, the US Navy solution has been the use of forward overseas bases (see figure 4). Having them not only alleviated the time and distance challenge but also provided for quicker and more efficient fleet logistics support and ideal training grounds, the Crow Valley and Zambales Training Area in the Philippines for example (Berry 1989, 197 and 210-212). More importantly, because these bases were a plus to the HN(s) local economy, these nations were more committed in their support for the United States.

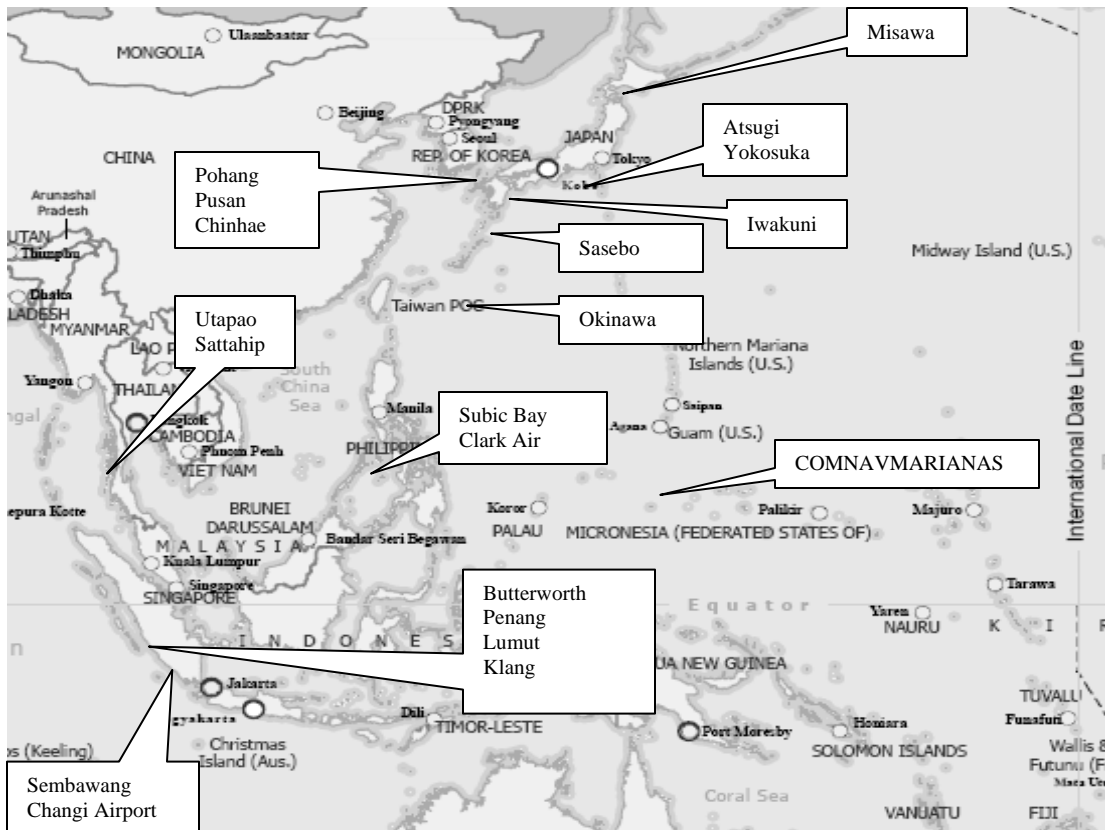


Figure 4. US Navy Pacific Bases and other places USN has been granted access. *Source:* Map reprinted from OCHA Regional Office for Asia-Pacific Overview v1. 060823.

However, as the domestic political situation in ASEAN states becomes more restrictive in allowing base access, the United States' ability to maintain military presence in the region once again suffers from the effects associated with tyranny of distance. For this reason, the leadership at COMPAFLT have been working hard to overcome it, and in effect converting the handicap into something to the US Navy's advantage--"The Power of Proximity," to borrow Tim Harcourt's phrase (Harcourt 2005, 1).

