



CRS Report for Congress

Guam: U.S. Defense Deployments

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Summary

The U.S. military is building up forces on the U.S. territory of Guam to increase deterrence and power projection for possible responses to crises and disasters, counter-terrorism, and contingencies in support of South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, or elsewhere in Asia. But the defense buildup on Guam is moderate. Guam's role has increased with plans to withdraw some U.S. forces from Japan and South Korea. The buildup will cost \$10.3 billion, with Japan contributing about 60% (\$6.1 billion). Updated as warranted, this CRS Report discusses developments and policy issues.

Strategic Significance of Guam for Defense Buildup

Visiting Guam in May 2008, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that Guam's buildup will be "one of the largest movements of military assets in decades" and will help to "maintain a robust military presence in a critical part of the world."¹ Guam is a U.S. territory long considered to be strategically significant to U.S. forward deployments in the Western Pacific. In the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii is about 2,400 miles west of California, and Guam is about 3,800 miles further west of Hawaii. Guam has two important U.S. military bases: Apra Naval Base and Andersen Air Force Base. The island, three times the size of Washington, DC, is home to about 171,000 residents. As the Defense Department has faced increased tensions on the Korean peninsula and requirements to fight the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Pacific Command (PACOM), since 2000, has built up air and naval forces on Guam to boost U.S. deterrence and power projection in Asia. Concerns include crisis response, counter-terrorism, and contingencies in the western Pacific. But the defense buildup on Guam is moderate.

Force Relocations and Deployments from the U.S. Mainland

In 2000, the press reported that the Air Force wanted to base elements of an Air Expeditionary Force in Guam and had sent B-2 stealth bombers to Guam to broaden the range of U.S. options for possible contingencies involving North Korea. As PACOM's

¹ Donna Miles, "Gates Views Growth Under Way in Guam," *AFPS*, May 30, 2008.

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Commander, Admiral Dennis Blair acquired approval to forward deploy air-launched cruise missiles on Guam for the first time in August 2000. The Air Force moved precision munitions to be stockpiled on Guam, including Joint Direct Attack Munitions and Joint Standoff Weapons.² In early 2001, the Navy announced that it would station up to three nuclear attack submarines at Guam, in order to shorten the transit time compared to traveling from homeports in Hawaii or California to the western Pacific and to shorten deployments for sailors. The first sub to be based at Guam arrived in October 2002. In July 2007, the USS Buffalo joined USS Houston and USS City of Corpus Christi as the three forward-deployed nuclear attack submarines permanently based at Guam.³

In 2002, the Commander of Pacific Air Forces publicly detailed his request for basing aircraft in Guam. In addition to munition stockpiles and jet fuel, he reportedly requested F-22 stealth fighters, 767 tankers, C-17 transports, bombers, and Global Hawk reconnaissance drones.⁴ In March 2003, after a new Air Expeditionary Wing was activated at Guam's Andersen Air Force Base, B-1 and B-52 bombers deployed temporarily on a rotational basis from air bases in Texas and Louisiana as U.S. forces prepared for war against Iraq. Beyond rotation of aircraft, the Air Force began continuous deployment of aircraft into Guam. As part of this build-up, the first B-52 bombers (stationed out of Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota) to deploy to Andersen arrived in February 2004.⁵ In April 2005, the Commander of Pacific Air Forces said that B-2 stealth bombers started to fly out of Andersen. In April 2005, F-15 fighters temporarily deployed to Andersen from Idaho. An Air Force official said in 2006 that the Air Force plans to station KC-135 tankers on Guam. In May 2007, the Air Force announced the deployment of 18 F-16 fighters to Guam for four months. In the summer of 2008, several F-22 fighters, based in Alaska since 2007, began deployments to Guam. Also, Andersen Air Force Base plans to have four to six Global Hawks for an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Strike Task Force by 2009. However, in March 2007, the Navy decided not to homeport the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson at Guam.⁶

² Thomas Ricks, "For Pentagon, Asia Moving to Forefront," *Washington Post*, May 26, 2000; "Inside the Ring," *Washington Times*, August 25, 2000; Robert Burns, "Air Force Plan Could Place Bombers Closer to Targets," *Seattle Times*, November 30, 2000.

³ Christian Bohmfalk, "Navy Decides to Homeport Up to Three Attack Submarines in Guam," *Inside the Navy*, January 29, 2001; Nathan Hodge, "Navy Basing Subs in Guam," *Defense Week*, October 1, 2002; *Navy Newsstand*, July 12, 2007.

