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Newport, R.I.**

**China's Anti-Piracy Mission: Turning Blue-Water Theory into Practice and the
Implications for the U.S. Navy**

By

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of
the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily
endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

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ABSTRACT

China's People's Liberation Army Navy Gulf of Aden anti-piracy mission is now well into its second year and fifth rotation of warships. The anti-piracy mission has provided the PLA(N) an opportunity to exercise a range of blue-water navy competencies in a relatively benign environment. China is quickly turning blue-water navy theory into practice in the Gulf of Aden. As the PLA(N) incorporates the experience it builds in the Horn of Africa, the nature of its operations will change, with the potential for a significant impact on the U.S. Navy. The U.S. Navy has conceptualized and planned toward a China whose navy is capable of a strong defense of the littorals. The PLA(N) is rapidly building a blue-water naval capability due to its commitment to the anti-piracy operation. A PLA(N) capability to extend and sustain operations at greater distances will challenge the U.S. Navy in the following areas: 1) planning for an adversary capable of operating in multiple theaters 2) response time to Western Pacific contingencies; 3) maritime domain awareness; and 4) protection of sea lines of communication. The U.S. Navy needs to move quickly to recognize that the PLA(N) will have a capacity to sail well beyond their own shores and conduct operations. Now is the time for the U.S. Navy to take action to ensure success across the range of peacetime and conflict scenarios.

INTRODUCTION

In December 2008, China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLA(N)) embarked on a historic mission to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden. The deployment marked the first time since the fifteenth century that China has conducted a combat operation at a great distance from its own shores.¹ The mission is now well into its second year and fifth rotation of warships. The People's Republic of China (PRC) remains keenly committed to the anti-piracy operations. As the political commissar of the South Sea Fleet, Chen Yan, stated in an interview prior to the most recent deployment of warships in March 2010, "We are very confident and ready."²

The anti-piracy mission is contributing to securing China's vital economic and energy interests in the Gulf of Aden. The PLA(N) has amassed fairly impressive security statistics to date, escorting 1,643 foreign and domestic ships and rescuing 23 vessels.³ Taken in total, the anti-piracy mission has provided the PLA(N) an opportunity to exercise a range of blue-water navy competencies in a relatively benign environment.

The PLA(N) has rapidly modernized over the last two decades in terms of platforms, weapons and technologies. However, little evidence existed as to whether the PLA(N) possessed the tactical acumen and proficiency to employ their sophisticated platforms effectively beyond China's littorals. In fact, the inability to conduct "sustained operations in waters and airspace that are more distant from China," was reported as a significant limitation of the PLA(N) in a recent report to the U.S. Congress.⁴ China is beginning to remedy this issue in its anti-piracy mission.

China is quickly turning blue-water navy theory into practice in the Gulf of Aden. As the PLA(N) incorporates the experience it builds in the Horn of Africa, the nature of

its operations will change, with the potential for a significant impact on the U.S. Navy. The PLA(N) is already sailing with consistency beyond its traditional operating area within the first island chain.⁵



Figure 1. Lines indicate the first (closest to the PRC mainland) and second island chains (the line east of Japan and the Philippines), PRC military theorists conceive of two island “chains” as forming a geographic basis for China’s maritime defensive perimeter, *Annual Report to Congress, Military Power of the People’s Republic of China*, (Washington, D.C., 2009) 18.) Document is in the public domain.

Analysis from the most recent Japanese Ministry of Defense White Paper indicates the first objective of Chinese Maritime Activities is to “intercept naval operations by enemies in waters as far possible from the country in order to defend Chinese territory and territorial waters.”⁶

The U.S. Navy has conceptualized and planned toward a China whose navy is capable of a strong defense of the littorals. The PLA(N) is rapidly building a blue-water naval capability due to its commitment to the anti-piracy operation. A PLA(N) capability

to extend and sustain operations at greater distances will challenge the U.S. Navy in the following areas: 1) planning for an adversary capable of operating in multiple theaters 2) response time to Western Pacific contingencies; 3) maritime domain awareness; and 4) protection of sea lines of communication. The U.S. Navy needs to move quickly to recognize that the PLA(N) will have a capacity to sail well beyond their own shores and conduct operations. Now is the time for the U.S. Navy to take action to ensure success across the range of peacetime and conflict scenarios.