Vice Admiral Walter F. Doran, then the Commander of USPACFLT advanced four options to overcome the challenge tyranny of distance poses. These options include implementation of a reach-back maintenance support program, harnessing the advances in information technology (IT) to maintain efficiency through application of collaborative training scenarios, joint interoperability and introduction of faster speed of ships, such as high speed vessels (HSV) and littoral combat ships (LCS) (Doran 2004, 1-4). All noble ideas but since distance is an unalterable factor to reckon, more basing options in the region would be a great US force multiplier in conflict. Furthermore, as Robert H. Scales Jr. and Larry M. Wortzel put it:

The "tyranny of distance" requires a US military presence, and the governments of Korea and Japan must involve their own voters in a civil debate, setting forth the case for a new security structure. This is important not only for domestic political reasons in Asia, but because the American people need to know that there is a civil debate about the subject among their allies, and that the alliances that have kept Asia safe, peaceful and prosperous for 55 years are still useful, welcome, and healthy. (1999, 4)

Thus, given the above, not only that the United States must aggressively seek alliances with as many ASEAN states as possible, but also nurture warm relationship with those nations that the US currently has military bases in.

## New Approaches in Navy Ship Deployments

In its transformation efforts to prepare for and meet the projected needs of the first phase of the twenty-first century the Navy is implementing changes to its traditional methods for deploying its ships overseas. These changes include new kinds of formations, more flexible deployment schedules, homeporting additional navy ships at forward locations, and long-duration deployments with crew rotation, otherwise called Navy Sea Swap. A brief discussion of these changes follows.

Navy officials believe that the old Carrier Battle Group (CVBG) and Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) combined formation does not offer sufficient flexibility for responding to the potential need for deploying significant naval capability in several locations around the world at the same time. Additionally, the increased and improved capabilities of new Navy ships can now sufficiently perform more and wider variety of missions. As a result, the Navy implemented a new global concept of operations-- redesignating the old CVBG/ARG setup to a separate Carrier Strike Group (CSG) and Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG), respectively, which basically reorganized the Navy into a larger number of independently deployable, strike-capable formations. The most significant effect is an increase in the number of independently deployable capabilities from twelve to fourteen formations (O'Rourke 2005, 2).

The CSGs provide a lethal and mobile force option for the president of the United States. Like its CVBG predecessor, it provides a full range of capabilities. The actual make up of a CSG depends on the requirements of the deployment. A guided-missile cruiser (CG), two guided-missile destroyers (DDGs), an attack submarine (SSN), a supply ship, as well as the carrier and its embarked air wing (CVW) typically comprises a

CSG. On the other hand, the ESGs provide greater combat capabilities than its ARG predecessor. The typical ESG comprises a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), an amphibious assault ship (LHA or LHD), an amphibious transport dock (LPD), a dock landing ship (LSD), a cruiser, a destroyer, a frigate, and attack submarine, as well as fixed wing and rotary-wing aircraft.

Traditionally, the US Navy's primary means of maintaining forward-deployed presence had been the standard six-month deployment. Although this method has been flexible and predictable in the Navy's ability to maintain its forward deployments, service officials concluded that the deterrent value of forward-deployed naval forces might be further enhanced by adding more flexibility and decreasing predictability. Manifestations of this are the CSGs, ESGs (already discussed earlier) and, the newest, Fleet Response Plan (FRP). Essentially, FRP works in tandem with the CSGs. It permits the Navy to deploy up to six of its twelve CSGs within thirty days, and an additional two CSGs within another sixty days after that (O'Rourke 2005, 3).

Forward-homeporting directly correlates with overcoming the challenges of the tyranny of distance. Homeporting navy ships in overseas locations reduces transit times from home port to operating area and thus permits longer ships on station days in overseas operating area. The US Navy recently has taken steps to increase the number of forward-homeported Navy ships. Among those included in the Pacific area of operation are three attack submarines in Guam. The Navy is also considering transferring an aircraft carrier from CONUS to Hawaii or Guam and additional attack submarines to Guam. Although, not an increase in number per se, but rather in capability, the Navy is sending to Japan a nuclear-powered carrier, the USS *George Washington* (CVN-73) in



place of the USS *Kitty Hawk* sometime in 2008. Increasing the number of ships forward-homeported in the Pacific only improves the US Navy's ability to respond to potential flash point locations, such as the Korean Peninsula, the Taiwan Strait, or the South China Sea (O'Rourke 2005, 3).

