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CHINA: Beijing's Military Modernization Efforts in the Pacific Threaten US Logistics

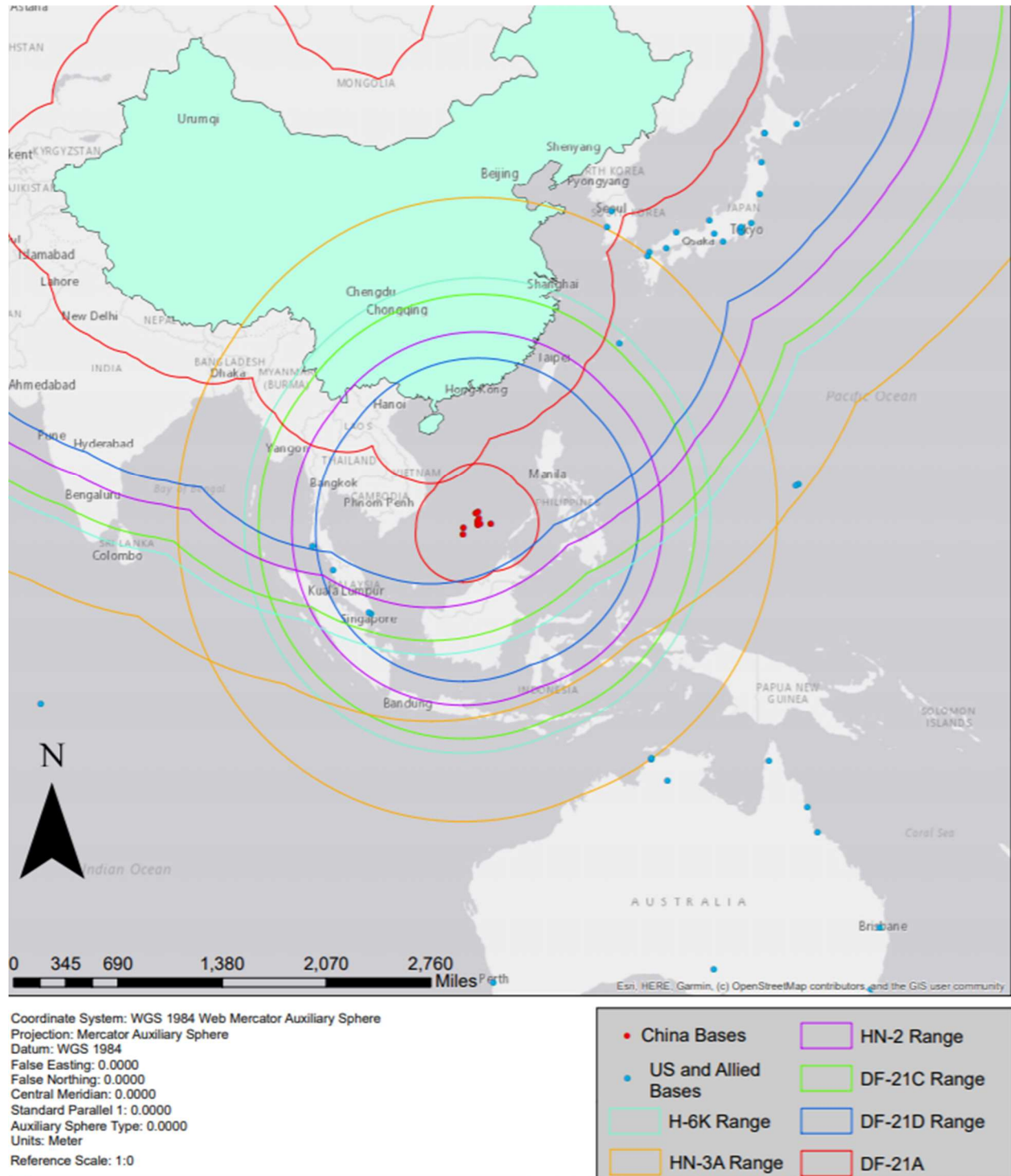
Summary: China's recent military development in aircraft, ballistic missile capabilities and building military initiatives in the South China Sea (SCS) provide Beijing with an extended range to project power, threatening US logistic capability in the Pacific. This threat will likely cause other nations in the Pacific to secede to Beijing's aggressive regional policies leading to a reduction in America's regional prestige.

South China Sea Expansion: China's illegal expansion and island building into the SCS since 2012 provides Beijing with increased military power projection and strategic depth. Multiple islands located in the Spratly and Paracel island chain serve as fully functioning military bases with deep seaports and channels, bomber capable airfields, radars, anti-access area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, and housing for troops. These developments coupled with the geographic spread of the islands, makes it difficult for any nation to challenge Beijing's military dominance in the SCS without greatly risking their own assets. Additionally, Chinese bases within the SCS lie approximately 740 miles from China's original coastline, granting Beijing with a larger military sphere of influence and newfound capabilities in the region.

