

AMERICA THREATENS CHINA: Pentagon Prepares for Confrontation in the Asia-Pacific Region

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[Stop NATO](#) 3 June 2012

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In January of this year the three officials in charge of U.S. global military strategy and operations – commander-in- chief President Barack Obama, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey – unveiled the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, entitled “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” which officially confirmed American plans to increase its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region to counter China, now the world’s second-largest economy.

Alternately referred to as rebalancing, reemphasis, refocusing and a pivot away from Europe and toward the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, the new doctrine reflects the past twenty years’ consolidation of U.S. military and political control of Europe through the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the subjugation of North Africa and the Middle East except for, at least for the present, Syria and Iran through the creation of U.S. Africa Command, NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative military partnerships and its ten-and-a-half- year-old Operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean, and the wars against Iraq and Libya.

Having not so much neutralized opposition – there were no effective challengers to U.S. geopolitical hegemony in the indicated areas – as eliminated remaining pockets of independence and nonalignment (Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya), the Pentagon and its allies are free to move against China, having already surrounded Russia through NATO expansion and partnerships from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, the South Caucasus to Central Asia, the Arctic Ocean to Mongolia.

On June 1 Pentagon chief Panetta spoke at the eleventh annual Shangri-La Dialogue defense summit in Singapore, where the U.S. has recently gained basing rights for its warships, and reiterated plans to expand, tighten and integrate its alliances with defense treaty partners in the Asia-Pacific: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand. (Taiwan is practically if not formally in that category.)

As the Defense Department’s news agency, American Forces Press Service, reported, Panetta emphasized that “Defense policy in the region calls for the U.S. military to expand military-to- military relationships well beyond the traditional treaty allies.” The allusion is to the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand) not already included in bilateral military alliances with Washington as well as new partners like Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Tonga and others supplying troops or transit bases for the U.S.-NATO war in Afghanistan. An old

ally, Pakistan, and newly acquired ones, India and Bangladesh, are also within the Pentagon's purview.

In the past few years the U.S. has pulled Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam into its political-military orbit and expanded partnerships with Malaysia and Singapore, which have troops serving under NATO command in Afghanistan along with Australia, Mongolia, New Zealand, South Korea and Tonga.

Panetta's comments in Singapore included the following: "By 2020, the Navy will reposture its forces from today's roughly 50/50 split between the Atlantic and Pacific to about a 60/40 split between those oceans - including six aircraft carriers, a majority of our cruisers, destroyers, littoral combat ships and submarines."

To appreciate the scale of what that redeployment portends, it's worth noting the unprecedented and unparalleled military capacity the U.S. has built from the end of World War II to the present, in the process establishing the first and only global military force.

The U.S. has eleven aircraft carriers with attached strike groups; all the world's supercarriers and all but one of its twelve nuclear-powered carriers. (France has the other.) The eleven American supercarriers are the largest warships ever built.

It has 61 guided missile destroyers and 22 guided missile cruisers, all of which are part of or can be upgraded to join the Aegis Combat System, thereby being capable of participating in Washington's worldwide interceptor missile program.

The U.S. Navy also possesses 72 submarines, 18 ballistic and 53 attack models, and 24 frigates, nine amphibious assault ships, seven amphibious transport docks, 12 dock landing ships, four littoral combat ships and scores of other vessels.

Washington has pledged to deploy 60 percent of the above to the Asia-Pacific region in the imminent future.

Ahead of his trip to Singapore, Panetta visited the headquarters of U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) in Honolulu, Hawaii and American Forces Press Service reported that "There are 330,000 U.S. service members in the Pacific Command area now, and Panetta anticipates the proportion of the total military in the region will rise."

The same source added: "The American military also wants to strengthen power projection capabilities in the region. Panetta said there will be new platforms and capabilities for troops in the area."

U.S. military chief Martin Dempsey is also attending the three-day Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore and his meetings in the Southeast Asian nation indicate one component of the Pentagon's "power projection" strategy for the Asia-Pacific area. He met with the host country's defense minister, chief of defense and heads of its army, air force and navy and toured the Sembawang Air Base and other military facilities.

His discussions included topics like the regular Commando Sling joint U.S.-Singapore air combat exercises and the imminent deployment of U.S. littoral combat ships to Singapore agreed upon late last year.

Singaporean Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen visited the Pentagon in April, during which Panetta announced the doubling of the number of U.S. warships to be “forward deployed” to Singapore, from two to four, for exercises and operations near the strategic Strait of Malacca.

In the same month the U.S. deployed the first 200 of 2,500 Marines to northern Australia as part of a military buildup which will also include aircraft, warships and drones.

The Philippines is the third Asia-Pacific nation where the Pentagon is securing new bases to contain and ultimately confront China.

In April the U.S. and the Philippines conducted the latest Balikatan military maneuvers with 4,500 American Marines and 2,500 Philippine troops which included an amphibious assault at Ulugan Bay on Palawan Island to rehearse the “recapture” of an island near the Spratly Islands contested by the Philippines and China.