The Navy has been experimenting on the merits of Sea Swap. The concept of Sea Swap is to reduce the percentage of time that deployed ships spend in transiting to and from overseas operating areas. It involves deploying Navy ships overseas for periods of twelve, eighteen, or twenty-four months rather than the standard six-months and having a crew rotation every six months. The relieving crew would travel from CONUS to the changeover port via aircraft, conduct turn-over period with the outgoing crew and then the latter return to CONUS to take over the ship that the ship that had been operated by the replacement crew. While Sea Swap sounds great, there are potential disadvantages. As a November 2004, Government Accounting Office (GAO) report on sea basing concept summarizes:

While rotating crews has enabled the Navy to keep ships deployed up to 24 months, the service has not fully examined all issues related to the best maintenance strategies that could affect a ship's condition and crew's morale. Absent effective strategies, the Navy risks degrading long-term ship condition and discouraging crew support for rotational crewing. (GAO 2004, 3)

The disadvantages include extensive wear and tear on the deployed ships due to lengthy periods of time at sea, reduced sense of crew "ownership" and reduced opportunities for transit to port of calls. Moreover, even if the benefits outweigh the above disadvantages, the application maybe limited to the small vessels and exclude the bigger platforms.

## Sea Basing

The Joint Integrating Concept (JIC) defines sea basing as the rapid deployment, assembly, command, projection, reconstitution, and reemployment of joint combat power from the sea, while providing continuous support, sustainment and force protection to select expeditionary joint forces without reliance on land bases within the [joint operational area]” (OFT 2005). To put it another way, Admiral Cebrowski, then Director of the Office of Transformation, succinctly states:

The notion of sea basing has to be thought of, not as base at sea, but rather about operational maneuver from the sea...being able to use the sea as a joint maneuver space, not just a naval maneuver space. I think sea basing is going to be one of the biggest engines for change. (OFT 2005, 1)

Born out of the lessons on the significant impact of restricted access during military campaigns, whether it be a HN’s air space or forward-basing of much needed supplies, Sea Basing was originally conceived in 2002 as a US Navy and US Marine Corps concept that made up the third pillar--along with Sea Shield and Sea Strike--of the Chief of Naval Operations’ (CNO) Sea Power 21 strategy. The initial concept of operations envisions a Sea Base consisting of strike forces such CSGs and Surface Action Groups (SAGs) in order to maintain air superiority and support deep strike operations. ESGs will also be available for the initial point of entry for ground operations. Follow-on ground operations will be supported by Maritime Preposition Force-Future (MPF-F) squadrons all without the use of friendly bases ashore.

Clearly, the key component to Sea Basing is the MPF-F structure. The problem with this is that, unlike the other two legs of the triad in Sea Power 21, Sea Basing has not progressed as well primarily due to budget constraints. As it stands now, Sea Basing will continue to be pushed to the right and will probably not fully evolve until after 2020

when the number of MPF-F platforms will have reached twelve, a level believed to be sufficient to provide sustained support and interoperability with other Sea Base units, CSGs, ESGs, and SAGs.

Sea Basing is increasingly pursued as a joint asset that will be utilized by all services (AMI Intl 2004, 10). But, once again, funding will be a key issue as the Sea Basing concept continues to be developed. The US Navy and the US Marine Corps, by themselves, will not be able to resource the necessary funding within the planned timeline. The program needs to be treated as a truly joint project with all services, the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, to help resource the funding for this endeavor.

#### Future Ship Acquisition

From 1996 to 2005, the US Navy witnessed an overall average of twenty-one percent decrease in the number of its submarines and principal combatants that include destroyers, cruisers, and frigates. The other types of ships including aircraft carriers, amphibious, mine warfare and combat logistics force ships remained at an almost constant level (see table 3). As of February 2006 the Navy included 281 ships. From this, the Navy proposed, on the same month, to maintain in coming years a fleet of 313 ships (see table 4) with the corresponding five-year procurement plan as depicted in table 5. However, it is uncertain whether the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) supports the above proposal (O'Rourke 2006a, 12). When asked about the Navy's 313-ship proposal in December 2005, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reportedly replied, "it is Navy capabilities, not numbers of ships that count" (Ahearn 2005). The SECDEF's statement along with the final report on DOD's *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) released on 3 February 2006, that states that the DOD will "Build a large fleet that includes 11 Carrier

Strike Groups” suggests that OSD supports a Navy with eleven CSGs and more than the current level of 281 but not necessarily the proposed 313-ship fleet, including the proposed subtotals for ship types other than aircraft carriers.

