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RUSI VI

*To promote national defence and security issues
through discussion and engagement*

**Newsletter of the Royal United Services Institute
of Vancouver Island**

The Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island is a member of the Conference of Defence Associations. The CDA is the oldest and most influential advocacy group in Canada's defence community, consisting of associations from all parts of the country.

The CDA expresses its ideas and opinions with a view to influencing government security and defence policy. It is a non-partisan, independent, and non-profit organization.



June 2021

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President's Message

We just completed our regular speaker's season with a webinar entitled *SS Werewolf: the Nazi Resistance Guerrilla Movement of 1944-47*. I hope you found it and our other 2021 webinars insightful. These webinars covered a variety of topics including the technical details behind Tom Hank's movie *Greyhound*, *US Space Force*, *HUMINT in Afghanistan* and *Forbidden Nation: A History of Taiwan* with Jonathan Manthorpe. If you missed any, they are posted to our website at <http://rusiviccda.org>. Finally, we will complete our electronic AGM this month and RUSI-VI will then stand down for the summer. Depending on provincial health restrictions, we will be either be doing webinars, or live meetings by September.

Due to the Pandemic it seems as if we are trapped in a kind of ground hog day between wearing masks, no international travel at all, and even restrictions on local excursions. However, the world has not stood still and several articles below quite clearly bear this out. This Newsletter includes two interesting articles on ongoing Chinese deception tactics in the spirit of Russia's 'Little Green Men' of 2014. Both Russia and China continue their onward march of opportunism, not unlike Germany in the 1930s. History teaches us that even small successes embolden the opportunist, who then continues to push for every advantage, until someone finally pushes back. No one likes a bully, nor will a bully be tolerated forever. Each opportunistic victory therefore, no matter large or small, inevitably must lead to a future rebuff. The sooner the opportunist gets his knuckles rapped, and understands that he has gone too far and can go no farther, the better it is for all concerned. Unfortunately, the longer the delay the more painful it is for all concerned.

Get your second vaccination as soon as you can, enjoy the summer, and take care!

Scott H. Osborne
President
Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island

US Air Force's biggest planes need to do more than carry things in the next war, air-mobility general says

insider@insider.com Microsoft News (Christopher Woody) 9 April, 2021



© US Air Force/Senior Airman Cassandra Johnson Airmen load equipment on a C-5M Super Galaxy at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, May 10, 2019. US Air Force/Senior Airman Cassandra Johnson

- The US military believes a war with Russia or China will require its current platforms do more.
- For Air Mobility Command, that means cargo planes and tankers can't just be carting fuel and supplies.

The prospect of war with a powerful adversary means the Air Force's cargo and tanker planes need to be able to do more than move supplies and fuel, according to Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost, head of Air Mobility Command.

"Look at the competition that we're in right now. Why wouldn't we change the calculus by doing different things, moving away from the antiquated view that [Air Mobility Command] just brings stuff ... and [stays] outside the threat ring to be a maneuver force to support inside the threat ring, because that's really where we're going," Van Ovost said at Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies [event](#) on March 31.

Mobility aircraft, particularly tankers, will be "forward in the fight," Van Ovost added, making them well suited to be primary or backup "nodes" to process and relay information to other aircraft and outposts.



Reuters A KC-46. Reuters

"Our last experiment had a C-17 as the forward node to do crunching of data," Van Ovost said. "It was on the ground, but we showed that a C-17 with a current setup of antennas could do that work, so why wouldn't we put that on all the airplanes?"

The new KC-46 tanker, which is still struggling with [other aspects](#) of its mission, will be the first to get a new pod developed as part of the Advanced Battle Management System, the Air Force's [contribution](#) to a broader Pentagon effort to digitally connect military forces.

"That's a pod on the airplane" that can provide command and control, translating information between aircraft and processing data, and it could in the future be hooked up to other aircraft, such as the KC-135 tanker, Van Ovost added.

"I absolutely believe that all the platforms need to be connected to provide the resilient and interoperable pathways not just for Air Mobility but to be able to allow F-35s and F-22s to talk, to be able to talk to [the Valkyrie](#), and to have resilient forward nodes that can process data and send out orders," Van Ovost said.

Preparing for 'the next fight'



© US Air Force A C-17 drops palletized munitions (simulated JASSMs) during Advanced Battle Management Onramp #2 testing. US Air Force

The cargo fleet will likely also be carrying weapons for strikes and self-defense, Van Ovost said.

"For us right now, we look at the [Special Operations Command] model that they're doing with the C-130s, and we think to ourselves, 'How can you do that with C-17s? What if you had a platform that could eject JASSMs out of the back of the airplane?'" Van Ovost said, referring to the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile.

Air Force Special Operations Command [tested](#) so-called palletized munitions in early 2021. In a separate test in September, a C-17 dropped a pallet of simulated JASSMs. The Air Force and private industry are [continuing](#) to develop the concept.

"The name of the game is to, at lower costs, provide mass on target," Van Ovost said. "Frankly, palletized munitions, that's quite the load if you can eject that out of the back of the airplane and get those things flying."



© US Air Force A KC-46A refuels a C-17 Globemaster. US Air Force

Dropping bombs out of cargo plane, which other crews then guide to targets, would be faster than unloading weapons "on a ramp somewhere" to be reloaded onto bombers, Van Ovost said, adding that in a future experiment, Air Mobility Command will test its ability to command and control such munitions after dropping them.

Being forward also means closer to the enemy, and Air Mobility Command has been "looking at high-value aircraft self-defense in all kinds of different ways," Van Ovost said.

The pod deployed aboard tankers and airlifters could be reconfigured to provide "defensive capabilities," Van Ovost said. Those planes could also carry "attritable" systems - [reusable but also expendable](#) - for the same purpose.

Central to all of that is "battlespace awareness," of which most of the mobility fleet has "zero" right now, Van Ovost said, adding that putting aircraft on the same network would give them a common picture of incoming threats.

"So now I may not need fighters immediately by our aircraft. Perhaps they can intercept it forward of the aircraft or ... we can have defensive counter-air attritables that are either on the wings that could launch out and do a headshot or simply electronic warfare in those pods so ... we can deflect the missile."



© Senior Airman Roslyn Ward A US Air Force KC-135 refuels a B-52 over the Middle East, December 30, 2020. Senior Airman Roslyn Ward

Van Ovost cited the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's "[Gremlins](#)" as an example of an "attritable" that could be launched from a C-17 or C-5 against aerial threats and then be recaptured and rearmed.

Other traditional defenses are also an option. "We have hardpoints on the C-17. We have hardpoints on the KC-46 - not a hard stretch to think that we could put one or two missiles on there for self-defense," Van Ovost said.

Talk of new roles for the airlift fleet has prompted questions about whether there are enough of those planes to do those tasks and conduct standard mobility operations, but "the next fight" likely won't have "an iron build up" at a major bases or drawn-out attrition warfare, Van Ovost said.

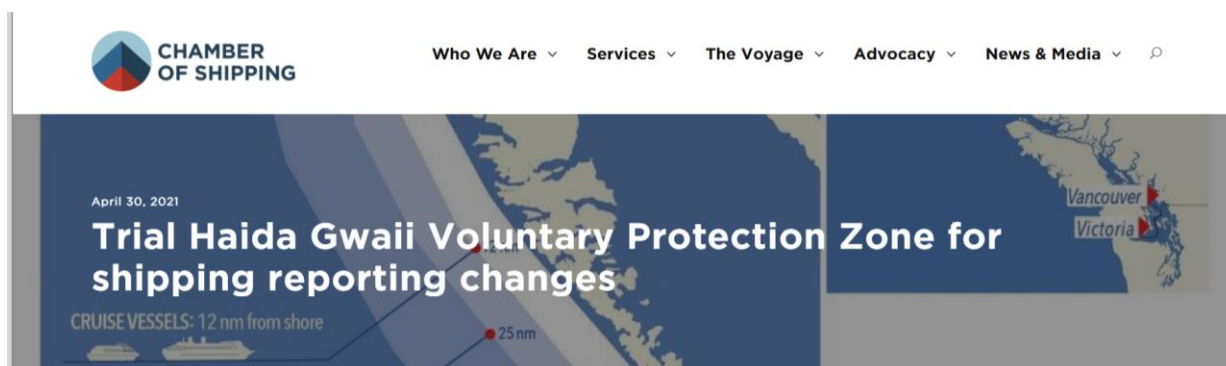
"The next fight is going to be just-in-time, and I think the intensity is going to be much shorter," Van Ovost added. "So we really have to think about how we're going to use the airplanes in the future and what warfare is going to look like."

Trial Haida Gwaii Voluntary Protection Zone for Shipping Reporting Changes

The following observation comes from RUSI NS and refers to precedence setting in the world order.