Most of the Asia-Pacific is in the area of responsibility of U.S. Pacific Command, one of six Unified Combatant Commands the Pentagon employs to maintain control of and pre-position for potential military actions throughout the world. It consists of U.S. Army Pacific, U.S. Marine Forces Pacific, U.S. Pacific Fleet and U.S. Pacific Air Forces.

PACOM’s website boasts that its geographical reach “encompasses about half the earth’s surface, stretching from the waters off the west coast of the U.S. to the western border of India, and from Antarctica to the North Pole.”

Its area of responsibility takes in 36 nations and over half of the world’s population.

The website also itemizes American military assets already deployed to the Asia-Pacific:

Some 350,000 military personnel, one-fifth of total U.S. forces.

The U.S. Pacific Fleet, assigned to PACOM, includes six of eleven aircraft carrier strike groups, approximately 180 ships, 1,500 aircraft and 100,000 service members.

U.S. Marine Forces Pacific consists of two-thirds of U.S. Marine Corps combat troops, two Marine Expeditionary Forces and 85,000 personnel.

U.S. Pacific Air Forces has over 40,000 airman and more than 300 aircraft, with an additional 100 aircraft based in Guam.

U.S. Army Pacific has over 60,000 service members and five Stryker combat vehicle brigades.

There are also an estimated 1,200 Special Operations troops assigned to PACOM.

Components of U.S. Pacific Fleet, the U.S. Third Fleet is home-based in California and the Seventh Fleet in Japan. The Seventh Fleet, the largest forward-deployed naval force in the world, has 50 to 60 ships, 350 aircraft and 60,000 Marines and sailors.

U.S. Pacific Air Forces includes the Fifth Air Force in Japan, Seventh Air Force in South Korea, Eleventh Air Force in Alaska and Thirteenth Air Force in Hawaii.

PACOM has three subordinate unified commands: U.S. Forces Japan, U.S. Forces Korea and

Alaskan Command.

Pacific Command has in recent years been making inroads into Asian nations that were off-limits during the Cold War period and for the first decade and a half afterward.

PACOM has been running annual Khaan Quest military exercises in Mongolia since 2003, mainly to train Mongolian troops for deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

U.S. Army Pacific conducts annual Angkor Sentinel exercises in Cambodia, as with those in Mongolia including troops from American NATO and from other Asia-Pacific allies.

PACOM and its service affiliates also hold regular military exercises elsewhere throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

In January the U.S. and Japan held the latest Keen Edge command post exercise in Japan and Hawaii.

From January 15-February 17 of this year 7,000 U.S. troops and 3,000 from Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea participated in the Cobra Gold 2012 war games in Thailand.

The U.S. and South Korea held their joint Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercises from February 28 to April 30 (February 28-March 9 and March 1-April 30, respectively) with 11,000 American and over 200,000 South Korean troops.

In March the air forces of the U.S., Thailand and Singapore participated in the Cope Tiger exercise at the Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base.

At the end of the month the three-week U.S.-led Commando Sling air combat exercises in Singapore were begun.

In April the U.S. and India engaged in this year's Malabar naval exercise, the latest in a series of annual drills with that codename, in the Bay of Bengal. The ten-day Malabar 2012 exercise was led by the U.S. Seventh Fleet and included aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, guided missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill, guided missile destroyer USS Halsey and American aircraft and a submarine.

In the same month the 7,000-troop U.S.-Philippine Balikatan 2012 exercise was held in the South China Sea.

On May 30 the U.S. began the 18th annual Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) in Indonesia. The nine-day exercise included a U.S. Navy Task Group and Marine landing force.

Other regular U.S.-led military exercises in the Asia-Pacific include the biennial U.S.-Australia Talisman Sabre and the biennial Rim of the Pacific exercises, the second the largest multinational naval maneuvers in the world. This year's Rim of the Pacific exercise in and near Hawaii will run from June 29 to August 3 and include 24 nations, 42 ships, six submarines, over 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel.

Having vanquished most all islands of resistance and neutrality in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, the Pentagon is moving its global military machine into the Asia-Pacific for a

showdown with China.

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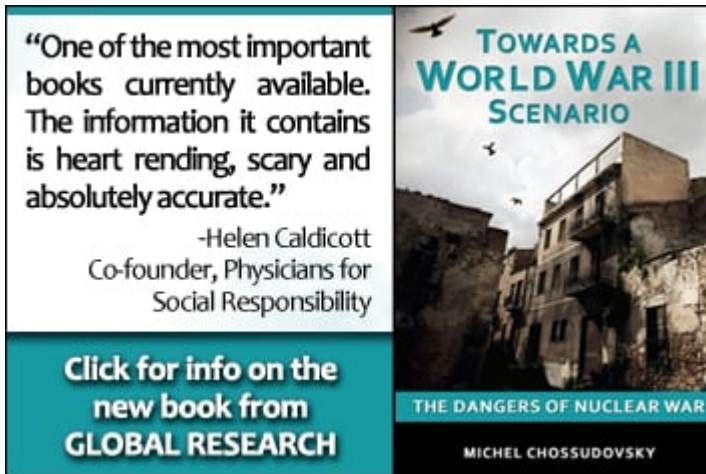
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