Type of Vessel	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Submarines	95	95	84	76	74	73	72	72	72	72
Carriers	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	11
Cruisers	31	30	29	27	27	27	27	27	27	25
Destroyers	52	57	57	54	52	54	55	49	49	47
Frigates	49	44	40	37	35	35	35	30	30	30
Patrol/Coastal Craft s	25	20	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Mine Warfare	21	25	26	27	27	29	27	26	26	26
Amphibious	245	252	253	243	243	241	241	240	240	240
Logistics and Support	189	184	190	174	174	180	178	185	185	185

Source: International Institute of Strategic Studies: *Military Balance, 1996-2005*. (Extracted from various pages of ten *Military Balance* annual reports, London: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group).

Ship Type	Reported 2006 Navy Proposal for 313-Ship Fleet	Early-2005 Navy Proposal for Fleet of 260-325 Ships		2002-2004 Navy Proposal for 375-ship Navy	2001 QDR Plan for 310-ship Navy
		260-ships	325-ships		
Submarines (SSBNs)	14	14	14	14	14
Submarines (SSGNs)	4	4	4	4	2 or 4
Attack Submarines (SSNs)	48	37	41	55	55
Aircraft Carriers	11	10	11	12	12
Cruisers, Destroyers, Frigates	88	67	92	104	116
Littoral Combat Ships (LCS)	55	63	82	56	0
Amphibious Ships	31	17	24	37	36
MPF(F) Ships	12	14	20	0	0
CLF (Resupply) Ships	30	24	26	42	34
Dedicated Mine Warfare Ships	0	0	0	26	16
Other	20	10	11	25	25
Total Battle Force Ships	313	260	325	375	310 or 312

Source: 2001 QDR report, U.S. Navy data, and *Report to Congress on Annual Long-Range Plan for Construction of Naval Vessels for FY 2007*, Government Printing Office (Washington, DC: 2001, 4).

Type of Vessel	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	TOTAL FY 07-11
CVN-21			1				1
SSN-774	1	1	1	1	1	1	5
DDG-1000		2		1	1	1	5
CG(X)						1	1
LCS	3	2	3	6	6	6	23
LPD-17	1		1				1
LHA(R)		1			1		2
TAKE	1	1	1				2
LHA(R)-MPF(F)						1	1
TAKE-MPF(F)				1	1	1	3
LMSR-MPF(F)					1	1	2
MLP-MPF(F)				1		1	2
JHSV				1	1	1	3
TOTAL	6	7	7	11	12	14	51

*Sources:* Department of the Navy (DoN), Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2007 Budget, Chart 15, and Draft Report to Congress on Annual Long-Range Plan for Construction of Naval Vessels for FY 2007. (DoN 2006, 5)

The Navy realizes that its force structure must meet warfighting requirements for GWOT, homeland defense, conventional campaigns, Stability and Operations (SO) requirements associated with each, and the three levels of deterrence--transnational, regional and global--at an affordable price and an acceptable level of risk. For this reason, it remains committed to resourcing the proposed 313-ships fleet. To achieve this force structure, the Navy anticipates conducting a “future force mix analysis” (O’Rourke 2006a, 2). The Navy Strategic Plan released in May 2006 states that the

Navy will continue to refine capability and capacity requirements in POM-08 *Program Objective Memorandum for FY08* by reviewing the force mix against emerging and evolving threats. Navy will conduct an analytic review and analysis of potential alternative capacity and capability mixes that will support Joint Force requirements and enable stable shipbuilding and procurement accounts.

It is not surprising to infer that the above analysis could result in a new force structure plan to replace the 313-ship proposal. The key for any shift of force mix change from that which was originally proposed is for the new plan to be aligned with the precepts of the latest Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), calling for an enhanced capability that is both effects-based and delivered primarily within the littoral environment. The increasing attention given to Special Forces, the creation of a naval riverine capability and the acceleration in the building programme of the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) illustrate the strong focus made on expeditionary and littoral areas of operation (IISS 2006, 13). On 24 September 2006 the Navy christened and launched the nation's first littoral combat ship, USS *Freedom* (LCS-1). She will join the fleet next year but which coast is not known at this time. The second ship in the class is scheduled to launch sometime next year (CNO Public Affairs 2006). The Navy's goal is to have procured a total of twenty-three LCS by FY 2011 (see table 4).

