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TESTIMONY

The PLA Navy's "New Historic Missions"

Expanding Capabilities for a Re-emergent Maritime Power

CORTEZ A. COOPER

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June 2009

Testimony presented before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review
Commission on June 11, 2009

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The RAND Corporation

***The PLA Navy's "New Historic Missions"
Expanding Capabilities for a Re-emergent Maritime Power²***

Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission

June 11, 2009

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to the Chairman and the other distinguished members of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. It is an honor to have the opportunity to testify here today.

My testimony will briefly examine three areas of pressing concern:

- People's Republic of China naval modernization strategy, in the context of Chinese Communist Party directives and military guidelines
- Recent expansion of the missions and deployment of China's naval forces, and trends regarding this expansion out to 2020
- Implications of Chinese naval modernization and force deployment strategies

The Commission poses a key question regarding China's re-emergence as a maritime power: do recent People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) activities reflect a China that will act as a responsible stakeholder, or a China that will seek to only pursue its own national interests? My testimony hopefully will provide insight into the PLAN as a rapidly modernizing maritime force, whose fleet over the next decade will be structured, equipped and trained for a diversified mission portfolio supporting China's expanding economic interests. Whether or not this will equate beyond 2020 to the construction of a force capable of global sea power projection will largely depend upon the perception of China's leaders regarding the viability of economic lifelines under existing maritime security conditions. In the next three to five years, Chinese Communist Party elites probably will make the decisions determining the direction of naval power projection for the next two to three decades.³

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² This testimony is available for free download at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT332/>.

³ In this testimony, I differentiate between "power projection" and "force projection." The former refers to an ability to project and sustain major combat operations far from secure, fixed basing; the latter to an ability to deploy force packages away from fixed basing for limited times and more permissive, or low-intensity, operations. The distinction is that of the author alone.

Even if China's leaders assess that energy and market access is basically secure, and deem naval power projection beyond China's peripheral seas unnecessary, the PLA will continue to modernize for a number of diverse tasks—some of which are of great concern to U.S. policy makers. The PLAN is modernizing to support joint warfare in the littoral, conduct sea control operations in near peripheral waters and sea denial operations at extended ranges in regional seas, and deploy and sustain naval formations in support of non-combat or low-intensity operations in distant seas. This latter capability can support mutually desirable stakeholder objectives, such as international law enforcement, peace-keeping and humanitarian relief operations.

Communist Party Guidelines for PRC Naval Modernization and Operations

The PLAN has operated for decades under an “offshore active defense” strategy, but only since former President Jiang Zimen's promulgation of active defense guidelines in 1993 did this have real meaning for naval modernization. Under Jiang's “Military Guidelines for the New Period,” prioritization of capabilities to conduct sea denial operations beyond Taiwan accompanied the need to protect coastal economic centers of gravity and deter or delay U.S. intervention in a Taiwan conflict. As part of the requirement to win a “local war under high-technology conditions,” Jiang's “strategic guidelines of the active defense” also led the PLAN to develop offensive capabilities to conduct limited sea control operations to enforce sovereignty and territorial claims in the East and South China Seas.⁴ This requirement has changed slightly over the intervening years, to fighting and winning a “local war under informatized conditions”—recognizing the criticality in modern warfare of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) and network electronic warfare.

More recently, China's leadership has openly stated that the PRC is a central player in the world economy, and that global stability and prosperity are intertwined with Chinese national development. The overarching approach to this national development is expressed in President Hu Jintao's “Scientific Outlook on Development,” which encompasses an evaluation of China's internal and external security environment and highlights the centrality of global economic factors. The corresponding military guidance clearly establishes the desire for PLA capabilities beyond those required for defense of the homeland and a potential Taiwan conflict.⁵ These guidelines were formally delineated by Hu in December of 2004, in a speech on the “historical missions of

⁴ For a comprehensive reading of Jiang's guidelines, see Jiang Zemin, *The International Situation and Military Strategic Guidelines*, 13 January 1993 (Republished in August 2006, Three Volumes: *Selected Works of Jiang Zemin*.)