'This just came up to our attention thanks to our colleagues in the Company of Master Mariners of Canada. A voluntary protection zone, though Transport Canada Ship Safety Bulletin 26/2020 states "commercial vessels that are of 500 gross tonnage or more must travel at least 50 nautical miles away from the shores of the west coast of Haida Gwaii." 'Must' is not voluntary in mil speak. And 50 miles is outside territorial waters and the contiguous zone. Is Canada setting a bad precedent that China and other authoritarian regimes will utilize to reduce the 'freedom of the ocean common' and the passage of trade thereon?

Further, the rationale for the zone (which is linked from the Safety Bulletin to a website by the Council of Haida Nation and Transport Canada) seems to be environmental. One wonders what consideration was given to a marine protection zone.



Starting May 1, Transport Canada will be contacting ship operators directly if they sail through the Voluntary Protection Zone (VPZ) extending west of Haida Gwaii. During the trial, commercial vessels greater than 500 gross tonnage are asked to transit a **minimum distance of 50 nautical miles** from the west coast of Haida Gwaii, with the following exceptions:

- Cruise vessels are asked to observe a minimum 12 nm distance from shore;
- Vessels transiting between Pacific Northwest ports (Washington, BC and Alaska) are asked to observe a minimum 25 nm distance from shore;
- Tugs and barges (including pushing and towing alongside), no minimum distance; and

- Fishing vessels, no minimum distance.

Observing the VPZ is voluntary and only when it does not jeopardize the safety of navigation, the vessel, the persons aboard, and the cargo. Transport Canada Ship Safety Bulletin #26/2020 and the Canadian Coast Guard's monthly Notice to Mariner – Western Edition include additional details.

The French Armed Forces Are Planning for High Intensity War

After a decade of counter-insurgency, plans are changing.

The Economist Apr 3, 2021

Editor : Ever the ebb and flow of focus for our Armed Forces. We haven't seen any articles on the Canadian Situation, nevertheless we can be assured that the Big Battle Scenario is one of many that are being studied by the CAF, but will our equipment new and existing be able to meet these high intensity war scenarios?



In the forests and plains of the Champagne-Ardenne region, where once the great powers went into battle, the French armed forces are beginning to prepare for the return of a major conflict. Planned for 2023, Exercise Orion is a full-scale divisional exercise that will last several days, based probably out of camps at Suippes, Mailly and Mourmelon. It will involve the full range of French military capacity on a scale not tested for decades. The drill will include command-post exercises, hybrid scenarios, simulation, and live-fire drills. Around 10,000 soldiers could take part, as well as the air force and, in a separate maritime sequence, the navy. Belgian, British and American forces may join in. There are other

signs that the French armed forces are in the midst of a generational transformation. In January, the general staff quietly established ten working groups to examine the country's readiness for high-intensity war. French generals reckon that they have a decade or so to prepare for it. The groups cover everything from munition shortages to the resilience of society, including whether citizens are "ready to accept the level of casualties we have never seen since World War two", says one participant. The spectre of high-end war is now so widespread in French military thinking that the scenario has its own acronym: hem, or *hypothèse d'engagement majeur* (hypothesis of major engagement). The presumed opponents are unnamed, but analysts point not only to Russia, but also Turkey or a North African country.

That represents a seismic shift for French forces. Thirty years ago, they mostly did peacekeeping. Over the past decade, they have turned to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, whether abroad (Opération Barkhane in the Sahel) or at home (Opération Sentinelle). But in his strategic vision for 2030 published last year, General Thierry Burkhard, the head of the French army, called for preparing for high-intensity, state-on-state conflict. "We absolutely have to prepare for a more dangerous world," General Burkhard recently told *The Economist*. This requires what he calls a "hardening" of the land army. Currently France keeps 5,100 troops in the Sahel as part of Barkhane. Future operations "could involve brigades, or a division", meaning 8,000-25,000 soldiers. The need to change scale over the next decade, says the general, will require a mix of reforms: more demanding recruitment; investment in modern equipment; simpler organisational structures to make the army nimbler; and toughened training for a major conflict. "We will be tested more and more brutally," he says. "We need to realise this."

When Emmanuel Macron was elected president in 2017, the armed forces initially doubted his commitment to military spending. After imposing a round of short-term cuts, he rowed publicly with General Pierre de Villiers, then head of the joint chiefs of staff, prompting the general to resign. Since then, however, Mr Macron has kept a campaign promise to invest heavily in France's soldiers. The defence budget for 2019-25 got a big boost, taking annual spending to €50bn (\$59bn) by the end of the period, by which time it will be 46% up on its level of 2018. Weighted towards the later years, the budget allows military planners to think ahead, buy kit and reorganise. "It's the first time in memory that we have a reasonable fit between the planning documents and the budget allocated," says François Heisbourg of the Foundation for Strategic Research in Paris. It also means that France now meets its NATO commitment to spend at least 2% of its GDP on defence. The core of French military modernisation is the Scorpion programme, a \$6.8bn project to replace virtually every front-line motorised and armoured vehicle in the army, upgrade the 1990s-era Leclerc tank and connect all these together over a new digital network.

The idea is that a first fully equipped Scorpion brigade should be ready by 2023. Rémy Héméz, a French officer and researcher, says that in the 15 years between 2010 and 2025 the army's equipment will have changed more than it did in the four decades between 1970 and 2010. In many respects, France's approach to future war differs from the tech-heavy vision recently unveiled by Britain. Whereas Britain is cutting troops and armour, France is keeping 60% more soldiers than Britain plans to, and 50% more tanks.



The Economist

It has been relatively slow to acquire and arm drones. “There is a great risk of falling behind as automation on the battlefield accelerates,” warned a report by the Institut Montaigne, a think-tank. Indeed, French officers tend to be more sceptical than British or American ones that technology will transform the battlefield. “Technology is never 100% effective,” warns General Burkhard. “Soldiers must always be able to fight in a degraded way...when the technology does not work any more.” That does not mean France is ignoring new domains of war; space, in particular, is a priority. In September last year France’s air force became the “Air and Space Force”, having earlier set up a new military space command in Toulouse. The French armed forces

are also expanding their information warfare and cyber capabilities. In December 2020 Facebook and Instagram removed a network of 100 fake accounts linked to the French armed forces after they sparred with Russian-backed ones over the Central African Republic and Mali, among other African battlegrounds where the two countries vie for influence.

As France starts to gear up its armed forces for all these new forms of warfare, however, there are a number of serious challenges. The Sahel experience, says General Burkhard, is “undeniably a real strength”. Over a vast area of semi-arid scrub, soldiers and special forces take part in high-risk combat operations, which are both technically and tactically challenging. The French army has reported 57 deaths since 2013. Yet Barkhane is a highly asymmetric conflict, in which the French enjoy air supremacy, with no communications interference or threat from drones, missiles or cyber-attacks. The other problem is that French forces are being pulled in several directions at once. In mid-March a dozen French tanks, 160 armoured vehicles and 300 troops arrived in Tapa, in Estonia. They were the latest French contribution to the NATO battlegroups stationed in Poland and the Baltic states to deter Russian attack. Indeed military staff assume future engagements would be alongside allies—if not NATO, then at least America, or a coalition of the willing. These modernisation efforts are consistent both with NATO’s priorities and with Mr Macron’s desire for Europe to bolster its indigenous defences, though France and others remain reliant on American support for key enabling assets, like airlift and air defence.

In addition to eastern Europe, France is increasingly preoccupied to the south. In the eastern Mediterranean, France and Turkey have quarrelled over Libya, Syria and Cyprus, prompting Mr Macron to dispatch two warplanes and a frigate to Greek waters last August. France is also deeply involved in the Indo-Pacific, where its overseas territories contain 1.6m French citizens and 7,000 soldiers. France has sustained a steady naval presence in the area. The catch is that the navy has just 15 major surface ships to deal with all these issues, points out Admiral Pierre Vandier, France’s chief of naval staff. “All of us Europeans are on thin ice. We may stretch our forces between doing well in the Atlantic, doing well in the Med, doing well in the Gulf and doing well in the Indo-Pacific.” Prioritising between these is no longer a job for the armed forces, he says, but “a political decision” for Mr Macron, or for his successor. “We will have choices to make, for sure.”

