

House Armed Services Committee – Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces
27 February 2014

Capabilities to Support the Asia Pacific Rebalance – A Maritime Perspective
Witness Statement

In Asia-Pacific today, maritime considerations influence national security planning, economic exchange and societal development more than any other region, domain, or aspect of the global environment. Here, the maritime narrative influences the largest populations, economies, and militaries of the world, so nations that desire the capability to protect their economic interests, ensure stability, and secure the key lines of approach to their future, need maritime capabilities. As a result, decisions made about maritime forces directly impact the protection, representation, and ability of a nation to defend its sovereign interests at sea; in this region, seapower has returned to pre-eminence as an essential element of national power.

In the "Pacific Century," seapower resumes its traditional role in the sea lines of communication as an instrument of peace, stability, and protector of trade and development. For the US government, investments in the navy...as well as reductions contemplated in procurement, readiness, operations, and manpower, while other governments invest in their own maritime forces...have direct and predictable consequences that call into question the ability of the United States to remain engaged in the region, to defend its interests and those of its partners. I am not aware of any country in Asia-Pacific that is reducing the size or capability of its navy. Additionally, long-standing partners, friends, and allies in the region desire more American naval presence rather than less, because of concerns over tension and the potential for conflict.

In this context, the People's Republic of China drives any discussion about state interests and national security, regionally and globally. China has moved beyond a 'continental defense' strategy and her leaders are convinced that to defend China it is necessary to push foreign militaries out of its 'near seas' to the first island chain -- to include the Yellow Sea, East Sea, and South China Sea areas. This 'near-sea' defense strategy attempts to influence and to whatever extent possible, control all foreign military operations in adjacent seas, extending even to (and some cases within) the territorial seas of its neighbors. This strategy attempts to redefine the taxonomy, understanding, and use of the high seas in terms wholly unfamiliar to a region that is home to three of four of the world's largest economies, ten of the world's fastest growing economies, and one-third of global trade in transit. Today, maritime highways network and connect a regional, economic juggernaut made possible by US presence over the past six decades. To accede to the narrowly selective Chinese historic interpretation and expansive geographic claim in the South China Sea -- effectively makes 1600nm of water that conforms roughly to the shape of the extended southern Chinese coastline -- subject to internal Chinese law with sovereign, territorial rights attendant to it, which is unequivocally counter to the most

specific, unimpeachable axiom of the maritime commons, envisioned and practiced by nations for centuries in the form of customary international law.

As China has developed the technology, equipment, and confidence to execute this strategy, it has created hubris within its ranks and taken actions viewed and characterized by Japan and the ASEAN neighbors as 'over-reach' -- a term used to describe intimidating, aggressive behavior well-beyond acceptable norms. Assertive and expansive maritime territorial claims have touched-off and unleashed a volatile resurgence in nationalism, historic boundary disputes, and challenged access to resources in contested economic exclusion zones that fuel tension in the region.

We are witnessing the PLA growing rapidly in technical capability and industrial capacity symbiotic with an increasingly jingoistic fervor and rhetoric. We see evidence that technical military advancements have provided fertile ground for new diplomatic initiatives and concomitant challenges to established USG positions on: resource exploration, building ties to traditional US partners, maritime boundaries, and in other coercive ways that do not conform to international law, are antithetical to regional stability, and test globally accepted democratic principles at a time when our national mood has focused on domestic issues.

In looking at this half of the globe over the coming decades, relatively few topics have the potential to determine substantial political, economic, and military outcomes for such a large area of the community of nations as:

- (a) PRC expansion of influence (economic, political, military)
- (b) PRC near-sea defensive construct
- (c) PLA role in China's internal/external policy-making process
- (d) US posture, presence, and influence in the region
- (e) US economic performance

For decades, the U.S. Pacific Fleet has focused its security responsibilities in support of the Taiwan Relations Act...today, as a result of a decade of military modernization, the flashpoint for misunderstanding and conflict at sea extends beyond the Strait. Since there are no conventional arms control regimes or pre-established frameworks designed to manage escalation, the real possibility exists for conflict in the maritime domain that is not at the time, place, or for the duration of our choosing. The absence of a regime or framework to de-tension the area also creates the equally real probability for conflict that is regional in context, extending beyond the borders of the Taiwan Strait and involving US treaty allies, regional partners, as well as multinational commercial interests.

For very real strategic as well as operational reasons, we place a high premium on deterrence and conflict prevention strategies based on a tested formula of forward presence and cooperative relationships with our allies. Reassurance to allies and partners is a critical function of forward deployed U.S. forces. Forward presence is the face of US resolve. It presents the nation with the necessary capability and opportunity to exercise US leadership through appropriate, timely, and consequential actions...actions that are designed to address or resolve the coercive, unsafe, or unhealthy conditions that can affect economies, populations, and nations.

For real world economic and political reasons, there are direct linkages between national imperatives and the need for a Navy responsive to US interests overseas. It is important during a period of declining budgetary authority to memorialize 'first principles' that support conflict prevention strategies with an American military capability that:

- is forward-deployed to a region of consequence;
- builds true, deep partnerships and sustains influence with allies and partners;
- sustains wholeness in fleet readiness;
- attracts and retains high quality people;
- makes wise investments in an era of frugality.

During a period of vulnerability that comes with recapitalization, there is a requirement for short-term mitigations to address the immediate concerns of the current security environment versus the long-term need for programmatic investments. For a comparatively modest investment, munitions are an important, credible element of the discussion: continued investment in both capacity and capability for Integrated Air and Missile Defense, continued development for long range surface-to-surface striking capability, and continued procurement for air-to-air capability in a complex electro-magnetic environment. Despite budgetary pressures to the contrary, the Navy must be prepared with responsive capabilities and sufficient power to deter armed conflict and suppress threats to commerce in the maritime domain.

Nations in the region are watching, with keen interest, the affect of US economic challenges and the strain of more than a decade of war on the Navy's ability to remain forward, engaged, and ready. The US fiscal environment and the Asia Pacific security environment are on diametrically divergent paths. In my former position in the Pacific Fleet, we recognized the fiscal constraints and understand that we must balance investments (as well as offsets) with the 'wholeness' of the force in an environment that is changing at an increasing pace. We have an immediate challenge to manage short-term issues, which involve increasingly higher levels of risk. We have been on this page of history before and our team has faced austere economic cycles in the past. While the American public has kept faith with the navy, they have not changed their view of our mission or their expectations for our response to crisis conditions. Over the course of our respective careers, we have witnessed a Navy engaged in a variety of operations in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, sometimes focused on one enemy, as in the

Cold War against the Soviet Union, or sometimes deployed against a regional adversary, as in Vietnam or the Gulf War. In all that time, the U.S. Navy configured platforms for one contingency, but actually used it globally for many others, including humanitarian missions, well beyond the imaginations of those who laid the keel.

What has kept the Navy relevant since ship/submarine/aircraft design of our current fleet many years ago has been the skill and ingenuity of Sailors, young Americans, who continue to adapt, to think critically and address challenges for sustained operations from any location, at any time - without caveats. I would suggest that the continued investments made in people have improved the relevancy and responsiveness of the fleet in an era of great challenge and change. It is our people who make contact in the region, who represent the national interest, who act on democratic principles that appeal to audiences well beyond the confines of a single mission or operation, and who demonstrate the leadership, commitment, and resolve of the American government. Our Sailors provide the best and brightest return for US government investment.