⁵ For an overview of Hu's Scientific Development and associated military missions, see James Mulvenon, “Chairman Hu and the PLA's ‘New Historic Missions,’” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 27, Winter, 2009.

the armed forces for the new stage in the new century.” These “historic missions” delineate four tasks for the PLA:

- Consolidate the ruling status of the Communist Party
- Help ensure China’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and domestic security in order to continue national development
- Safeguard China’s expanding national interests
- Help maintain world peace⁶

China’s most recent Defense White Paper, *China’s National Defense in 2008*, further highlights the inextricable link between China’s global economic reach and its burgeoning military power. It is also the first White Paper, of six thus far, that specifies containment by outside powers as a threat to China—and the U.S. is the only nation mentioned by name as exerting a negative influence on Asia-Pacific security. The paper indicates that China is hampered by the economic, military and technical superiority of developed nations, and that China’s national development is tied to global factors and expanding interests that demand increased defense capabilities.⁷

The vulnerability stressed in the White Paper has been echoed in a number of other sources in the form of what Hu Jintao has labeled “the two incompatibilities.” The first “incompatibility” is represented by the gap between the current level of PLA capabilities and the aspiration to win a “local war under informatized conditions.” The second is the lack of military capabilities to defend expanding national interests.⁸ The PLA is explicitly instructed to defend China’s broader interests, which implicitly demands that the PLA conduct threat assessments and capabilities development in the context of economic lifelines and activities. This will be an area of much debate for Party leaders and PLA strategists over the coming months.

In order to correct the deficiencies noted in the “two incompatibilities,” the White Paper describes a framework for the armed forces to enhance capabilities to accomplish “diversified military tasks.”⁹ The PLAN is organizing, equipping and training to meet the requirements of this diversified mission set. Many of the facets of this modernization effort are manifest in improved naval combat capabilities in near-shore and green-water scenarios, but others involve developments in logistical and force projection capabilities that can support naval presence farther afield for a broader range of missions. They do not yet equate to power projection in

⁶ Hartnett, Daniel, *Towards a Globally Focused Chinese Military: The Historic Missions of the Chinese Armed Forces*, Project Asia, The CNA Corporation, Alexandria, VA, June 2008.

⁷ *China’s National Defense in 2008*, Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, Beijing, January, 2009.

⁸ Unattributed, “New Year Message: Develop a New Situation in National Defense and Army Modernization, Guided by the 17th Party Congress Spirit,” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 1 January, 2008.

⁹ *China’s National Defense in 2008*.

distant waters, but decisions made and programs undertaken in the coming five years could indicate whether or not China's maritime security beyond 2020 will shift in that direction. The context for these decisions will center on perceived vulnerabilities regarding energy security, territorial and resource claims, and security of sea lines of communication (SLOCs). As the 2008 White Paper indicates, China is inclined to view the U.S. and our alliance structure as potential obstacles to Chinese national development goals in these areas.

Expanding Missions and Deployments for China's Navy

Maritime Missions for the "New Stage of the New Century." While many decisions regarding the structure and capabilities of the PLAN beyond 2020 probably have not been finalized, it is clear that China has decided to build and deploy Asia's most diverse and capable naval force. PLAN commanders seek to realize the capabilities inherent in Party strategic guidelines over the next decade by:

- Becoming a viable strategic arm
- Developing maritime strike packages to conduct and sustain "green water" offensive naval combat operations (out to the "first island chain" running from Japan down to the Philippines and Borneo, and throughout the South China Sea)
- Providing combatants and support assets capable of limited force projection operations in distant seas (beyond peripheral waters)
- Providing leadership, doctrine, tactics, and training for integration into joint and multi-national operations

Taiwan continues to serve as the fundamental driver for development of offensive capabilities in the PLA Navy. The PLAN is already capable of imposing and sustaining a blockade against Taiwan, barring U.S. and allied intervention. Even with third party assistance, damage to Taiwan's naval and air forces, and its economy, would be grave in even a limited blockade scenario. The PLAN, supported by the conventional missile forces in the 2nd Artillery Corps, is also vastly improving the capability to hold U.S. naval formations at risk in the western Pacific, and to delay or deny their rapid and effective entry into a Taiwan theater of operations. Chinese capabilities to conduct sea control operations further from its shores will become a reality if anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) deploy and prove as effective as many analysts fear, and PLAN submarines become increasingly capable of long, extended deployments. Such operations are already feasible out to approximately 400 miles from China's southern and eastern seaboard—this reach could extend to nearly 1,000 miles if current trends continue. Essential C4ISR capabilities such as joint command and control, long-range surveillance and reconnaissance, maritime area air defenses, and a joint targeting architecture probably will be in place between

2015-2020—which will also allow Beijing to focus capabilities on deployments to the “greater periphery,” particularly the Straits of Malacca, the Indian Ocean, and possibly the Persian Gulf.