⁴ Jim Wolf, "U.S. General Urges Warplanes Be Sent to Guam," *Reuters*, August 23, 2002.

⁵ PACOM, "B-1Bs, B-52Hs Arrive in Guam," March 6, 2003; Robert Burns, "Air Force Wants to Put Fighters and Bombers Back on Guam in Pacific," *AP*, January 13, 2004; Michael Sirak, "U.S. Considers Bomber Presence on Guam," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, January 21, 2004; PACOM, "Bomber Deployment to Guam," February 2, 2004; "Bombers Arrive At Andersen," *AFN*; and Katie Worth, "B-52 Bombers Arrive," *Pacific Daily News*, February 23, 2004.

⁶ Martin Matishak, "Hester: Air Force to Bolster Presence in Asia-Pacific Region," *Inside the Air Force*, April 29, 2005; Natalie Quinata, "Fighter Squadron Arrives on Guam," *Pacific Daily News*, April 30, 2005; Gregg Kakesako, "U.S. Military to Beef Up Its Presence on Guam," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, June 21, 2006; "United States to deploy 18 F-16s to Guam," *Reuters News*, May 24, 2007; Frank Whitman, "No Big Changes at Andersen Right Away, New 36th Wing Commander Says," *Stars and Stripes*, November 18, 2006; Nelson Daranciang, "Senators Hope Naval Presence Will Grow," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, March 31, 2007; Audrey McAvoy,

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U.S. Force Relocations from Japan and South Korea

In May 2006, the United States and Japan signed a detailed “roadmap” agreement to broaden military cooperation, mostly dealing with changes and additions to U.S. forces in Japan. It provides for the relocation of the headquarters of the III Marine Expeditionary Force and 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam by 2014. Approximately 7,000 Marines will remain on Okinawa. The cost of the relocation is estimated at \$10.27 billion. Of this amount, Japan pledged to contribute \$6.09 billion, including direct financing of facilities and infrastructure on Guam.⁷

Visiting South Korea in June 2008, Defense Secretary Robert Gates announced that U.S. troops there would remain at about 28,000, instead of carrying out the plan of 2004 to restructure U.S. forces by reducing troop strength from 37,000 to 25,000 by September 2008. U.S. officials have indicated that further withdrawals of Army forces are possible, primarily to support the requirements of the Army and Marine Corps in the active theaters of Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. Air Force plans to relocate expeditionary combat support units from South Korea and Japan to consolidate them on Guam.

Concerns and Issues for Congress

Rationales. One rationale for the military build-up on Guam is its status as a U.S. territory. Thus, the United States is not required to negotiate with sovereign countries on force deployments or face the risks of losing bases or access. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld visited Guam in November 2003 and expressed support for building up Guam as he considered a new round of base closings.⁸ In contrast, the United States had to close Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines in 1992, and countries like South Korea could restrict the use of U.S. forces based there. U.S. forces based in Guam also do not have to contend with political sensitivities over nuclear powered vessels. Moreover, some countries, including allies, have raised doubts about their support for U.S. forces in a possible conflict between the United States and China.

Another rationale is the expansion of options that Guam offers to the evolving U.S. force structure. As Commander of PACOM, Admiral William Fallon expressed his vision for Guam as a staging area from which ships, aircraft, and troops can “surge” to the Asian theater. He stressed “flexibility,” saying “we need to have forces ready to react,” and we must have built-in flexibility” to meet emergencies (including disaster relief).⁹ In 2004, the Navy held “Summer Pulse 04,” its first exercise to increase readiness to

⁶ (...continued)

“Air Force to Deploy Alaska-based F-22 Raptors to Guam,” *Associated Press*, May 21, 2008, quoting the Commander of Pacific Air Forces, General Carrol Chandler; Navy Secretary Donald Winter, Report on Department of Defense Planning Efforts for Guam, September 15, 2008.

⁷ Linda Sieg, “U.S.-Japan Security Overhaul Gives Tokyo Bigger Role,” *Reuters News*, May 16, 2006; Karl Eiselberg, “Finalized U.S.-Japan Defense Accord Masks Some Deeper Concerns in Security Alliance,” *Daily Report*, May 5, 2006.

⁸ James Brooke, “Looking for Friendly Overseas Base, Pentagon Finds it Already Has One,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2004.

⁹ Richard Halloran, “Guam Seen as Pivotal U.S. Base,” *Washington Times*, March 11, 2006.