In response to its commitment to deliver increased effect through strike, the Navy increased the number of available independent strike groups from nineteen to thirty-six with eleven CSGs. There is also a strong emphasis on operational readiness of the Fleet Response Plan, whose concept was explained earlier. Additionally, the Maritime Pre-positioning Force Future (MPF/F) also receives support with a procurement mix of eight vessels within the next five years as shown in table 4 (IISS 2006, 13). Development of the submarine force is underscored by the redesignation of four *Ohio* class ballistic missile submarines into 'special forces capable' and conventional guided missile platforms. Re-designation is anticipated to be complete by 2007. One *Virginia* class (SSN 774) boat is programmed for procurement per year until 2011 at which time the Navy

expects a return to steady state of production of two attack submarine per year by 2012 (O'Rourke 2006d, 13). In addition to the LCS-class, the Navy also wants to procure two other classes--the DDG-1000 (formerly DD(X)) destroyer and the CG(X) cruiser. As the plan now stands, while the first two DDG-1000s are to be procured in FY 2007 and one each year from FY 2009 to FY 2011, the first CG(X) cruiser will not be procured until FY 2011 (O'Rourke 2006e, 12).

The foregoing chapter emphasized the key role the USPACFLT plays in the pursuit of American interests as well as manifested the benefits, if not the importance, of having redundancies in the US Navy's access to overseas forward bases necessary in maintaining a forward presence and efficient operational deployments in the Asia-Pacific region. While the United States continues to have strong alliances in the region, it also recognizes the reality that current situations favorable to US Navy's ability to use existing forward bases in non US territories overseas may change in the future. In response to this, the US Navy has taken carefully measured steps geared towards the medium and long term future ships acquisition, deployment cycles and rebalancing of forces. How these initiatives affect the USPACFLT basing structure in light of the potential threat that a rising China PLAN may create is the next and final thrust of this study.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Conclusions

The preceding two chapters discussed the threat posed by the PRC and the current US Navy Pacific Fleet basing structure. Using time and distance considerations, force ratios, and redundancy criteria defined in chapter 3, this paper now assesses the secondary questions and the main thesis--the adequacy of USPACFLT basing structure relative to the challenges from the threat that China could pose to long-term American regional strategic interests.

The United States considers the Asia-Pacific region critical to American national interests. Specifically, US interests in the region are rooted in the prevention of war and maintenance of stability. Security and stability of the region, particularly of the trade routes and chokepoints such as the Strait of Malacca, are critical not only to maintaining unhampered flow of trade and commerce, but also to preventing regional instabilities. For these reasons, China's continuing military modernization especially of its naval forces, has raised concerns particularly among senior US Navy officials and in the halls of the United States Congress.

Recognizing these concerns and the many challenges the US faces in the twenty-first century, as the primary military agent of American national interests in the region, the US Navy has taken the critical initial steps in addressing the threat posed by PRC. Various naval programs have been developed or are in progress aimed at overcoming the inevitable challenges of the tyranny of distance and thereby increasing on-station US Navy presence. Such programs include new deployment cycles, the Sea Swap program,



Sea Basing concept, and acquisition of “smart ships.” Force structure rebalancing has also been identified, and is well underway; to further bolster USPACFLT’s capabilities pending the acquisition of additional “smart ships” and weapon systems. For example, the assignments of sixty percent of the total US submarine forces and an additional carrier strike group in the Asia-Pacific area of responsibility, in either Hawaii or Guam, are under consideration. While this rebalancing increases USPACFLT’s capabilities, the “show of force” it brings to bear also reinforces deterrence and provides a great medium for peacetime military to military engagements.