PLAN forces and capabilities focused on a Taiwan scenario can also conduct many of the missions required for enforcing territorial claims in the South and East China Seas.

In 1992, China’s National People’s Congress passed legislation unilaterally declaring that China had the right to “adopt all necessary measures to prevent and stop the passage of vessels through its territorial waters,” including disputed areas in the South and East China Seas. Recent events seem to indicate that China may be increasingly willing to enforce this position. The UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf is attempting to resolve maritime boundary claims, and a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman has taken the opportunity to assert China’s sovereignty over most of the South China Sea as an extension of its claim to the islands therein. This extended claim to the continental shelf includes jurisdiction over the resources below the seabed.¹⁰ China has formally instructed the UN to deny consideration of a similar claim by Vietnam, and the PLAN has expanded capacity for combat operations in these waters. Both nuclear attack and nuclear ballistic missile submarines are deploying to new basing facilities in Hainan Island. China has established a special garrison in the Paracel Islands that includes a naval infantry detachment, and the airfield at Woody Island accommodates the full range of PLA combat aircraft.

An important debate among Chinese security strategists concerns the protection of the trade and energy resources that flow through the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea. While current and pending capabilities may allow China to negotiate from a position of strength regarding territorial and resource claims in the South China Sea, China has very limited ability to respond to large-scale threats to Chinese shipping in the Straits of Malacca and distant reaches of the South China Sea. While piracy has been on the wane in these waters, and there is no persistent military threat to Chinese shipping in the Strait, Chinese strategists have noted that the increased importance to China of these sea lanes creates a strategic vulnerability.¹¹ Chinese perceptions of the future security of SLOCs such as the Straits of Malacca will play a significant part in decisions regarding resource allocations for power projection capabilities and missions.

Recent harassment of U.S. Navy surveillance ships by Chinese fishing vessels in the South China Sea and Yellow Sea illustrate what one high-level U.S. official describes as “strategic mistrust” based on inadequate military-to-military relations between the U.S. and China.¹² It is

¹⁰ Unattributed, “China Asserts Sea Border Claims,” BBC Online, May 13, 2009.

¹¹ Zhao Hongtu, “Reconsidering the Malacca Dilemma and China’s Energy Security,” in Open Source Center CPP20070724455004, June 20, 2007.

¹² Unattributed, “China Military Buildup Seems U.S.-focused: Mullen,” Reuters Online, May 4, 2009.

possible, however, that while recent events are probably not indicative of a desire for confrontation in these waters, the Chinese will be increasingly willing and able to present obstacles to U.S. operations within waters bounded by China's claimed Exclusive Economic Zone. Beijing may hope that increasing the frequency and profile of patrols and deployments in these waters will establish *de facto* control and an upper hand in negotiations concerning the status of claimed islands and resources. This requires PLAN commanders and personnel with much greater operational confidence and skill than has been the case in the past—which will accrue to a growing percentage of the naval force as the number and variety of non-combat operations and patrols increase.

The 2008 Defense White Paper stresses the importance of response to non-traditional threats, which include providing military support to a range of military operations other than war. The current deployment of three PLAN vessels conducting merchant escort operations in the Gulf of Aden as part of a multi-national anti-piracy effort is a ground-breaking mission for the PLAN, and one that likely serves as a precursor for other such missions. Given the overall increase in PLA participation in UN peace-keeping operations, the PLAN may also begin providing logistical support for these deployments. PLAN commanders and personnel performing these missions will address one of the service's most glaring deficiencies: lack of operational experience. These operations may also open options that help to alleviate a growing Chinese concern regarding the security of Chinese personnel and infrastructure abroad.

Supporting a Diversifying Mission Set: Platforms, Weapons and Bases.¹³ The maritime capabilities that China has developed over the past two decades, primarily focused on operations against Taiwan and U.S. forces responding to a Taiwan contingency, are applicable to broader mission sets and will form a foundation for future programs. There will, however, be a number of significant new capabilities that will mark naval modernization in the next decade; and several key program decisions made in the next few years may determine the direction of the naval force for two to three iterations of China's program and budgeting cycle—roughly corresponding to the next 25 years.