Russian-Turkish Relations and their Implications for the West

Col (Ret'd) Robert E. Hamilton & Anna Mikulska, Foreign Policy Research Institute – 8 Apr 2021



(Main

Summary of paper (Article at [Link following this summary](#))

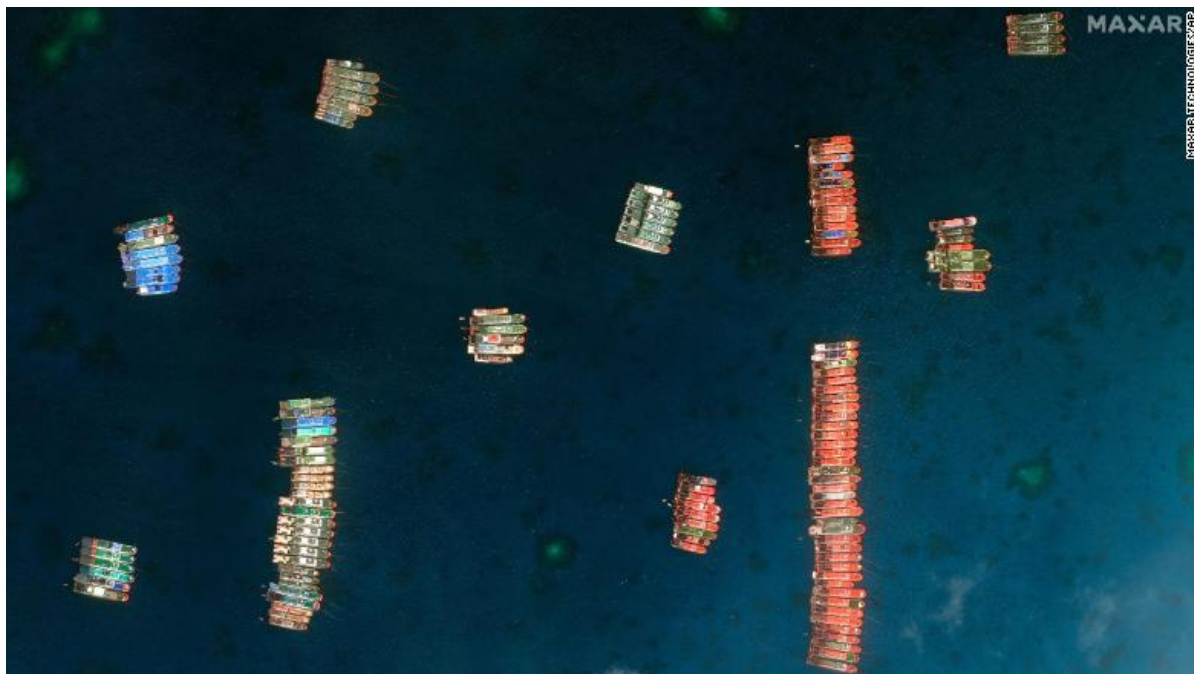
The relationship between the Russian Federation and Republic of Turkey is one of the most important bilateral relationships in Eurasia today. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) original adversary and one of its earliest members have in recent times veered sharply between cooperation—often against NATO’s interests—and competition so intense that it seemed war between them was possible. Politically, their leaders and their systems of government share a basic compatibility predicated on authoritarianism and resistance to what they claim is Western meddling in internal affairs. Militarily, Moscow and Ankara have at times cooperated closely. For instance, the two have worked to marginalize the U.S. military’s influence in Syria, and Turkey has purchased and deployed Russian S-400 air defense systems, putting its defense relationship with the United States in jeopardy. At other times, such as in the military escalation in Idlib (Syria), the Libyan Civil War, and the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict, the two have found themselves backing different sides and had to work assiduously to prevent a direct military clash. Economically, the relationship has been historically unbalanced in Russia’s favor, but Turkey’s increasing trade in services and emergence as an important energy storage and transport hub may change this. The two economies share a basic complementarity, with few areas where they compete in the production of goods and services. This dynamic may increase the ability of their economic relationship to act as a “shock absorber” and minimize the impact of disruptions in other

facets of their ties. Overall, Moscow and Ankara have worked to emphasize areas of cooperation and “compartmentalize” areas of difference. Policymakers in Western capitals will need to develop an understanding of the drivers of the Russian-Turkish relationship and their effects on Western interests.

<https://www.fpri.org/article/2021/04/cooperation-competition-and-compartmentalization-russian-turkish-relations-and-their-implications-for-the-west/>

Beijing has a Navy It Doesn't Even Admit Exists, Experts Say and it's Swarming Parts of the South China Sea

Analysis by **Brad Lendon**, Hong Kong CNN - Updated 6:17 AM ET, April 13, 2021



This satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows Chinese vessels in the Whitsun Reef located in the disputed South China Sea. Tuesday, March 23, 2021.

They've been dubbed China's "Little Blue Men," an allegedly **Beijing-controlled maritime militia** that analysts say could be hundreds of boats and thousands of crew members strong.

China doesn't acknowledge their existence and when questioned, refers to them as a "so-called maritime militia."

But Western experts say the alleged militia is an integral part of Beijing's efforts to exert its territorial claims in the South China Sea and beyond. They claim its blue-painted vessels and their crews -- allegedly funded and controlled by the People's Liberation Army -- can quickly bring a Chinese presence so large around disputed reefs and islands they are almost impossible to challenge without triggering a military confrontation.

The apparent militia made headlines last month when more than [200 Chinese fishing boats crowded around Whitsun Reef](#), a Philippine possession in the Spratly Island chain in the South China Sea.

Analysts at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in Singapore say they've never seen a Chinese operation of this size before.

"The Whitsun Reef incident is unprecedented in scale and notable for its duration: the largest numbers of Chinese fishing vessels gathered at any time at one Spratly reef, and staying there for several weeks," Samir Puri and Greg Austin, both senior fellows at the IISS, [wrote last week on the organization's blog](#).



In this photo provided by the National Task Force-West Philippine Sea, Chinese vessels are moored at Whitsun Reef, South China Sea, on March 27, 2021.

The Philippines protested the Whitsun incident to Beijing, calling the boats a "swarming and threatening presence" and saying the flotilla was infringing on Philippine territory and fishing grounds. Manila demanded the Chinese boats leave the area, which it maintains is in exclusive economic zone.

Beijing countered that the boats, which numbered 220 at one point, according to the Philippine government, were simply escaping rough seas by moving within a lagoon formed by the boomerang-shaped Whitsun Reef, which Beijing calls Niu'e Jiao and claims as part of its territory.

"Due to maritime situation, some fishing boats have been taking shelter from the wind near Niu'e Jiao, which is quite normal. We hope relevant sides can view this in a rational light," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said.

The Chinese Embassy in Manila was more blunt. "There is no Chinese Maritime Militia as alleged," it said.

The diplomatic back and forth between Philippine and Chinese officials continued last week, with the Chinese Embassy in Manila calling remarks by the Philippine defense secretary regarding the Chinese boats as "wanton" and "perplexing." The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs fired back, deploring the Chinese Embassy's statement, reminding China its diplomats are "guests" in Manila and pledging to issue daily diplomatic protests while Chinese vessels are in the Philippines' maritime zones.

How Does the Chinese Maritime Militia Allegedly Work?

Despite Chinese government denials, there is little ambiguity in Western circles about what the Pentagon calls the People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia (PAFMM).

"The People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia don't fish," Carl Schuster, a former director of operations at the US Pacific Command's Joint Intelligence Center, told CNN. "They have automatic weapons aboard and reinforced hulls, making them very dangerous at close range. Also, they have a top speed of around 18-22 knots, making them faster than 90% of the world's fishing boats."



China has built the world's largest navy. Now what's Beijing going to do with it?

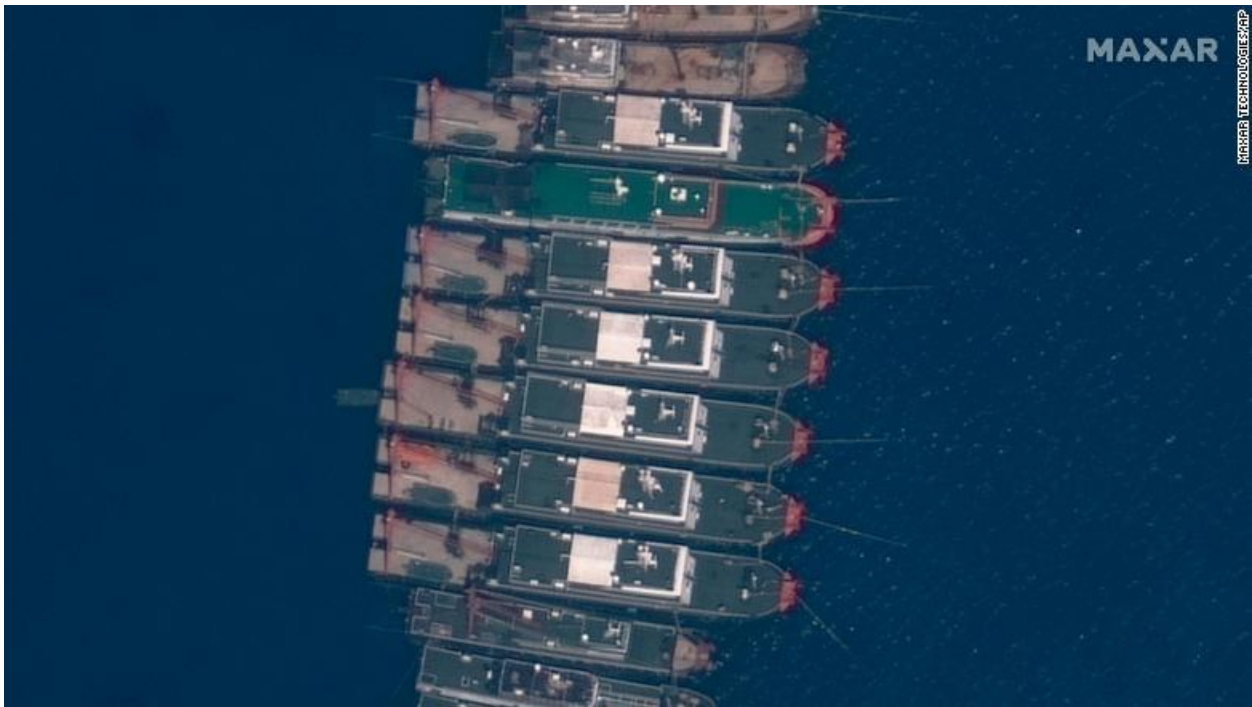
Some experts have taken to referring to the militia as "Little Blue Men," a reference to the color of their boats' hulls and to Russia's "Little Green Men," soldiers in unmarked green uniforms who infiltrated Crimea before Moscow annexed it from Ukraine in 2014.