ANTI-PIRACY MISSION RATIONALE

Several imperatives propelled the People's Republic of China to deploy the PLA(N) anti-piracy task force to the Gulf of Aden. China has critical resource and energy sea links to Africa; much of China's trade with the European Union also passes through the Red Sea, Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden.⁷ From November to December 2008, two Chinese vessels, a fishing boat and a tanker, were the targets of separate pirate attacks in the Horn of Africa region.⁸ Professor Andrew Erickson of the U.S. Naval War College offers an insightful explanation as to the motivation within the People's Republic of China to take on the anti-piracy mission:

“The heart of the matter was the lack of further options to solve the piracy problem indirectly. Unable to afford high private security fees, Chinese ships had started to detour around the Cape of Good Hope, raising shipping rates and risking the loss of market share if the Chinese merchant ships broke contract. *This, in turn, risked making China's government look ineffectual.*” (emphasis added)⁹

Thus the decision-making rationale was almost equal parts protection of economic interests, and preservation of the PRC's domestic and international legitimacy.

Within the political-strategic realm, the anti-piracy deployment strongly emphasizes China's commitment to cooperative international efforts.¹⁰ For the U.S.

Navy, “it proclaims China’s intentions and ability to militarily defend its *expanding, globalizing national interests*” (emphasis in original).¹¹ Further, as Andrew Erickson indicates “Although the decision-making appears to be long term and gradual, China’s State Council and Central Military Commission likely approved the Aden mission in part to exercise the PLA(N)’s growing military capability.”¹² The significance for the U.S. Navy is that the mission offers the PLA(N) the opportunity to develop a range of increasingly sophisticated naval capabilities, including the sustainment of an operation at a great distance from its own logistics bases – a key component to building a blue-water navy and conducting future power projection missions.¹³

WHY NOT THE WESTERN PACIFIC?

Chinese maritime activities beyond their own waters are often viewed with suspicion. Japan’s Ministry of Defense reported in 2009 that “China has been intensifying its maritime activities in recent years.”¹⁴ Figure 2 depicts the range of activities that China has conducted in the waters around Japan.