For sea denial and control operations in and just beyond littoral waters, the PLAN's primary assets are a large, sophisticated mine inventory and formidable attack submarine fleet. The submarine fleet remains a priority for allocation of modernization resources—in the 2010-2012 timeframe, China will be operating approximately 50 modern or upgraded submarines. The second pillar of Beijing's strategy is the new destroyer and frigate fleet. The PLAN operates

¹³ Except where specifically noted, information on weapons systems and base facilities are taken from *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment- China and Northeast Asia*, Jane's Information Group, 3 February, 2009.

Russian SOVREMENNY destroyers with advanced anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM), and is building eight new classes of indigenous destroyers and frigates. The LUHAI and LUYANG destroyers are designed to ameliorate the PLAN's most glaring maritime force projection shortfall—ship-borne area air defenses—and have the capability to conduct long-range anti-surface warfare missions with supersonic ASCMs. The PLAN's new frigates also incorporate much-improved air defenses and stealth design technology.

China is also producing a large number (probably over 50) of HOUBEI class fast-attack missile platforms with a stealthy, catamaran hull design. The HOUBEI is an excellent example of an asset that supports a range of missions: it is a highly capable littoral warfare platform with missiles that can support combat operations in a Taiwan theater or a South China Sea conflict, as well as anti-access or area denial operations against U.S. or allied forces. The PLAN also has a significant deep-water mining capability to support anti-access and blockade operations, with a wide variety of applications via varied delivery and activation mechanisms.

The PLAN Commander, Admiral Wu Shengli, recently indicated that priority new-generation weapons for the PLAN include “large surface combat ships, super-cruising combat aircraft, stealthy long-endurance submarines, precision long-range missiles... deep-diving, fast and intelligent torpedoes, and electronic combat equipment.”¹⁴ These capabilities are in reach in the coming decade, and are specifically designed to allow the PLAN to move over this period from sea denial to sea control capabilities in a regional conflict.

To improve the deterrent impact of Beijing's nuclear counter-strike strategy, the PLAN is also modernizing the sea-based nuclear force. A new SSBN, the Type 094 class, has entered service. Analysts expect it to be armed with 12 ballistic missiles, which could have a range of as much as 12,000km. This would permit attacks on most continental U.S. targets from protected locations close to China's shore, and new basing facilities will allow deployments from both the northern and southern coasts of China.

A number of sources indicate that China has constructed a major new naval base at Sanya, on the southern coast of Hainan Island.¹⁵ This base reportedly includes facilities capable of large-scale loading of forces, armaments, or supplies, and an underground facility for submarine docking. Basing of the Type 094 class SSBN at Sanya will allow deep-water access for more secure operations. Approximately four other naval bases are under construction or expansion to

¹⁴ Bradley Perrett, “Chinese Navy Requires Supercruising Fighter: *Aviation Week's Defense Technology International*, April 27, 2009.

¹⁵ Richard Fisher, Jr., “Secret Sanya—China's New Nuclear Naval Base Revealed,” *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 15, 2008.

support fleet modernization requirements. This is at considerable expense, and indicates the importance that China's leaders place on providing a solid logistical foundation for growing mission sets. Each of the PLAN's three fleets will likely have new or improved submarine basing facilities.

Naval Diplomacy, Multi-lateral Exercises and Support for Extended Deployments.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the PLAN has increasingly focused on naval diplomacy and exercises with regional partners and major maritime powers.¹⁶ In 2005, the PLAN joined Russian Navy counterparts in "Peace Mission 2005," conducting firepower demonstrations for the first time with a major foreign navy. The 2008 White Paper notes that over the past two years, the PLAN has conducted maritime training exercises with 14 countries. Many of these activities are focused on reassuring neighbors of benign intent in the maritime realm, but they also provide an operationally inexperienced navy with much-needed foreign expertise.

As a maritime trading power, Beijing approaches its naval modernization as a component of a larger effort that includes robust civil and military shipbuilding capacity, and access to major port facilities on each of the major regional seas. China's political and economic relations with Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan include port facility construction activities that potentially will support future PLAN deployments. These facilities include new or upgraded ports at Gwadar in Pakistan, Sittwe in Burma, and Chittagong in Bangladesh. Chinese support to Sri Lanka is an example of Beijing's ability to leverage economic aid, arms sales, and diplomatic support in the UN into a strategically advantageous relationship—in this case a relationship with a country traditionally allied with India and recently at odds with the U.S. over human rights issues. In 2008, China replaced Japan as Sri Lanka's largest foreign donor, with aid topping U.S. \$1 billion. Some analysts believe that Chinese arms sales were largely responsible for the Sri Lankan forces' recent defeat of the Tamil rebels, and that these sales are linked to a deal whereby China will assist in the construction of a port at Hambantota in return for future PLAN access.¹⁷

Exercises and Patrols: Increasing PLAN Confidence and Skill for Diverse Missions.