"The Maritime Militia is used by Beijing 'to subvert other nations' sovereignty and enforce unlawful claims,'" a [December report](#) from the heads of the US Navy, Marines and Coast Guard said.

"The Militia is a key component of China's Armed Forces and a part of what it calls the 'People's Armed Forces System,'" Conor Kennedy and Andrew Erickson, two leading American experts on the subject, [wrote for the US Naval War College](#) in 2017.

It is "a state-organized, -developed, and -controlled force operating under a direct military chain of command to conduct Chinese state-sponsored activities," they added.

The alleged militia is integrated with China's fishing fleet, the world's largest with more than 187,000 boats, Erickson told CNN, but the actual number of armed boats remains unclear to Western experts.



This satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows Chinese vessels anchored the Whitsun Reef located in the disputed South China Sea. Tuesday, March 23, 2021.

Whatever their ranks, experts say they can lead large flotillas of actual fishing boats in actions to further Chinese government policies and territorial claims -- including those in the South China Sea.

"China is typically secretive about its Third Sea Force (behind the PLA Navy and coast guard), which might conceivably number in the thousands of vessels and in the tens of thousands of personnel. Possibly more," Erickson told CNN.

A [2020 US Defense Department report](#) on the Chinese military mentions only 84 actual maritime militia boats, all assigned to a unit operating out of Sansha City on Hainan island, in the northern reaches of the South China Sea. The unit, established in 2016, gets frequent subsidies to operate in the Spratly Islands, the report said.

"This particular PAFMM unit is also China's most professional. Its forces are paid salaries independent of any clear commercial fishing responsibilities and recruited from recently separated veterans," it said.

But Erickson told CNN the boats seen around Whitsun Reef in recent weeks looked different from those in the Hainan unit, suggesting full-time militia boats are greater in number than previously thought.

Erickson and colleague Ryan Martinson, [writing in the journal Foreign Policy](#) late last month, said tracking of some of the Chinese boats at Whitsun using open-source intelligence shows they came from Taishan in China's southern Guangdong province.



At least seven "enormous" trawlers that were in the Whitsun lagoon could be part of "the most advanced PAFMM unit yet developed and deployed," Erickson and Martinson wrote.

Using automatic identification system data, they said the boats at Whitsun had patrolled the Union Banks, where Whitsun Reef is, as well as other Spratly Islands features like the Subi and Mischief reefs, both of which have been built up and militarized by the Chinese armed forces.

"There is no evidence of fishing whatsoever during these laser-focused operations, but every indication of trolling for territorial claims," the pair wrote.

[Data that Erickson and Martinson compiled from MarineTraffic.com](#) shows just how frequently the unit has been in the Spratly Islands chain over the past year.

As of March 29, only 44 boats remained in the Whitsun Reef lagoon, CNN affiliate [CNN Philippines reported](#), citing a statement from the Philippine government's National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea.

The rest had scattered to other contested reefs and islands in nearby waters, the statement added.

What is the purpose of the Maritime Militia?

The concept of a maritime militia, or an irregular naval force, allows China to make territorial claims in huge numbers without ever involving the People's Liberation Army proper, Western experts say.

Even if lead boats like those mentioned by Erickson and Martinson are relatively small in number, they can spearhead flotillas in the hundreds -- as seen in Whitsun Reef.

"These classic 'gray zone' operations are designed to 'win without fighting' by overwhelming the adversary with swarms of fishing vessels," Derek Grossman, a RAND Corp defense analyst, [wrote last year](#).

Jay Batongbacal, director of the Institute for Maritime Affairs at the University of the Philippines, summed up what Beijing has done in recent weeks at Whitsun Reef and recent years across the South China Sea -- 1.3 million square miles of water, almost all of which Beijing claims as Chinese territory.

"They are now essentially occupying Whitsun Reef by the mere presence of their vessels," Batongbacal said in [an interview with National Public Radio](#).

"That's actually the objective of the Chinese strategy, to establish de facto control and dominance over the entire South China Sea through these incremental moves."



In this photo provided by the National Task Force-West Philippine Sea, Chinese vessels are moored at Whitsun Reef, South China Sea on March 27, 2021.

From a tactical standpoint, the fishing boats represent hundreds of obstacles an adversary like the US Navy would have to work around. And the US Navy could likely only deploy a few destroyers at any one time to challenge them.

That puts huge numbers in China's favor.

"Because they are cheap, fishing vessels will always outnumber warships," Johns Hopkins University researcher Shuxian Luo and Columbia University researcher Jonathan Panter [wrote in the US Army's Military Review journal](#) earlier this year.

So even real, unarmed fishing boats acting under the leadership of maritime militia vessels can be an effective military force.

"Instead of a kinetic threat, Chinese fishing vessels present more of a disruptive one. Deployed in even limited numbers, fishing boats can inhibit, if not prohibit altogether, a warship's ability to conduct" anti-submarine warfare and flight operations with its helicopters, Luo and Panter wrote.

From a strategic standpoint, "challenging these vessels is dangerous," they wrote -- especially for other Southeast Asian nations that have claims to features in the South China Sea but don't have the military might to stand up to China.

"Weaker states, aware of Chinese fishing vessels' possible government affiliation, might hesitate to engage with them in a way that could provoke a PRC (Beijing central government) response," they said.

Because China says they are not military vessels, it can claim any action against them by foreign navies or coast guards would constitute an attack on Chinese civilians.

"The strength of the maritime militia is its deniability, which allows its vessels to harass and intimidate foreign civilian craft and warships while leaving China room to deescalate by denying its affiliation with these activities," Luo and Panter wrote.

But with those overwhelming numbers for China comes risk as well, the analysts said.

"The same factors that make the maritime militia a deniable force (its civilian crews and dual-use technology) also raise the risk of accidents and escalations," Luo and Panter wrote.

"This is a toxic mix: due to the maritime militia's deniability and the core interests at stake, the PRC (People's Republic of China) has a high incentive to employ it, but the more frequent its operations, the greater the likelihood of interactions with US vessels that could spin out of control."



In this March 7, 2021, photo provided by the Philippine Coast Guard/National Task Force-West Philippine Sea, some of the 220 Chinese vessels are seen moored at Whitsun Reef, South China Sea.

And it's not just interactions with US ships that could spark wider conflict.

A statement from the White House said US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan spoke with his Filipino counterpart and said the US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty applies in this case.

That would mean any hostile action against Philippine forces or territory by China could bring a US military response.

The US kept up the dialogue with Manila last Thursday, when US Secretary of State Antony Blinken tweeted he had a substantive conversation with Philippine Foreign Secretary Teddy Locsin "discussing our concerns with People's Republic of China militia vessels in the South China Sea."

China, for its part, has said it is the United States that is at the root of tensions in the South China Sea -- on the military level by sending its warships and warplanes on exercises there, and on the diplomatic level with bellicose statements.

When then-US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last summer accused China of "bullying" its Southeast Asian neighbor, the Chinese Embassy in Washington said the US State Department "deliberately

distorted facts, exaggerated the situation in the region and attempted to sow discord between China and other littoral countries," [the state-run Global Times reported](#).

Where has this activity been seen before?

The concept of a Chinese maritime militia traces its roots back to the days just after the Communist revolution in 1949 as the government of Mao Zedong looked for coastal defense, Grossman, the RAND analyst, wrote.

Without any navy to speak of, Beijing pumped money and training into a maritime militia left over from the nationalist regime it ousted. A few years later, collectivization of local fisheries added a new layer of Communist Party control to the militias, Grossman said.

In the 1960s, as the PLA Navy developed, it trained the militias in military tactics and operations and used them in more PLA Navy missions, he added.