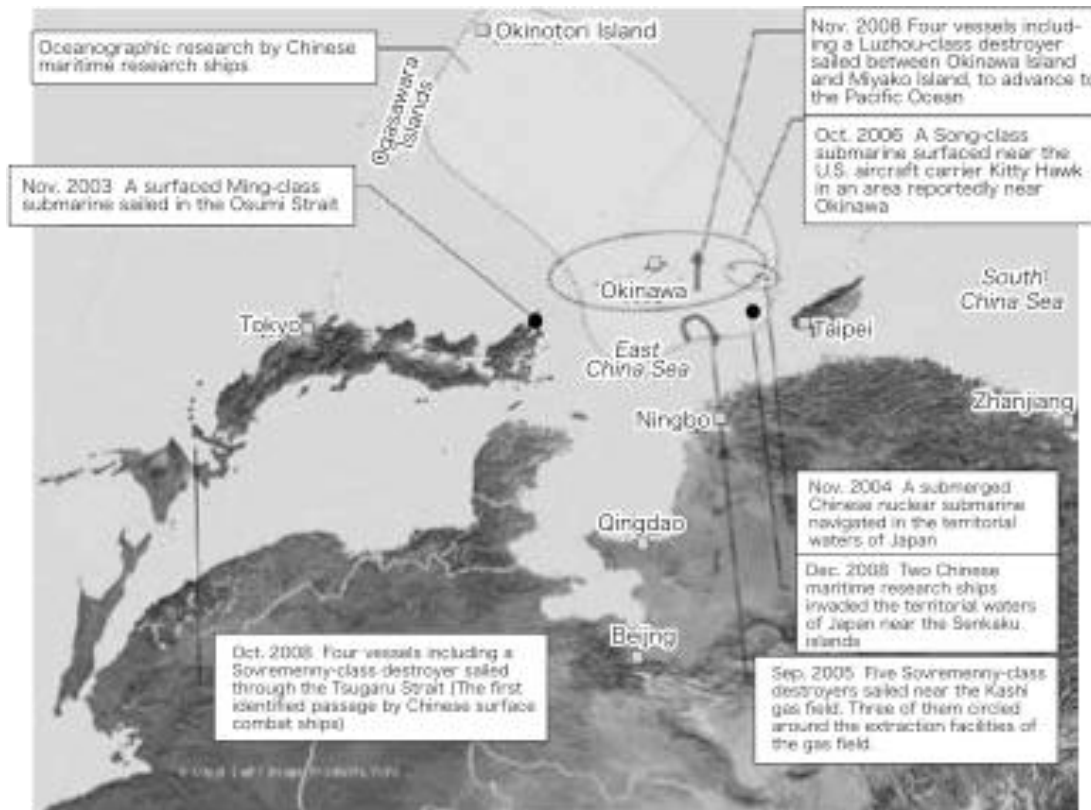


Figure 2. Recent Chinese maritime activities near Japan. *Japanese Ministry of Defense, Annual White Paper*, (Tokyo, 2009) 57.) Document is in the public domain.

United States government and military officials often question China’s military expansion. Recently, the Commander of USS George Washington Aircraft Carrier Strike Group, Rear Admiral Kevin Donegan, expressed concern over China’s military build up, “with China’s military growing at an ‘unprecedented rate,’ the U.S. wants to ensure that expansion doesn’t destabilize the region,” Donegan told reporters on a visit to the Chinese territory of Hong Kong.¹⁵

U.S. and regional suspicion, and a desire by Beijing to be viewed as a responsible international stakeholder, likely complicate PLA(N) efforts to conduct blue-water training in the Western Pacific. Recent doctrinal writings provide evidence that China aspires to develop a blue-water capability. Researchers from the Navy Military Studies

Institute in Beijing have argued for a shift in strategy from “near-seas active defense” to “far-seas operations”.¹⁶ Chinese naval theorists recognize the unfavorable nature of China’s geo-strategic position; a long coastline partially blocked by the first island chain limits maneuver space for the PLA(N) and favors potential adversaries.¹⁷ To alleviate this, the researchers suggest, China must break out of interior-line constraints (associated with the near seas within the first island chain) and acquire capabilities to operate in the far seas.¹⁸ The anti-piracy mission proved an excellent opportunity to develop the capacity to operate in “far-seas” without drawing the ire of regional and international powers.

WHAT HAS THE PLA(N) LEARNED?

Most importantly for the U.S. Navy, the PLA(N) has acquired valuable operational experience in the nearly eighteen months of anti-piracy operations. The PLA(N) chose its most modern destroyers, an indigenously-produced Luyang I guided-missile destroyer (DDG) and Luyang II DDG from the South Sea Fleet, as the first units to deploy to the Gulf of Aden.¹⁹ This likely represented a desire on the part of the PLA(N) to ensure the mission was successful and avoid any potential embarrassment resulting from a material casualty. After all, this was the PLA(N)’s first operational deployment. That said, the PLA(N) has continued to send sophisticated platforms in the five iterations of the anti-piracy mission to date, allowing commanders and crews of their front line warships to gain valuable experience.

The naval disciplines that the PLA(N) has exercised through are many, and include:

- At sea logistics, replenishment and voyage repairs.

- Command and control.
- Satellite communication to relay information.
- Interagency coordination.²⁰

Quite simply, the PLA(N) anti-piracy operations represent the foundational aspect of a blue-water capacity. This does not mean they are a truly blue-water navy. However, as a result of these operations the PLA(N) now possesses five surface action groups that have sustained operations at a distance of over 5,000 nautical miles from homeport for an extended period of time. The significance for the U.S. Navy in a Western Pacific crisis, is clear: the PLA(N) has the capacity to deploy and sustain multiple surface action groups well beyond China's littorals.