In November of 2007, the PLAN conducted an air and naval exercise in the vicinity of the disputed Paracel Islands, including live-firings of advanced surface and sub-surface launched ASCM. The first of the new Type-094 SSBN submarines also deployed to its new base on Hainan Island at this same time. Both South and East Sea Fleet forces participated, as did one of China's most

¹⁶ Liang Guanglie, "Chinese Military Foreign Diplomacy is in Step With the Times," in Open Source Center CPP 20081223702009, December 23, 2008.

¹⁷ Jeremy Page, "Chinese Billions in Sri Lanka Fund Battle Against Tamil Tigers," *The Times (UK) Online*, May 2, 2009.

effective littoral maritime combat platforms, the new HOUBEI class fast attack missile craft. Recognizing China's improving posture in the contested waters, Vietnam protested the exercise.

Following a lull during which new systems came on line and older subs were decommissioned, the PLAN has increased long-distance submarine patrols—one report estimates a rise from 2 in 2006 to 12 in 2008.¹⁸ At-sea replenishment has also been a focus of training and deployment activity, and the decision to deploy a three-vessel naval group for anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden indicates an increasing comfort on the part of PLAN leaders with long-term deployments. Increased PLAN presence in disputed regions in the East and South China Sea, and in proximity to the operating areas of U.S. and other naval forces, both raises the need for development of maritime de-confliction procedures and provides experience for PLAN operators in more complex operational environments.

Force Projection Aspirations. Chinese strategists are debating whether or not expanding Chinese economic interests will require the capability to conduct sea control and air superiority operations along sea lanes in the Philippine Sea, Straits of Malacca, and Indian Ocean. China's leaders will be making decisions in the near term regarding military and non-military approaches to perceived vulnerabilities in these areas.¹⁹ Given national development priorities, it is unlikely China will pursue the extremely high cost of transition to a carrier navy for at least the next ten to fifteen years. More likely is a "hybrid" navy that has one or two carrier groups designed to provide force projection for regional contingencies or a show of presence in distant sea lanes. Reports indicate that the Russian SU-33 ship-based fighter may be the airframe of choice for an indigenous conventional propulsion carrier in the 45,000-60,000 ton range, and that construction could begin at any time at Shanghai's Changxin Island shipyard.²⁰

An operational carrier will lend prestige to China's Navy, and provide extended airpower in scenarios where China can protect the carrier, such as in a South China Sea crisis. It could, of course, also be used to support humanitarian and disaster relief missions. To focus on forming carrier groups for global power projection, however, would be an enterprise of immense cost, and one that would potentially heighten regional and global fears of Chinese adventurism. For many regional contingencies, the anti-access capabilities that Beijing currently prioritizes offer more return for the investment, and some of these capabilities might be sacrificed if China pursues broader power projection goals centered on carriers. Increasing Chinese access to bases along

¹⁸ "Executive Overview: Fighting Ships," *Jane's Fighting Ships*, Jane's Information Group, 29 April, 2009.

¹⁹ For discussions on the broad range of burgeoning security concerns for China, see Yuejin Liu, ed., *Science of National Security*, Beijing: China University of Political Science and Law Publishing House, 2004.

²⁰ Tetsuo Kotani, "Chinese Aircraft Carriers?- let Them Have Them," *PACNET Newsletter*, no.32, May 4, 2009; and Andrei Chang, "China ready to Build Aircraft Carrier," UPI International Military Might Column, June 2, 2009.

key sea lanes might be viewed as a much lower cost option for purposes of limited force projection and deterrence of attacks to Chinese shipping.

Strategic Implications for the United States

U.S. strategists and analysts should thoroughly assess at least three broad categories of mission sets for which Chinese leaders have directed the PLAN to prepare:

- Sea control operations in support of local war in the Taiwan Strait, East China Sea, and/or South China Sea
- Anti-access operations to delay or deny U.S. air and maritime response to crises in the Asia-Pacific region
- Maritime force projection in distant waters

Each of these categories must be considered separately and in aggregate when determining how best to develop needed counter-measures, and cooperative approaches where appropriate.