The tiny islands that could explode the China-Vietnam relationship

But in 1974, as China fought with then-US ally South Vietnam over control of the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, the use of fishing vessels in combat operations proved their worth, Grossman wrote.

The PLA Navy used two fishing trawlers to deliver 500 Chinese troops to the disputed islands as the presence of civilian Chinese fishing boats around them slowed South Vietnamese military decision making, the RAND analyst said.

Once the Chinese troops were in place, the South Vietnamese garrison surrendered.

"A key lesson learned for Beijing was that leveraging fishing militia forces was far less likely to trigger US intervention in the matter even when the threatened neighbor was a US ally," Grossman said.

In the South China Sea, the Philippines is one of those US allies -- and China has used the maritime militia in operations to gain control of territory recognized by a United Nations tribunal as belonging to Manila, experts and officials say.

Grossman and others note the presence of a maritime militia in Chinese operations that led to Beijing's control of Mischief Reef and Scarborough Shoal in 1995 and 2012, respectively.



The Chinese-controlled artificial island of Mischief reef in the South China Sea, as seen by CNN from a US reconnaissance plane on August 10, 2018.

A 2016 ruling by the UN Tribunal said both Mischief and Scarborough are in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, but China does not recognize the ruling and in fact has built one of its largest South China Sea fortifications on Mischief.

Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Sunday said what China is doing now is a repeat of 1995 and 2012.

"The utter disregard by the Chinese Embassy in Manila of international law, especially the UNCLOS to which China is a party, is appalling," Lorenzana said in statement.

"The continued presence of Chinese maritime militias in the area reveals their intent to further occupy features in the West Philippine Sea."

China has also used fishing boats to take on the US Navy directly, [according to the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative](#) (AMTI), part of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

On March 9, 2009, two fishing boats -- operating with Chinese naval and fisheries ships -- allegedly attempted to target the towed sonar array of the USNS Impeccable, a civilian-crewed survey ship, in the South China Sea. The Chinese trawlers also stopped in front of the US ship, forcing it to perform an emergency stop to avoid collision, according to the AMTI report.

Meanwhile, another US survey ship, USNS Victorious, was being harassed in the Yellow Sea, the report said.

China claimed the US ships were operating illegally in its exclusive economic zone. Washington said its ships were in international waters and well within their rights to be there.

A precarious future

The 2009 incident showed how close the US and China could come to an actual confrontation because of Beijing's alleged use of fishing boats for military purposes. But Grossman said, given neither the Impeccable incident or any of its island occupations have blunted Chinese ambitions in the South China Sea, more deployments are likely.



Rare footage shows US patrol of South China Sea

"If history is a good indication of what to expect in the future, then Beijing is likely to double down on the PAFMM in virtually any scenario imaginable. That means it should be a force to be reckoned in the years to come," he said.

Puri and Austin, the IISS analysts, said Beijing is already taking stock of reactions to Whitsun Reef.

"The Whitsun Reef incident is a powerful demonstration of China's willingness to run risks by assembling such a large concentration of vessels in a highly contested area," they wrote.

"If these analytic assumptions are accurate, China's military leadership will be evaluating the performance of its most recent maritime militia foray and the responses it has elicited from others," they said.

Robert Williams, executive director of the Paul Tsai China Center at Yale Law School, said China would likely try to keep the intentions of any maritime militia -- and the rules it adheres to -- murky.

"China is highly effective in utilizing non-militarized coercion tools. Beijing has not been keen to give up these tools, which it sees as incurring limited escalation risks with neighboring countries," Williams [wrote on the Lawfare blog](#) of the Brookings Institution.

Essentially, Beijing wants to keep Washington -- and its South China Sea neighbors -- guessing.

"It would be an overstatement ... to claim that the Chinese military establishment relishes crises. Many PLA thinkers are highly sensitive to the destabilizing risks of military crises," Williams wrote.

But China, he said, sees "ambiguous signaling as a source of ... deterrence."

Essentially, if an adversary is constantly trying to assess intentions, it isn't taking action.

China Tries to Wear Down its Neighbors with Pressure Tactics

With military flights, maritime militia patrols and sand dredging, China is pressuring Taiwan, the Philippines and other Southeast Asian neighbors.



A Taiwanese soldier stands on guard at the Hukou military base during the military exercise on Jan. 19, 2021. Taiwan staged a military drill using tanks, mortars and small arms intended to repel an attack from mainland China. Walid Berrazeg / SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

April 10, 2021, 3:00 AM PDT NBC NEWS

By Dan De Luce

WASHINGTON — China is trying to wear down its neighbors with [relentless pressure](#) tactics designed to push its territorial claims, employing military aircraft, militia boats and sand dredgers to [dominate](#) access to disputed areas, U.S. government officials and regional experts say.

The confrontations fall short of outright military action without shots being fired, but Beijing's aggressive moves are gradually altering the status quo, laying the foundation for China to potentially exert control over contested territory across vast stretches of the Pacific Ocean, the officials and experts say.

Since June, [Chinese military](#) planes, sometimes including fighter jets and bombers, have regularly flown into Taiwan's air defense identification zone, forcing Taipei to scramble fighter jets.



Taiwanese coast guard looks at a sand-dredging ship with a Chinese flag in the waters off the Taiwan-controlled Matsu islands, on Jan. 28, 2021. Ann Wang / Reuters

Taiwan's much smaller air force has struggled to keep up with the incursions, which occur on a near daily basis, and Taiwanese officials have acknowledged the strain that the Chinese flights put on its armed forces. Two Taiwanese fighter jets crashed last month, the third aviation accident for Taiwan's military since October.

Last month, Taiwan's deputy defense minister, Chang Che-ping, told parliament the military would no longer scramble jets every time the Chinese encroached the air defense zone, and instead would track the incoming planes with land-based missile defense systems.

"We are considering the war of attrition issue," Chang said.

Although Taiwan has a well-trained, modern air force, officials concluded that the odds were stacked against them, said Gregory Poling of the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank in Washington. China has more aircraft and more pilots than Taiwan, and the strain on the crews and the wear and tear on the airplanes would only grow over time.

"If it's a numbers game, [China is going to win](#)," Poling said.

A similar scenario has played out across the South China Sea and the East China Sea, with Taiwan, the Philippines and other governments struggling to fend off China's numerous maritime militia boats, coast guard vessels and naval ships venturing into disputed territory.

The Chinese are "trying to grind them down," said a senior U.S. Defense official.

To the south off the coast of the Philippines, a flotilla of Chinese maritime militia have been stationed around Whitsun Reef in the Spratly Islands for months, refusing repeated demands from Manila to leave the area.

At one point last month, up to 200 Chinese vessels, which Beijing insists are merely fishing boats but which the Philippines and U.S. officials say are part of a maritime militia, were anchored around the reef. By refusing to budge, the large group of boats is effectively controlling access to a wider area that lies inside the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

The Philippine foreign ministry has accused China of infringing on its sovereignty and said that the boats' "swarming and threatening presence creates an atmosphere of instability."

China has refused to withdraw the boats and argued Whitsun Reef is part of Chinese territory, accusing the Philippines of trying to deny China access to traditional fishing grounds.

"We hope the Philippines will look at this objectively and correctly, immediately stop wanton hype ... and avoid casting negative influence on bilateral relations and the overall peace and stability in the South China Sea," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhao Lijian said at a recent press briefing.

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment.

Whitsun Reef is a key location for China as it lies at the northern end of Union Banks, a large atoll, and Beijing already dominates the southern and middle end of the atoll with artificial islands it created over the past decade, according to Jay Batongbacal, director of the [Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea](#) at the University of the Philippines.

"Control of Whitsun Reef enables them to control the entire Union Banks," Batongbacal said.

The area is also near military bases built by Vietnam, which has rival territorial claims in the South China Sea. The large Chinese presence has made it "painfully clear to the Vietnamese that it's China who controls Vietnam's access to its own bases," Poling said.

The Philippines has a miniscule military compared to China, and its navy is outmatched just by China's large coast guard ships. But Manila has tried to rally international support against Beijing's presence and reminded [China](#) that it has a defense treaty with the United States. The Biden administration has explicitly cited its obligations to the Philippines in more than one sharply worded statement, condemning China's actions at the reef.

"As we have stated before, an armed attack against the Philippines armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the Pacific, including in the South China Sea, will trigger our obligations under the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty," State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters.

The [tough words from the administration](#) have been accompanied by a show of naval force in the Pacific, with the Navy announcing the presence of a Virginia-class submarine in the region, the USS Illinois, along with an amphibious assault ship, the USS Makin Island, operating with the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier group.

China has not threatened to open fire on Philippine naval ships or military aircraft. In past encounters, China has avoided combat, and relied on what analysts call "gray zone tactics" that fall below the threshold of warfare but nevertheless incrementally shift conditions in their favor over time.