“surge” operations in response to a crisis or emergency. In June 2006, PACOM held the “Valiant Shield” exercise that brought three aircraft carriers to waters off Guam.

A third rationale is the need to counter what commanders call the “tyranny of distance.” PACOM, headquartered in Honolulu, has an area of responsibility that encompasses almost 60% of the world’s population, over 50% of the earth’s surface, the Pacific and Indian Oceans, 16 time zones, and five of seven U.S. defense treaties. U.S. forces on Guam are much closer to East Asia, where the United States has alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines. The United States also has concerns in Asia about threats to peace and stability in the East China Sea, South China Sea and over terrorist threats in Southeast Asia, humanitarian crises, and security for sea lines of communication (SLOCs), particularly through the Straits of Malacca. Combat aircraft on Guam can reach Taiwan, Japan, Philippines, or the Korean peninsula in two to five hours.¹⁰ Moreover, **Table 1** presents the shorter sailing distance and time from Guam to Manila in East Asia, compared to that from Honolulu, Seattle, and San Diego.

Table 1. Illustrative Sailing Distances and Time

To Manila, from:	statute miles	days at 20 knots	days at 30 knots
Guam	1,724	3.1	2.1
Honolulu	5,482	9.9	6.6
Seattle	6,853	12.4	8.3
San Diego	7,595	13.8	9.2

Notes: Sailing distances in statute miles were calculated using nautical miles reported by “Distances Between Ports,” 2001, published by the National Imagery and Mapping Agency. Also, 1 nautical mile equals 1.15 statute miles, and 1 knot equals 1.15 mph.

Concerns. As U.S. forces relocate to Guam, the state of its infrastructure has been of concern to some policymakers. Also, Guam’s political leaders have expressed concerns about the impact of additional deployments on its infrastructure, including utilities, roads, and water supplies. Guam’s location in the Western Pacific also requires construction of protection for U.S. forces and assets against typhoons. In the fall of 2006, PACOM officials briefed Guam on some aspects of an undisclosed draft plan for military expansion, the Integrated Military Development Plan, with possible military projects worth a total of about \$15 billion.¹¹ In addition, Guam’s remoteness and conditions raise more questions about hosting military families, training with other units in Hawaii or the west coast, and costs for extended logistical support. Addressing another concern, a former commander of Marine Forces Pacific urged that Guam’s buildup include more than infrastructure to develop also human capital, communities, and the environment.¹²

¹⁰ Donna Miles, “Gates Views Massive Growth Under Way in Guam,” *AFPS*, May 30, 2008.

¹¹ *KUAM News*, September 12, 2006; *Pacific Daily News*, September 13, 2006; *Stars and Stripes*, September 17, 2006.

¹² W. C. “Chip” Gregson, “New Thinking Needed on Pacific Frontier,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, December 7, 2007.

Guam's higher military profile could increase its potential as an American target for terrorists and adversaries during a possible conflict. China has a variety of ballistic missiles that could target Guam. North Korea reportedly has developed a new intermediate range ballistic missile (Taepodong-X) that could reach Guam. Any such vulnerabilities could raise requirements for both counter-terrorism measures and missile defense. Also, some say that Guam is still too distant from flash points in the Asia and advocate closer cooperation with countries such as Singapore, Australia, the Philippines, and Japan.¹³ Building up the U.S. presence in those countries could enhance alliances or partnerships, increase interoperability, and reduce costs for the United States.

Alliances. The Guam Integrated Military Development Plan, parts of which were reported in October 2006, indicated that U.S. Army units withdrawn from South Korea are not likely to be stationed on Guam.¹⁴ The Pentagon's restructuring plan reportedly intended to maintain U.S. air power in South Korea, particularly the three squadrons of F-16 fighters based at Osan Air Base. An emphasis on U.S. offshore forces in South Korean security could affect decisions regarding the mix of U.S. forces based on Guam and rotated into Guam from other bases. This might especially be true of heavy bombers, which the Air Force rotates into Guam from bases in the United States. Concerns about maintaining deterrence after U.S. reductions of ground forces might lead PACOM to increase exercises of heavy bombers and/or aircraft carrier strike groups near Korea.¹⁵

Under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, U.S. concerns involve possible conflict between China and Japan over their competing claims to the Senkaku islands (called Diaoyu islands by China) in the East China Sea. The United States administered the islands after World War II and turned them over to Japanese administration in 1972. Clinton and Bush Administration officials have stated that the Senkakus fall under the scope of the U.S.-Japan alliance.¹⁶ In September 2005, the PLA Navy deployed five naval ships to the disputed area in the East China Sea with competing territorial and oil claims. For training, Guam has provided valuable and less constrained airspace and bombing ranges for the air forces of Japan, Thailand, Singapore, South Korea, and Australia.