There is no question that during the last decade China has increased naval strength particularly in submarines, surface combatants (destroyers and frigates), and amphibious ships. Between 1996 and 2005, PLAN increased this fleet of warships by an average of twenty-six and a half percent overall. Without the US Navy providing the counter-balance, China could now be considered capable of exercising naval hegemony in the region. The weakness or almost non-existence of other navies in the region, excepting that of Japan and India, speaks to this reality. While it is true that China has undergone a dramatic buildup of its PLAN, especially in terms of the aggregate number of ships and weapon systems, at the same time, the US Navy has decreased in similar ship types by an average of twenty-one percent. However, the qualitative aspects of PRC’s overall maritime capabilities are still not up to Western standards, with the possible exception of the missiles and torpedoes it has acquired from Russia. According to many naval experts, it will take years and an infusion of advanced Western or Russian technology for the PLAN to become a match for the United States in terms of quality. Therefore, using the force ratio criterion, the US Navy still has a comfortable edge over

the PLAN. Nonetheless, the regional threat is something that should not be easily dismissed. Rather it should be used to guide actions by US Navy and policy-makers alike to maintain a certain level of superiority over the PLAN and possibly expand access to more regional bases, and procurement of more advanced systems by friends and allies in the region.

This thesis has stressed that US Naval forward presence has been, and continues to be widely accepted as a vital element in protecting American interests in the complex Asia-Pacific region. Apart from its obvious diversity in culture, political systems, and religion, the region is a multi-faceted geographic, diplomatic, economic and security environment. Geographically, the region spans great distances covering more than half of the earth's surface. This vast area links the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and the Middle East with the Far East and Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. It is within this region that a vast amount of the world's trade flows via important sea lines of communication.

Diplomatically, the United States, in particular the US Navy, is seen as a stabilizing factor in the region via its active presence. This strong commitment of military forward presence served as a cornerstone of deterrence against the spread of communism during the Cold War era and now acts to deter potential regional and local aggression and conflict. The Navy's continued presence galvanizes the US commitment as the key stabilizing element in the balance of power in the region, so necessary in maintaining regional security and stability. However, the ability of the US Navy to maintain a strong forward-presence to a great degree depends on a robust and balanced force along with reliable basing structure and support. Yet, time and distance factors will continue to

challenge the US Navy's ability to carry out its missions and roles efficiently and effectively, particularly in times of regional conflicts, unless properly addressed and overcome through early, and adequate planning.

Generally speaking, most of the regional host and allied nations still embrace and are strongly supportive of the US military presence in the region as the key to sustaining security and stability. This military forward presence has grown even more important as each state becomes increasingly integrated as a result of globalization, although the level of support has shifted from time to time. What has been clearly manifested in recent times, however, is a general trend in the difficulty of obtaining and maintaining the permanent forward-basing access. As discussed in chapter 5, outside of Hawaii and Guam, USPACFLT at present only has forward bases in Japan, South Korea and Singapore.

Japan and South Korea have bilateral defense treaties with the United States while Singapore has signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the use of its facilities at Changi airport and its sea port and ship repair facility at Sembawang. However, because of changing political climate within host and allied nations, obtaining access to bases can be tenuous and restrictive at best. As seen in the case of Turkey during OIF when, even as a treaty ally, it did not allow US forces the use of its bases for purposes of over flight to Iraq. The South Korean president said its government would restrict US forces seeking to deploy from there. Even Japan, a solid ally, must take into account local political pressures that may affect US deployments, training, repair, and maintenance. This is where the advantage of redundancy presents itself, that is, insuring that an alternative

exists should one host nation (base/place) does not permit access to the US forces in general and US Navy in particular.

The United States is also bound by existing bilateral mutual defense treaties with several nations in the region. After World War II the United States signed mutual defense treaties with Australia, Japan, Korea and the Philippines. Since then, the United States has maintained its commitments to these treaty allies. Until the closure of the US Naval Base in Subic Bay, Philippines in 1992, the US Navy had permanent bases in each of these nations. Today, USPACFLT has the bulk of its major base support structure in Japan and a small footprint in South Korea. Although unlikely in the near term, a shift in either Japanese or South Korean political dimension that jeopardizes the US Navy basing structure in these countries could be very damaging particularly to the US Navy's ability to pursue its objectives and to the US strategic interests in general. In such a case, it would give the US Navy more flexibility if it has redundancy in access to other bases and places in the region.