CONFRONTING AN ADVERSARY IN MULTIPLE THEATERS

The powerful naval units deployed in the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet area of responsibility (AOR), demonstrate China's capability to protect its own critical energy and commercial links to the Middle East. In the event of a conflict, the U.S. may choose a naval strategy to deny access to energy and natural resources flowing from the Middle East to the PRC. This task becomes obviously more complex in the face of one or perhaps multiple PLA(N) Surface Action Groups defending China's maritime interests. It would not be a significant jump for the U.S. Navy to find itself in combat operations against an adversary capable of fielding powerful elements in multiple theaters.

Naval Warfare Publication 3-32 notes that "There has been little opportunity for the Navy to plan and execute a major naval operation or campaign (sequence of major naval operations) since World War II."²¹ The U.S. Navy arguably has struggled with the operational level of warfare at sea, and eventually developed the Maritime Headquarters

(MHQ) with Maritime Operations Center (MOC) construct.²² The MHQ/MOC operating concept represents a significant step by the U.S. Navy toward addressing a recognized deficiency at the operational level. However, the U.S. Navy lacks a service wide doctrine to conduct operations – from deterrence to combat at sea – against a single adversary across multiple theaters.

The MHQ/MOC construct is useful to assemble U.S. Naval Forces and execute operations, while providing for interoperability across the fleets. However, the U.S. Navy faced with a PLA(N) capable of operating in multiple theaters, will require decisions on the global allocation of U.S. Naval Forces, how to plan deterrence and combat operations and how to synchronize those efforts across multiple theaters. The U.S. Navy’s lack of doctrine to plan such an effort across the fleets will ultimately hinder the ability of the MHQs and MOCs to carry out operations against the PLA(N).

THE TIME CHALLENGE

Pacific Command Commander Admiral Robert Willard reported to Congress on March 24, 2010, that the PLA(N) is building a “blue-water” capability, including the ability to surge surface combatants and submarines at extended distances.²³ China’s regional anti-access strategy already provides for “projecting increasingly credible, layered offensive combat power across its borders and into the Western Pacific.”²⁴ In recent conflicts, the U.S. military had the ability to build up forces until it has reached a level of sufficient combat power to go on the offensive.²⁵ Should China be able to hold U.S. Naval Forces at risk beyond the first island chain – deep into the South China Sea or in the Indian Ocean – it may provide China with a significant time advantage in achieving its military objectives in the Western Pacific.

Figure three illustrates U.S. Navy response times (best case scenario) to the Western Pacific.

Port	Straight-line distance to Taiwan Strait area ^a (nautical miles)	Minimum travel time in days, based on average speeds below ^b		
		20 knots	25 knots	30 knots
Yokosuka, Japan ^c	1,076	2.2	1.8	1.5
Guam	1,336	2.8	2.2	1.9
Singapore ^d	1,794	3.7	3.0	2.5
Pearl Harbor ^c	4,283	8.9	7.1	5.9
Everett, WA	5,223	10.9	8.7	7.3
San Diego	5,933	12.3	9.9	8.2

Figure 3. Potential Ship Travel Times to Taiwan Strait Area. Reprinted from Congressional Research Service Report, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities*, (Washington, D.C., 4 April 2009) 49.) Document is in the public domain.

Milan Vego, in *Joint Operational Warfare*, notes that “time lost can never be recovered.”²⁶ In the event of a conflict with the People’s Republic of China, the U.S. Navy would be required to maneuver forces into the Western Pacific to achieve operational objectives. As Figure 3 denotes, distances alone are extremely long from U.S. bases in the Central and Eastern Pacific. Further, the vast sea-space of the Western Pacific makes it probable that naval forces alone will act as the initial response force in any contingency. In this role, the U.S. Navy will execute a range of maritime missions to achieve objectives for the Joint Force Commander, while ensuring access and protection for U.S. Joint Forces and Allies.

The U.S. Navy will initially rely on our Forward Deployed Naval Forces (FDNF), consisting of a Carrier Strike Group and Amphibious Ready Group, home ported in Japan, to respond to a crisis with China. However, if additional naval forces are required, they will flow from distant Central and Eastern Pacific bases. The transit alone will require a significant amount of time for the forces to arrive in the Western Pacific.