China. China's civilian and military commentators commonly suspect that the U.S. defense build-up on Guam partly has been aimed at China, which has threatened to use the People's Liberation Army (PLA) against Taiwan. U.S. policy on helping Taiwan's self-defense is governed not by a defense treaty but by the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), P.L. 96-8. Some concerns about the PLA's accelerated modernization since the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995-1996 also have expanded beyond a focus on Taiwan to include PLA preparations for possible conflicts with the United States and Japan. In Southeast Asia, despite reduced tensions since the mid-1990s, China claims much of the South China Sea as well as the disputed Spratly and Paracel Islands in that sea as its "sovereign territory."

¹³ Thomas Donnelly, "Rebasing, Revisited," American Enterprise Institute, December 2004.

¹⁴ Murayama Kohei, "U.S. to Triple Troops in Guam, but No Earlier Than 2010 for Marines," *Kyodo News*, October 3, 2006.

¹⁵ Bill Gertz, "More Muscle, With Eye on China," *Washington Times*, April 20, 2006; Robert Burns, "U.S. Air Power in East Asia Has Grown," *Associated Press*, October 11, 2006.

¹⁶ "U.S.-Japan Treaty Covers Disputed Isles," *Reuters*, November 28, 1996; and Yoichi Funabashi, "Maintain the Armitage Doctrine Quietly," *Asahi Shimbun*, February 2, 2004.

The PLA has increased its attention to Guam and has been building up its submarine force (both nuclear-powered and diesel-electric). In November 2004, the PLA Navy sent a Han-class nuclear attack submarine to waters off Guam before intruding into Japan's territorial water.¹⁷ In April 2007, PACOM Commander Admiral Timothy Keating visited Guam and acknowledged that its defense buildup was partly due to concerns about any tensions over Taiwan and a need to deter North Korea. At the same time, he stressed U.S. transparency, saying "we're not doing this [buildup] under the cover of darkness."¹⁸

Still, a policy challenge has been to deter any aggression by China as well as to assure it that a U.S. goal is closer cooperation with this rising power as a "responsible stakeholder." The Commander of Pacific Air Forces said in May 2005 that the PLA's modernization gave him "pause for interest" but did not make a difference in significant force redeployment.¹⁹ Also, in 2006, Guam became a focal point for improving military-to-military relations with China. To blunt charges that Guam's build-up targets China, PACOM's Commander, Admiral Fallon, invited PLA observers to the U.S. "Valiant Shield" exercise that brought three aircraft carriers to waters off Guam in June 2006. The PLA Navy sent a Deputy Chief of Staff and specialist in submarine operations to lead the observers, who also boarded an aircraft carrier and visited Guam's air and naval bases. Two C-17 aircraft flew supplies from Guam to China for earthquake relief in May 2008.

Congress. In July 2006, the Senate Appropriations Committee issued a report (S.Rept. 109-286) on the Military Construction and Veteran Affairs Appropriations Act, which expressed concerns about a construction program on Guam estimated to cost \$10.3 billion (with Japan paying 60%) and expectations of a master plan for Guam from the Defense Secretary by December 29, 2006. In the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2008 (that became P.L. 110-161 on December 26, 2007), the Appropriations Committees decided against a Senate provision that would have required the Defense Secretary to submit the master plan by December 29, 2007 and provided more time for a report by September 15, 2008. In response, the Navy Secretary reported on planning for Guam, with initiatives for the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. Also, he reported that the Pentagon is developing the Guam Joint Military Master Plan.²⁰ The National Defense Authorization Act for FY2009 (that became P.L. 110-417 on October 14, 2008), inter alia, authorized a total of about \$180 million for Guam's military construction projects, established a Treasury account for all contributions for military realignment and relocations, and required the Defense Secretary to report on military construction projects by February 15 of each year.

¹⁷ *Kyodo World Service*, November 16, 2004.

¹⁸ Audrey McAvoy, "U.S. Pacific Commander Says Taiwan is Factor in Guam Buildup," *Associated Press*, April 15, 2007.

¹⁹ General Paul Hester, interview with *Inside the Air Force*, May 6, 2005.

²⁰ Donald Winter, "Department of Defense Planning Efforts for Guam," September 15, 2008.