However, it is not simply a question of places, but rather the access to and use of a foreign country's bases and facilities for military purposes. Ships of the USPACFLT have made, and on a regular basis, continues to make port visits to most of the Asia-Pacific countries, including China, as an integral part of the US Navy's engagement strategy. From these seemingly routine visits stronger and more cordial mutual relationship between the US and the country could grow. Indeed, they have served well in promoting American diplomatic ideals and economic interests worldwide.

Unfortunately, even with these past successes, there is no guarantee that any sovereign country visited by the USN, regardless of how many times, will grant access to

and use of its bases in the future. For instance, Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, and the Philippines are all places USPACFLT routinely conducts joint-naval exercises with for GWOT purposes or for routine military training. Any of these nations might make a good prospect from which to secure a guaranteed permanent access to bases depending on the conflict scenario. However, because of the longtime special relationship with the US and its proven strategic location, a key suggestion for US policymakers would be to pursue initiatives to reestablish a US naval base in the Philippines. This strategically located country could in the future, under the right political conditions and timing, allow greater access and base usage.

A forward-deployed overseas presence remains a key component of US strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. From the time the United States obtained possession of the Philippines in 1898 through the Cold War, the United States has relied on overseas presence as a means of containing the various potential and emerging threats. Owing to the vastness of the Asia-Pacific region, the forward overseas bases, serving as “lily-pads” greatly helped overcome the challenges posed by the tyranny of distance thus increasing warships’ on-station time and minimizing overall operational costs while allowing a presence of strong military force ready for rapid crisis response.

At the onset of a bi-polar world of the Cold War the United States, through its strengthened alliances with key states in the region, played a key role in maintaining security and stability in that region. In the post Cold War period, most of the states in the Asia-Pacific region depended on and continue to look up to the United States as the key stabilizing force in the region. Now, as the only superpower, the United States remains committed to this high-principled international duty. To help accomplish this, the United

States has taken, and continues to take, the steps necessary in strengthening existing alliances and in establishing new ones with emerging partner-states such as Vietnam and India.

Given the strong alliances the United States has in the region, the current overall limited capability of China's People's Liberation Army Navy discussed in chapter 4 and the qualitative superiority of US maritime forces' new capabilities combined with newly developed interoperability with regional treaty allies and emerging partner nation-states, this study finds that the current USPACFLT basing structure is adequate to meet the potential threat China's naval buildup could pose for the next ten years. Despite the great investments made to date, the PLAN's ability to sustain maritime power at a distance is still limited, at least until the next decade, to pose any serious threat to the United States' naval arsenal currently available, and on call for service in the region. If unchecked, however, China's aggressive naval modernization has the potential of posing credible threats to modern navies operating in the region including that of the US Navy. Moreover, this is currently relevant to any Taiwan scenario.

### Recommendations

Consequent to the potential threats that China's PLAN could present given her continuing modernization which includes an active procurement of Russian-built ships and armaments complemented by upgrades on her own indigenous designs, this study recommends that while increasing confidence-building measures and initiatives such as multinational joint military exercises, port visits, military exchange programs, and the like, the US Navy must maintain and strengthen its Pacific Fleet's capabilities to counter China's potential maritime threat beyond the ensuing decade. Furthermore, as access to

overseas bases becomes more tenuous and restrictive, and given the possibility of unforeseen events in South Korea and Japan, US policymakers consequently need to address the dangers to concentrating its “nest egg” of forces in Guam and establish alternative locations through maintenance of strong mutual relationships with existing allies in the region and cultivate new ones from those who the United States have emerging relationships. The Taiwan scenario demands that the USN maintain constant vigilance and up-to-date assessments of that situation.

On the diplomatic side, US policymakers also need to recognize the fact that restructuring alliances takes years, if not decades. Therefore, action to this end ought to be considered and taken sooner rather than later. Current initiatives on force structure realignments focused on Asia-Pacific theatre of operation must have Congressional support along with retaining, maintaining, refurbishing and expanding capacities of existing forward bases such as those on Guam, Japan and Singapore, to the maximum extent possible.

There are also several closely related and complementary fields of research but are beyond the scope of this study and are therefore recommended for further and separate analysis. They include but not limited to the effects and implications of concentrating US forward forces in Guam, and the role of Sea Basing in the context of the Chief of Naval Operation’s (CNO’s) Sea Power 21 triad.

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