China's ability to contest the access of U.S. Naval Forces at greater distances – skills the PLA(N) is acquiring in the anti-piracy mission – will only lengthen the amount of time required for U.S. Naval Forces to respond. Given the array of military capabilities the PRC has developed, particularly within the first island chain. China will rapidly gain the initiative in any Western Pacific contingency, if the U.S. Navy cannot respond in sufficient time.

MAINTAINING MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS

The PLA(N)'s rapidly expanding operations will stress the U.S. Navy's ability to maintain maritime domain awareness. In his written testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Admiral Robert Willard reported intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) as one of PACOM's primary challenges.²⁷ With the demand for ISR platforms and processing capacity to support ongoing U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. Seventh Fleet could lack sufficient assets and analysts to track the PLA(N).

It is not just the PLA(N), which is a source of concern for the U.S. Seventh Fleet:

“We watch with interest and concern the rapid development of the Chinese Navy. In the span of one career, the PLA(N) has moved from an antiquated coastal force to a capable, confident force deploying modern combatants to fight piracy in the Gulf of Aden. We are tasked to consider North Korea, a perennial state of concern, as it pursues WMD, sells weapons overseas and jockeys for position in northeast Asia. We share the Pacific with a re-emergent Russia, which maintains an SSBN presence in the region.”²⁸

Competing priorities also serve to complicate maintaining an accurate picture of PLA(N) activities. This is not to convey, however, that the Seventh Fleet Maritime Intelligence Operations Center (MIOC)²⁹ will find relief from managing competing interests, it must continue to deliver intelligence for all of the Seventh Fleet Commander's priorities.

Intelligence is critical, and as the PLA(N) advances in its ability to deploy at greater distances from its coastline – potentially closer to traditional U.S. Navy operations areas in the Pacific – accurate accounting of PLA(N) forces grows ever more vital. To accomplish this across the 48 million square miles³⁰ of the Seventh Fleet area of responsibility, with limited ISR assets and multiple priorities, will grow increasingly complex as the PLA(N)'s operations continue to evolve.

PROTECTION OF SEA LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Vego defines sea lines of communications (SLOCs) as “routes used for commercial trade and the transport of troops and materiel.”³¹ As figure three reveals, the U.S. Navy has long SLOCs to points in the Western Pacific, which is generally a disadvantage.³² As the PLA(N) anti-piracy operation has demonstrated, in peacetime operations, that China possesses the capacity to keep warships on station at great distances from their home bases to provide a rudimentary form of SLOC protection. It is short jump to implement a capability to threaten U.S. SLOCs in the Indian Ocean, or Pacific, in the event of a crisis.

The U.S. Navy may be faced with the challenge of protecting vital SLOCs, perhaps not only for the U.S. – but in a scenario that is short of conflict with the PRC – for Allies in the region. Admiral Robert Willard, emphasized the importance of securing sea lines of communication, especially for our Allies, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services on the topic:

“As you suggest, Japan, the Republic of Korea, our Allies in Southeast Asia, the Philippines and Thailand, and now our partners in Vietnam and elsewhere in the region, all have to deal, now, with capabilities that could potentially infringe on their freedom of action throughout this very important part of the world. We’ve been providing security for sea lines of communication that are moving over a trillion dollars of commerce per year, both back and forth to the United States and

to our important allies and partners in the region, which has also provided for the economic growth of China. *And I don't intend to cede any of that space, but, rather, continue to protect those sea lines of communication that are so vital to the United States and the Asia Pacific region as a whole.* (emphasis added)³³

The U.S. Navy must keep SLOCs open both for our interests and that of our Allies in the region. The U.S. military moves by sea and responding to any contingency in the Western Pacific will rely heavily on seaborne re-supply. Similarly, our Allies in that region are inextricably linked to the sea for vital resources and commercial goods. In the event of a crisis with the PRC between the U.S. or an ally, assets available for SLOC protection will be scarce and in high demand. This critical mission will compete for platforms with equally important efforts from ballistic missile defense to anti-submarine warfare. The challenge an expanding PLA(N) poses to key SLOCs can not be discounted: the Joint Force Maritime Component Commander will face difficult decisions in apportioning maritime forces while ensuring SLOCs remain open.