The stand-off at the reef is a perfect example of China's "playbook" to extend its control and influence, Batongbacal said, relying on civilian activity initially such as fishing, that is soon backed up with shows of strength from coast guard ships or naval vessels, overwhelming numbers and bold territorial assertions.

A similar strategy played out around another disputed area over the past two decades, Mischief Reef, according to Batongbacal. In that case, China initially built small huts in the 1990s that it said were for

fishing. By 2015, it became a major military outpost with missile batteries, bolstering China's power in the South China Sea.

Mischief Reef is one of a network of bases with hangars, runways and deep ports that China has steadily expanded in the South China Sea, putting other countries with competing territorial claims at a disadvantage.

“They are quietly and incrementally developing the capabilities of their island bases to control the South China Sea,” Batongbacal said.

“Through this strategy, they have turned the southern part of the South China into an area where they currently dominate in military and civilian terms, a far cry from where they were in the early 2000s when they were basically at parity with the other Southeast Asian states.”

In a separate confrontation with Taiwan, China has deployed a massive array of sand dredgers near the Taiwan-controlled Matsu Islands, forcing Taipei to deploy coast guard ships to escort them out of the area.



A Chinese People's Liberation Army H-6 bomber fitted with the YJ-12 anti-ship cruise missile flies near the Taiwan air defense identification zone near Taiwan on Sept. 18, 2020. Taiwan Ministry of National Defense / via AP

The Chinese tactics have thrust a difficult choice on Taiwan. If it ignores the intrusions, Taipei would send a signal that Beijing has de facto control over the area. But if it tries to confront the sand dredgers, the Taiwan Coast Guard could find itself stretched to the breaking point, Poling said.

“China's never presenting any overt military threat with this, but it's clearly steadily eating away at Taiwan's military readiness, and affecting the balance of power.”

It's a similar pattern across the region, with China pushing the boundaries without ever crossing a red line, Poling said.

“Beijing never really presents you with a clear deadline with a reason to use force. You just find yourselves worn down and slowly pushed back,” he said.

Security Affairs Committee of RUSI NS - Synopsis

RUSI NS has as part of its organization a committee who comment on strategic affairs and how they impact Canada. This excerpt is from an early May report but still highlights some interesting situations.

Afghanistan

The Afghan withdrawal and the moral and ethical decision to withdraw pose a problem not only personally but also to the West as a whole. I have always found it surprising that many felt that nation re-construction/building could take so little time. There was fairly common knowledge amongst the diplomatic corps that this was a multi-generational task. This would not create a Canada in Afghanistan, but a functioning Afghan democracy based on Afghan traditions and culture. Yet less than a full generation we are expecting a “victory,” what were people thinking? More importantly, what will be the personal cost to those who supported us? Women? And to the former workers on NATO bases. With this withdrawal, we have told the world made up of countries like Afghanistan that they are not worth it. The West will simply write off 27 million folks. Can anyone trust the West to follow through with action when the going gets tough? How do similar countries now look at Western assurances in future; does anyone trust us? Look at what happened to the Kurds. Have we become the enemy? Afghanistan will fall back into a civil war, many lives will be lost, lives of people who trusted us. For what it is worth, I believe that Canada had it right by guiding folks to take on jobs more complex than “trigger pullers.” Our young diplomats, development, justice, civil police and corrections folks amongst others were the real ‘big guns’ but they were only there for three years in insufficient numbers to make a difference - but they did make a difference. It is a pity we as Canada were not made of sterner stuff. As I have said then and I say now, twenty-seven million folks are worth it.

China

New Zealand Prime Minister PM Jacinda Arden has publicly criticized China in a recent interview. She and her Foreign Minister were harshly criticized for the lack of support from New Zealand for the views of the other members of the Five Eyes community. She basically stated that as China rises, there is growing aggression towards the world and a greater crackdown internally in areas such as Tibet, Xinxiang, Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong and efforts against Taiwan. These changes have been increasingly evident under Chairman Xi. It was also interesting that Xi is now being called the ‘Great Helmsman,’ the final piece as Xi has now taken

on the title last used by Chairman Mao. What can we expect next from the Great Helmsman? I suspect a major miscalculation.

Speaking of a miscalculation, China's much vaunted carrier rocket for the first piece of the new Independent Chinese Space Station is now hurtling out of control and will enter the atmosphere in an uncontrolled fashion and is heading for a crash somewhere on Earth. The rocket is approximately 22 tons and will have leftover fuel and other toxic materials which are not expected to completely burn up in the atmosphere. The expected debris field has yet to be determined but could cover hundreds of square kilometers and leave solid pieces and perhaps serious contamination. Strangely, the Chinese media have only talked about the success without telling the other side of the story, one of a complete debacle.

The Philippine Coast Guard is being blocked by Chinese Coast Guard in Philippine waters as described by the International Courts. President Duterte has spent most of his term trying to gain influence and support of China only to be continually rebuffed. This time, however, the Chinese may pay a greater price as the Philippines were going to cancel agreements with the US on defence. This act appears to be on hold. US warships were instrumental in removing the Chinese Maritime Militia from concentrating in Philippine waters.

China has always wanted to have a way of breaking through the First Island Chain and has tried to make headway in many of the smaller island nations in the Pacific. This week, Kiribati signed a deal to rebuild their airfield with China. Kiribati is a small island state of approximately 120 k people on 32 islands. Its capital is Tarawa of USMC fame in the Second World War. It recognized China after China offered routine flights through a Chinese airline and brand-new ferries for inter-island travel. The rebuilt airport is the latest Chinese effort and is typical of debt diplomacy. It is an interesting choice, it might be useful at some point, but it is more likely part of the Communist Chinese Party's efforts to further isolate Taiwan. China's actions are more aggressive abroad and more repressive at home and will be discussed at this week's G7 meeting of foreign ministers hosted by Britain. Marc Garneau to attend in person. This will be the first in- person meeting since Covid 19 pandemic. It is hoped a more determined outlook will be developed to meet autocratic regimes such as Russia, Iran and China.

March 24: Letter from the Acting Chief of the Defence Staff (A/CDS)

March 24, 2021 - “The Maple Leaf”



To the members of the Canadian Armed Forces:

ACTING CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF FOCUS AREAS

Having just passed the one-year milestone of being in a pandemic, we continue to live in a dynamic and unpredictable environment and recent events have added to the uncertainties we face. As your Acting Chief of the Defence Staff, I view my primary role as continuing to provide our nation a force that delivers operational excellence in a manner that is reflective of Canadian identity and values and which Canadians remain proud. Early in my tenure I believe it important to orient you on my four overarching focus areas of people, operations, readiness, and future capability development in order to guide our collective efforts.

People

Culture. The Canadian Armed Forces is at an inflection point with regards to our culture. Recent sexual misconduct revelations and allegations are very disturbing, have shaken us, and made clear how much farther we need to go to be the CAF that our people deserve, and Canadians expect. Furthermore, the societal problems of racism and hateful conduct continue to manifest themselves in our ranks. We need to view the current crisis as an opportunity and come out of it as a better organization. We will re-establish trust where it has been broken. We need all of our members to work in an environment characterized by a sense of mutual respect, dignity, safety and truly belonging. To that end, early work indicates we need to follow two streams:

1. External Actions. We will fully support and welcome an external review of our institution and its culture with the full realization that we do not have all the answers. We will embrace external recommendations, including an independent reporting chain.
2. Internal Actions. While the first stream takes shape, we are taking some important immediate steps while retaining the ability to incorporate its recommendations. This plan is still developing and is my personal focus. Firstly we must listen – to our own people at all levels, most importantly at the grassroots; and to external experts. From them we must learn and guide our actions accordingly. Several actions are already clear:

- Operation HONOUR has culminated, and thus we will close it out, harvest what has worked, learn from what hasn't, and develop a deliberate plan to go forward. We will better align the organizations and processes focused on culture change to achieve better effect.
- We will identify and take the steps necessary to create a workplace where individuals feel safe to come forward when they experience sexual misconduct.
- We will finalize and publish our Code of Professional Military Conduct, including a new focus on power dynamics in our system, and hold ourselves accountable to it.
- We will add new rigour and science to leader selection, starting at the highest levels.
- Along with other ongoing efforts, we will implement the Restorative Engagement aspect of the Heyder-Beattie Harmful Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour (HISB) class action lawsuit final settlement agreement, and learn from that to guide a wider reconciliation effort in an attempt to right past wrongs.
- We need to improve mechanisms to listen and learn from the experiences of those who have been harmed.

In all of these efforts, we will support victims as they come forward while at the same time respecting the fundamental right of due process for ongoing investigations.

Health and Wellness. Like the rest of society, life in the pandemic has been hard on our members and their families. We must continue to support one another, seek and offer help when the need exists, and make maximum use of the coping tools and resources available. As the conditions of the pandemic ease, we must take full opportunity of reinforcing our social connectivity.