Analysts should carefully scrutinize official Chinese sources for indications of trends in leadership positions and perceptions in those policy areas that will drive subsequent naval power projection decisions. These areas include:

- Increase or decrease in competitive and mercantilist approaches to energy and trade policy—and the “partnerships” that Beijing develops in this environment
- Chinese elite perceptions regarding global acceptance of China’s growing military dominance in peripheral waters, and the geographic scope of this dominance
- Aggressiveness in pursuit of security forums, both in Asia and beyond, that explicitly or implicitly exclude the U.S.
- Expansion of the PLAN peacetime “foot print”—including base/port access agreements and the signature of routine naval patrols
- Programs supporting the deployment of China’s first aircraft carrier—indications of whether or not China is positioning for transition to a carrier-centric navy

Due to the diverse range of missions confronting the PLAN, resource constraints will figure prominently in maritime strategy decisions. While China’s stated defense budget has enjoyed almost two decades of double-digit annual increases, and actual expenditures exceed the stated figures significantly, China’s expanded security outlook will necessitate hard resource choices. Convincing Beijing that current SLOC security and freedom of navigation operations provide a secure environment for Chinese shipping may help to channel resources away from large-scale power projection programs. Understanding China’s stance regarding territorial and resource claims in the East and South China Seas, however, is essential for keeping resource allocations

in perspective—programs to militarily enforce these claims may accrue from decisions to forego more global capabilities, and could be every bit as harmful to U.S. interests. Security analysts often focus to our own detriment on broader power projection issues, mirror-imaging that potential competitors seek to develop symmetric capabilities with the U.S. Alleviating Chinese concerns regarding energy and resource vulnerabilities includes both global SLOC security considerations, and diplomatic resolution of regional claims.

Countering Anti-Access Strategies. Chinese anti-access strategies and capabilities are formidable. The threats to U.S. freedom of movement and action in Asia include conventional, long-range strike threats to U.S. bases and maritime formations, and counter-C4ISR threats to U.S. forces' "eyes and ears." These threats would be significantly exacerbated in a scenario in which the U.S. is denied full use of regional bases. Washington's options for regional contingency response will diminish if China can successfully convey to regional actors that long-term political, economic, and security costs of full support to the U.S. are too high to bear.

U.S. and Japanese submarine forces should figure prominently in counter-measures for PLA anti-access capabilities on China's eastern or southern periphery. For Taiwan and beyond, the U.S. needs an anti-submarine warfare architecture with distributed sensors, unmanned vehicles, and the full complement of surface, sub-surface, and aerial detection, targeting, and weapons systems. Maintaining a larger number of our own nuclear attack submarines in the Pacific (including SSGN missile boats) would also provide a number of advantages that would complicate the Chinese use-of-force decision calculus. As the PLA develops deep-water mining capabilities, new mine counter-measure systems also will be increasingly important. As China fields a more effective stand-off capability via improved detection, tracking and long-range missile systems, U.S. carrier groups may have to operate further from China's coast to avoid unacceptable risk. Ensuring air superiority over potential trouble spots in the East and South China Seas (particularly the Taiwan Strait) will involve difficult decisions about the extent to which the U.S. is willing to strike key targets on the Chinese mainland.

Reinforcing the Regional Security Structure. PLAN littoral and green water power projection capabilities will certainly weigh ever more heavily on regional actors as they determine security alignment policies and force development priorities. U.S. military-to-military contacts in South and Southeast Asia are a critical component of the regional security architecture—one that must not slip as China grows in influence. The importance of physical presence of naval forces in the Pacific also must not be underestimated, and naval exercises should openly illustrate rapid surge capabilities. Even the perception on the part of Beijing that PLA capabilities could deny U.S.

freedom of action would at best complicate peaceful resolution of issues, and at worst lead to miscalculation and escalation.

As I noted in testimony before this Commission in 2006, China's leaders appear to believe that diminishing U.S. influence and access in Asia must eventually occur to accommodate China's re-emergence as a great power. I delineated, and still recommend, a policy approach to cooperative security and market mechanisms to alter this thinking. The primary focus should be on maintaining the physical military presence in Asia that sends a clear message of commitment to the region, while addressing Chinese desires regarding evolving, inclusive regional security architectures. Washington should ensure overtly recognized U.S. supremacy in key capabilities, but must not rely on this dominance as sufficient to ensure regional stability in the longer term. U.S. leadership in regional security arrangements, along with a cooperative, market-based approach to oil and natural resource access, potentially can channel PRC military capacity toward shared security roles and interests, and away from a decision to build increasingly formidable maritime power projection capabilities.