THE CASE AGAINST: ENGAGEMENT HOLDS THE ANSWER

The PLA(N) presence in the Gulf of Aden combating piracy is widely viewed as a responsible and productive step on the international stage for the People's Republic of China. In November 2009, the PLA(N) anti-piracy task force commander, Rear Admiral Wang Zhiguo met with U.S. Admiral Scott Swift, commander of Combined Task Force 151 on board the USS Chosin (CG-65) to discuss ongoing efforts in counterpiracy.³⁴ This represented a significant development in the often complicated U.S. – Sino military to military relationship. The Center for Naval Analysis noted that “The PLA(N)’s participation in the anti-piracy missions signals China’s willingness to cooperate on global issues of mutual interest.”³⁵ Given these considerations, it would be wise for the U.S. Navy to seek out and maximize engagement opportunities with PLA(N).

However, at the same time China is providing forces to contribute to quelling piracy, it also behaves aggressively in the maritime domain. The most recent example was the deliberate harassment of the USNS Impeccable in March 2009, by Chinese fishing vessels, which included surrounding Impeccable and impeding its movement.³⁶ This incident took place while Impeccable was conducting routine operations in the international waters of the South China Sea, in plain view of a PLA(N) intelligence collection ship and a PRC State Oceanographic Administration vessel.³⁷ The USNS Impeccable was forced to leave the area, and returned one day later under escort of the USS Chung-Hoon, a U.S. guided-missile destroyer.³⁸ Incidents such as the harassment of the Impeccable, make it difficult to ascertain Chinese intentions regarding routine and lawful U.S. Navy operations. Senior U.S. decision-makers will find it difficult to pursue a policy of purely engagement with the PLA(N) given the frequency of aggressive PRC behavior.

SOLUTION A DOUBLE STRATEGY: ENGAGE AND PLAN FOR CRISIS

Ultimately, the U.S. Navy should seek to both engage with the PLA(N), while simultaneously conducting the necessary planning to confront China if required. The anti-piracy mission provides an effective venue for the U.S. Navy to cooperate where possible with the PLA(N) to foster a mutual understanding and advance military to military relations. This effort will undoubtedly pay dividends in and set the stage for future cooperation.

The other side of the engagement coin is for the U.S. Navy to take the necessary steps to contend with an increasingly capable PLA(N). Failing to do so would severely hamper U.S. efforts in responding to contingencies in the Western Pacific. As the USNS

Impeccable incident illustrated, the Chinese are capable of potentially destabilizing the region with aggressive and illegal behavior,³⁹ to the detriment of U.S. interests. Given this consideration, the U.S. Navy must continue to develop courses of action and train to deterring, dissuading and if necessary, fight a PLA(N) that would contest our operations in the Western Pacific and in the Indian Ocean.

CONCLUSION

The People's Liberation Army Navy is acquiring formidable skills as a result of participating in anti-piracy operations over the past eighteen months. The PLA(N) is a more capable fleet in the areas of long distance sustainment and maintenance and command and control, and is gaining experience with each passing month. The U.S. Navy will now contend with a PLA(N) that is continuing to develop tactical and operational acumen, two areas in which they were lacking. China clearly intends to continue its participation in the anti-piracy operations for the foreseeable future, allowing for further training and development. Therefore, the U.S. Navy must immediately acknowledge China's rapidly developing blue water naval capability and develop solutions to ensure success against the PLA(N) in the event of a crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop Doctrine to Address the PLA(N) Challenge. A PLA(N) capable of operating in multiple theaters is a reality. The U.S. Navy requires doctrine to execute operations against a single adversary capable of operating in multiple theaters.