Postings. We will soon enter the Active Posting Season, and the high stress usually associated with it is exacerbated again this year with the pandemic. Housing prices across the country add to the burden of stress as will navigating different Provincial, Territorial, and international pandemic-related travel restrictions. Once again we will take a very flexible approach with move and report for duty dates. Guidance will be promulgated via CANFORGEN in the coming days.

Personnel Initiatives. We will continue with the vital work Military Personnel Command is undertaking to improve the conditions of service for our members and their families. The work on a revised Universality of Service (U of S) policy is progressing well along with specific Adaptive Career Path (ACP) initiatives that will offer more options to CAF members and their families. A long overdue Retention Strategy is under development to focus on retaining the excellent talent that lives and leads across the CAF. These initiatives must be delivered while respecting the guiding principles of our Canadian military ethos, most notably service before self and through a Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens. To that end, the CAF personnel management system needs to be modernized and, in some areas, changed. To achieve this, we will continue with the development and implementation of a new CAF HR Strategy.

OPERATIONS

Domestic. The perfect storm is potentially upon us, with the confluence of Operations LASER and VECTOR, as the response to the pandemic must continue, and LENTUS as spring comes with the usual heightened risks of natural disasters such as flooding and forest fires. We continue to provide excellent support to Canadians across the country: in Indigenous and Northern communities as they deal with outbreaks; in leading national planning efforts for vaccine distribution; in support to land border crossings; and very soon in the vaccination efforts for many Northern remote and Indigenous communities. Every day our forces are prepared to assist national authorities when requested, our Search and Rescue enterprise stands ready to respond to those in need, as does NORAD to defend

Canada and the United States. Throughout this period, the bulk of our operational effort and focus will be on the home game.

CAF Vaccination. Vaccinating the CAF is an operational focus. Over the course of the next three months, we are planning to receive 150,000 doses of vaccine, for which the administration will be the primary focus of our Health Services. I have issued vaccination priorities and more detail is in FRAGO 001 to CDS TASKORD 002 – Operation VECTOR – CAF COVID-19 Immunization Campaign. I strongly encourage all to get vaccinated. Our operational effectiveness depends on it. As our Force is vaccinated we will modify our protective measures according to best practices and regional health measures.

Expeditionary. Throughout this period, we will continue to do our part to ensure international peace and security, with ongoing operations such as Op CARIBBE in Latin America and the Caribbean, Op PRESENCE supporting the United Nations in Africa, and with upcoming rotations in Operations UNIFIER and REASSURANCE Land Task Force and Air Task Force-Romania. We will continue to be a leader abroad, notably with our ongoing commands of the Standing NATO Maritime Group One in Europe, and the Combined Task Force 150 in the Middle-East. We will continue to excel and maintain our efforts in the Indo-Asia Pacific region, including the ongoing deployment of HMCS CALGARY, the upcoming deployment of HMCS WINNIPEG, and our CANSOFCOM efforts across the globe.

READINESS

Personnel Generation. In a time when we should be growing our numbers, the pandemic has led the CAF to shrink in size in both our Regular and Reserve Force components. While our attrition over the last year has decreased by approximately 25%, our intake has only been a third of normal. As our recruiting system and CFLRS return to full capacity, we will need to continue to conduct decentralized Basic Military Qualification courses, and prioritize courses necessary to maximize the number of personnel reaching Operational Functional Point. A key aspect throughout will be increasing the diversity in our ranks to benefit from the talent inherent across Canada.

Individual Training. Likewise, our individual training course throughput has been significantly affected. In the mid-term, we will prioritize individual training over collective training in order to develop the leadership and technical qualifications and skills we need.

Collective Training. Collective training must continue, albeit in most cases at a reduced scale, to maintain our proficiency in higher level activities. NORAD's Ex AMALGAM DART, the Army's Ex MAPLE RESOLVE and the Navy's Ex DYNAMIC MONARCH to name just a few exercises, will continue to be conducted in a modified manner, using risk mitigation strategies to protect health and safety. To gain capacity for other activities, we will forgo such activities as the Ceremonial Guard, the CAF Small Arms Competition, and most community engagements.

Allies and Partners. Our competitive advantage in today's security environment is being part of a network of likeminded allies and partners. As conditions permit, we look to restore and re-engage with partners in various events, including exercises, training, and engagements.

DEVELOPING FUTURE CAPABILITIES

SSE Investments. Our defence policy, Strong, Secure, Engaged, lays out an impressive capital investment plan that we must continue to aggressively staff. Canadian Surface Combatant, Future Fighter, and many other programmes will be the foundation of our future military. We are already seeing increased capabilities with such projects as the Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship and the LAV 6 family of vehicles,

including the first of the Armoured Combat Support Vehicles just rolling off the production line. These projects will continue to demand significant and necessary effort.

Integrating Capabilities. Fueled in part by rapid technological development, the increasingly integrated character of warfare and international competition across all domains, including in non-traditional ones such as cyberspace are demanding that we invest in the foundation of our military enterprise. To this end, we will continue our pursuit of four very high priority capability areas: digitizing the force and adopting digital practices; a common C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence) ‘spine’; the joint sustainment enterprise; and leader professional development.

Defence of Canada. Various trends such as climate change, increased interest in the Arctic, and challenges to our national resilience, made clear during the pandemic, are driving change in how we conceptualize national defence. Recent announcements by the Government, such as the Canada-US national leader discussions, indicated the imperative of improving our continental defence, including the modernization of NORAD. In the short-term, we will continue to provide military support to policy development, including capability conceptualization and force design.

CONCLUSION

Despite the challenges we face, the business of defending Canada and Canadian interests must continue. Potential adversaries are not resting, and continue to expand their reach and test our resolve. At the same time, the scale and scope of tasks we are being called upon to perform are expanding as we protect our population.

The CAF post-pandemic will not be the same CAF as pre-pandemic... too much has changed. Balancing our capacity across many activities will be crucial as we evolve. In all, we are committed to making the CAF better in all we do, most importantly for our people who underpin every single aspect of our service. In every day that I serve, guided by these focus areas, I will endeavour to make the CAF a better place. I ask you to do likewise.

W.D. Eyre
Lieutenant-General
Acting Chief of the Defence Staff

Comment

There are many articles on the Canadian Armed Forces at the moment. Most are negative in regard to sexual and other misconduct. The media have made a show of it despite the fact that at this point none of the allegations have been properly investigated nor proven in court military or civilian. The fact is the CAF has done remarkably well in everything the government has asked of it despite the lack of support. This is long standing. Keep in mind that we have troops in Iraq, Latvia, Romania, with the UN, NATO missions, and at sea as well as been an instrumental in the fight against Covid. If the CAF's leadership is truly messed up, this would not be possible. There is much innuendo but so far limited substance. The CAF is not broken, it is more than senior leaders who screw up allegedly. Its success is based on the professionalism of the sailors, soldiers, aviators and special operations personnel. A recent interview on military law and current circumstances by an academic in an interview by the CBC shows, the lack of understanding of the CAF.

The CAF is not perfect or anything close to it but it is far from the train wreck posed by recent media reports. One thing is very clear - the public does not understand that the Armed Forces are armed for a reason and that It is not a normal part of society. Its role at its basic level is to use organized violence on behalf of Canada. Standard civilian justice will not do the trick, especially in regard to the concept of unlimited liability and the members' requirement to take life or sacrifice their own lives. No other organization in the country requires that commitment. [RUSI NS]

Are We REALLY Seeing the End of Global Islamist Terrorism?

Reports that global Islamist terrorism is on the wane are inaccurate and dangerous: we have to keep our eye on this international security threat.

<https://borealistthreatandrisk.com/author/pgurski>

- By [Phil Gurski](#) May 3, 2021



Usama bin Laden (Photo: AP/File)

Optimism is a great human characteristic, but it should not blind us to what is actually happening – and will continue to transpire.

I would imagine that just about everyone, including my dedicated readers and followers, are sick and tired of hearing about terrorism. After all, it has been almost twenty years since the attacks of [9/11](#) and we are rapidly approaching the third decade of the self-imposed (and ill-considered) '[war on terrorism](#)' (aka the '[forever war](#)'). Trillions of dollars have been spent, hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost, several countries have been invaded and a whole faith – i.e. [Islam](#) – has been inextricably linked to [violent extremism](#). We have also witnessed terrible 'counter terrorism' actions of which what the Xi Jinping government in China is doing against that nation's [Uyghurs](#) is perhaps the worst instance.

It should be of surprise to no one that reports that [an end](#) of this scourge is in sight would be very, very welcome. And while we should be skeptical of repeated claims that terrorist group A is on the ropes –

see just about every [Nigerian Presidential statement on Boko Haram](#) since 2015 – we will nevertheless cling to the hope that we can move on. That is just the way humans are.

What then to do with a recent op-ed by Washington Post correspondent [Fareed Zakaria](#)? Entitled “Ten years later, Islamist terrorism isn’t the threat it used to be” it has all the makings of a Hallelujah column (btw the ‘10 years’ refers to the [tenth anniversary](#) of the killing of [Al Qaeda](#) (AQ) leader [Usama bin Laden](#) in Abbotabad, Pakistan by US Navy Seals). But is it? Are we seeing the golden dawn of a new era? Hmmmm?



Mission accomplished?? (Photo: [MarineCorps NewYork](#) on flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Let’s first see what Mr. Zakaria has to say and then do some fact checking/analysis.

- Total deaths caused by [terrorism](#) around the world [have plummeted](#) by 59 percent since their peak in 2014;
- In the West, the current threat is less from [Islamist violence](#) than [far-right terrorism](#), which [has surged](#) by 250 percent in the same period, and now makes up 46 percent of attacks and 82 percent of deaths;
- Most Islamist terrorism today tends to be local — the Taliban in Afghanistan, [Boko Haram in Nigeria](#), al-Shabab in the Horn of Africa
- What remains now are local problems, local discontents that are really not part of some great global movement;
- There has been a spate of Islamist attacks in France, but [these were all carried out by individuals](#) not previously known to the police and not part of any known [jihadi](#) groups... [self-radicalized](#), with their own personal discomforts leading them to a radical ideology.; and

- For America, there is one big lesson: Stay calm. In the months after 9/11, we panicked, sacrificing liberties at home and waging war abroad, terrified that we were going to be defeated by this new enemy.

Isn't that optimistic? Time to break out the champagne!

Or is it?

If you know anything about me, you have an inkling about what I will say. While I do not see myself as a Cassandra, I am a realist and not only have I been examining and writing on terrorism for 25 years and continue to watch events in dozens of nations on a daily basis (you follow me on Twitter @borealissaves to get a flavour), but I have a slightly different view.

So, what do I make of Mr. Zakaria's glass half full views? It's mixed. While it is true that terrorism fatalities have dropped by 59 percent since their peak in 2014 and in SOME parts of the West the [current threat](#) is less from Islamist violence than far-right terrorism this ignores several very important points;

- jihadis still account for 99.4% of all [terrorist deaths](#) worldwide and 2021 is not starting out well (especially in Afghanistan, Iraq/Syria, Nigeria, the Sahel and Somalia);
- even with the 250% increase in far right terrorism, the number of deaths from this 'front' in 2019 amounted to 89 (and 51 came in one single attack in New Zealand) out of a grand total of close to 14,000;
- 'local' has a nasty tendency to mutate to 'global' – that is how AQ started by the way (as did Islamic State – ISIS) and these two grew to encompass dozens of affiliates around the world;
- Mr. Zakaria dismisses the threat of homegrown plots by those “not previously known to the police and not part of any known [jihadi groups](#). This is an error. He also commits the silly mistake of referring to 'self-radicalisation'; I thought we had slain that myth decades ago (i.e. NO ONE self-radicalises).

The one thing I agree with him on is his advice to 'stay calm'.

Our reaction to 9/11, while understandable given the enormity of the attacks, played out badly. We invaded one land that made sense ([Afghanistan](#)), although we are still there 20 years later, and one that did not (Iraq). Our labeling this as a 'war on terrorism' gave an opening to a whole list of other nations to treat dissent and opposition as terrorism (primarily [Russia and China](#) although many others committed the same mistake).

And it seems to me we are making the same error with the far right. It is being presented in some quarters (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*) as an 'existential threat' – which is most definitely is NOT – and we see a whole army of angry white folk as the enemy. How is this any different than what we did with [Muslims](#) and Islam after 9/11? Why can we not learn from what went badly?

So yes it is time to 'stay calm'. Here is what we need to do:

1. Let's allow our protectors (primarily [security intelligence](#) and law enforcement but on occasion the military as well) to deal with the small numbers of actual terrorists still active.
2. Let's not strike jihadism off the list yet: it is NOT going away.
3. And let's stop the 'moral panic' over the far right (see point 1 above for what we should do instead).

It is a very good day when anyone can write positively about terrorism since the last time that happened was decades ago. Nevertheless, sunny views have to be tempered with realism. We can't wish our way to peace and security after all.

PS I noticed that two other terrorism scholars agree with me that the notion that AQ is yesterday's group is unwarranted: [Colin Clarke](#) and [Fernando Reinares](#) – check out their op-eds! Also, have a look at [Sophia Moskalenko's](#) short paper on the inflation of the QAnon threat (and catch [her chat with me](#) last January).

“Canadians tend to think that our trade with the US, which is the majority of our trade, travels by land transport across land borders. But there is a significant amount that goes by water, either coastal or inland. It would be interesting to be able to read some general public retorting on that.

A major, some would argue the major, role of navies and coast guards is to protect trade. The Canadian public, to appreciate what its Royal Canadian Navy and Canadian Coast Guard are for, and why taxpayers are paying so much for them, needs to have an appreciation of the extent to which national prosperity is dependent on maritime-borne trade.”

Comment by CAH Darlington (Cdr Retd, RCN)

Highway H₂O Remains an Indispensable Pathway for Global Shipping



ADM Facility - at Port of Windsor

Ben Forrest - Postmedia Content Works

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Every summer and early fall, when grain producers harvest their corn, soybeans, wheat and canola from southern Canada and the northern United States, the material will make its way to Great Lakes ports like Windsor and Toledo, and from there to markets around the world.

Their journey is only possible because of the integrated transportation network known as Highway H₂O, a vast marine highway that connects overseas markets to communities throughout North America via the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

“They’re an essential business partner, and a key link for us to export grain and finished products,” said Kevin Wright, general manager, Great Lakes region, at ADM, a global leader in human and animal nutrition, and agricultural origination and processing. “The producers in both western and eastern Canada continue to do an amazing job of growing more crop on a per-acre basis. The Seaway is an integral part of our vast transportation network, and global supply chain.

ADM is one of the world’s most-respected food production companies, with a massive processing facility at the Port of Windsor that generates vegetable oil and animal feed for consumers in Canada, the U.S., Europe and North Africa.

The company has a second terminal at the Port of Toledo that connects and procures corn, beans and wheat from Michigan and Ohio. Without Highway H₂O, it would be impossible for ADM to transport the same volume of grain and finished products, said Wright.

“Travelling on the Seaway has the added benefit of reducing environmental impact,” he said. “Using the Seaway minimizes our carbon footprint while helping us make sure that our products get to the right places at the right time.”

Indeed, a single ship on Highway H₂O can carry 30,000 metric tonnes of cargo — equivalent to 301 rail cars or 964 transport trucks. Marine vessels are also fuel-efficient in comparison to other alternatives and have become a key strategy for eliminating traffic congestion.

“In this day and age, when we are concerned about the effects of climate change, and the efforts to reduce our carbon footprints, nothing can stand with shipping,” said Steve Salmons, president and CEO of the Windsor Port Authority.

“The carbon movement, per tonne of cargo, in a ship, is 20% less than rail, and about a seventh of trucking.”

Windsor is a robust and multifaceted port that includes the largest vegetable oil processing facility on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes. Big box retailers and deep fryers at fast-food restaurants in Canada likely carry soybean or canola oil manufactured in Windsor. The same is true of a large portion of road salt spread on Canadian highways, and manufacturers rely heavily on steel and aluminum that passes through Windsor on marine vessels.

About one-third of trade between Canada and the United States passes between Windsor and Detroit, which is less than a kilometre away on the U.S. side of the Detroit River.

“The Seaway is vital to connect us to the world,” said Salmons. “It’s always open, it’s always safe, and easy and economical. We have the world’s greatest inland waterway system, and we need to protect it, and to invest in it.”

About 100 kilometres south along the Lake Erie shoreline, the Port of Toledo in Ohio plays an equally important role in transporting and processing bulk commodities for global markets.

Toledo is a key destination for grain, petroleum, wind turbine components, coal, salt, cement, break bulk and bulk materials, as well as an essential location for ship repair. It’s home to the largest flour mill in North America, operated by Mondelez International, and has terminals that handle everything from steel coils to unrefined sugar, fertilizer and stone.

Though Toledo is a long-established U.S. seaport, it’s also part of a major intermodal transportation network that includes an airport and connections to the national railway and the interstate highway systems.

“We’re very centrally located within the Great Lakes region,” said Joe Cappel, vice-president of business development at Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority.

“So you can get to a lot of places from here — Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and all points in between — without [going] up and around the state of Michigan.”

This summer, as producers and processors along the Great Lakes prepare for a busy shipping season, Highway H₂O remains an indispensable pathway for the safe, efficient and environmentally friendly passage of goods throughout North America and around the world.

“The Seaway will always be critically important,” said Cappel. “It’d be hard to imagine a world without it.”

For more information, visit hwyh2o.com

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