The U.S. Navy faced a similar challenge when confronting the Soviet Union's Fleet at the height of the Cold War. The development of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy of the 1980's, offers a useful historical tool to craft doctrine for current

operations against a PLA(N) capable of operating in multiple theaters. The Chief of Naval Operations Strategic Studies Group and naval strategists assigned to the Navy staff in the early 1980's developed what became *The Maritime Strategy*.⁴⁰ Primarily, the strategy articulated "a global view of fleet operations, for deterrence and crisis control. Should deterrence fail, it shows how fleet operations can be integrated for a global conventional war with the Soviet Union."⁴¹ The development of navy-wide doctrine addressing the very same issues for operations against the PLA(N) would provide our Fleet Commanders a tool to conceptualize, plan and execute operations on a global scale. This would be of particular value in any potential U.S.- Sino crisis and enhance the effectiveness of the MHQ/MOC at the operational level.

Buy Back Time. There are two key steps the U.S. Navy must take to ensure U.S. Naval Forces arrive quickly to a Western Pacific contingency. First, operational level planning for Western Pacific contingencies must consider now that China can threaten U.S. Naval Forces well beyond their own littorals. Secondly, the U.S. Navy must ensure that our training cycle prepares our Naval Forces to fight their way into the theater.

The U.S. Seventh Fleet operational planning process must consider that China will deploy surface action groups to contest U.S. Naval Forces' access in a Western Pacific contingency. This will realistically guide the staff's planning and allow for development of the most effective courses of action to deal with extended PLA(N) operations. Most importantly, valuable time would be gained by having preplanned options at the ready, which will also enhance speed of decision at the tactical level.⁴²

The other side of the time coin is developing forces that are trained and ready to conduct operations against a potential adversary who is becoming willing – for the first

time since the Cold War – to contest sea space beyond the littorals. Realistic training for Naval Forces in the pre-deployment work up cycle should include exercises to identify, track and monitor/engage surface action groups at long range. Training should also include efforts to protect Naval Forces from detection by adversary surface action groups. Forces trained and ready to operate in an environment where sea control may be contested, simplifies the planning process and mitigates the necessity to train to while planning a major naval operation.

Enhance Intelligence Sharing. The U.S. must improve intelligence sharing programs with our allies in the Seventh Fleet AOR. ISR resources will remain scarce and partnering with our allies represents the most effective method to assist in tracking PLA(N) assets over greater distances. Pacific Command intelligence organizations will have to accelerate their efforts to increase intelligence sharing efforts.

Admiral Keiji Akahoshi, Chief of the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force, wrote recently that “it is important to enhance the interoperability between the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and the U.S. Navy in support of the Japan-U.S. alliance.”⁴³ Directly related to the issue is intelligence sharing, and it deserves enhancement as an aspect of the Japan - U.S. alliance. However, this should not include only intelligence sharing with a strong partner such as the Japanese. The Seventh Fleet, working through the national intelligence organizations, should seek to establish and strengthen existing partnerships throughout the region. Multiple nations sharing intelligence data is the only sure method to maintain Maritime Domain Awareness across the vast expanse of the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Advance Navy Interoperability with Southeast Asian Partners. In execution, protection of SLOCs will require more intense partnering with our Allies in the Pacific. Our relationships with Southeast Asian nations are less mature at the operational level. These relationships are equally important, particularly in the maritime sense, as many of the key shipping lanes in the Pacific run through the South China Sea and Indonesian and Philippine Archipelagos.

The Seventh Fleet should emphasize cooperative exercises with our partners in Southeast Asia with a focus on SLOC protection, and defense of maritime commerce, as a key aspect of Theater Security Cooperation efforts. Much of the military to military interaction between the U.S. and Southeast Asian Nations is within the realm of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), however, it can serve as a foundation to more sophisticated interaction. As an example in March 2010, the U.S. and Philippine Navies conducted a joint visit board search and seizure exercise, designed to improve interoperability.⁴⁴ This exercise is somewhat more sophisticated than typical HA/DR interaction, and could serve as a foundation to building SLOC protection into U.S. and Philippine training efforts. There is quite obviously an imperative for Allied SLOC protection and working through the command and control and interoperability issues at the tactical level would enhance operational level employment in potential crises.

NOTES

1. Center for Naval Analysis “China’s Participation in Anti-Piracy Operations off the Horn of Africa: Driver’s and Implications,” Center for Naval Analysis (2009): 1, <http://www.cna.org/documents/piracy%20conference%20report.pdf>.
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