Aircraft Development: China's introduction of the H-6N strategic bomber with an aerial refueling capability and the DF-21 air launched ballistic missile (ALBM), provides Beijing with the capability to deliver payloads further into the Pacific without increasing risks to the bomber. The H-6N also comes equipped with a newly modified version of the DF-21 ALBM. This capability coupled with Beijing's new airfields in the Spratly Islands allows for an extended range than previous land-based platform. Beijing's recent bomber development accompanies the introduction of a new fighter aircraft, including the 5th generation J-20 and first carrier-based fighter and electronic warfare aircraft the J-15 and J-15D. These new aircraft development efforts exemplify Beijing's goal of developing a naval air capability on par with Washington's.

Missile Modernization: China's modernization of its ballistic missile arsenal advances Beijing's capability to deny access of foreign naval powers in the Pacific through the development of the DF-21, and HN missile platforms. Beijing recently revealed the ground-based DF-21C for targeting land-based assets and DF-21D for targeting naval assets. In addition to increasing the ranges of the intermediate range ballistic missiles, Beijing equipped these missiles with maneuverable warheads that greatly improve missile accuracy. The HN missile program has also evolved in recent years with the induction of the HN-3A and the HN-3B. The HN-3A has a range of 3,000 km, almost double that of the previous HN-2. The HN-3B is a submarine launched cruise missile, which adds to the versatility of China's delivery options. In addition to missile modernization China is also expanding its stockpile of missiles to adequately arm its military installations in the SCS and along the Chinese coast. Beijing's recent missile developments provide China with a greater area denial capability in Pacific.

Outlook and Implications



As seen in the map above, Beijing’s military modernization developments through new aircraft and missile technology, combined with newly armed bases in the SCS illustrates a long-term goal by Beijing to gain the capacity to strike and destroy US and allied bases in the Pacific region. Specifically, the Chinese military could potentially target the critical RAAF Base Darwin

in northern Australia, the Anderson Air Force Base, and the US Naval Base in Guam. In the event of a regional conflict, this disposition of power provides China with a devastating first-strike option that could cripple US and allied logistic capabilities. These developments could also threaten US Navy assets in the region.

China's control of the SCS, growing range and arsenal of A2/AD capabilities, and capacity to knock out American and allied logistics networks, will likely damage America's prestige in the Pacific and may encourage Beijing to challenge Taiwan's autonomy. Doubting America's ability to halt Beijing if it were to perform aggressive actions in the Pacific, countries like Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea will likely act softer towards Beijing to protect their own economic assets and national security.

ALGERIA: Conspirators Likely Sought to Preserve Family Rule

Summary: The Algerian military court has sentenced interim president Said Bouteflika, two intelligence leaders, and the head of The Workers' Party to 15 years in prison for plotting against the state, which highlights the continuing instability in Algeria.

Development: On 25 September, a Bilda military court convicted four people of treason related to their plans to fire army General Ahmed Gaid Salah and then impose a state of emergency. These four people included: Bouteflika; intelligence leaders Mohamed Mediene and Athmane Tartag; and leader of The Workers' Party Louisa Hanoune. Since President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's stroke in 2013, his brother Said has unofficially exercised the power of the presidency. The four allegedly participated in a meeting discussing firing Salah and imposing a state of emergency. The court deemed them guilty of "undermining the authority of the army" and "conspiring" against the state. Salah remains the most powerful official leader of the country at the moment and announced plans to hold a democratic election on 12 December.

Analysis: Bouteflika, Mediena, Tartag, and Hanoune likely plotted firing Salah to preserve the longstanding rule of the Bouteflika family, while Salah most likely planned the arrests to maintain his interim command over the country and protect his political interests for the December presidential elections. These developments add to the political instability of the state amongst the mass protests and resignation of Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The December democratic elections could help stabilize Algeria, as a new leader may take control of the state and assuage the concerns of the public.

[Patrick Komanowski]

CHINA: Editing of Video Likely Indicates New Type of Cruise Missile

Summary: Beijing's removal of the missile from the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force's (PLARF's) video likely indicates a new type of weapon in Beijing's arsenal.

Development: On 25 September, Beijing released a video displaying a missile launch in the Chinese desert. Almost immediately after posting the clip on social media, Beijing withdrew the film and redacted the footage of the missile launch before reposting. The missile appears to have at the very least two distinct parts. The main body attaches to a large rocket booster, which designers created to fall off early in the missile's flight. and has thin fairing at the tail end, possible ramjet intakes, and large strakes or fins. Other Chinese missiles share similar designs.

Analysis: China's editing of the PLARF video likely indicates China has developed a new type of missile, which it wants to keep out of the public eye. The immediate response from Beijing indicates apprehension of the footage falling into foreign hands. The unique design of the missile itself also demonstrates the likelihood of a new missile type. If the new missile proves supersonic, it could shift the power balance in the East-Asian region and could create a potential risk to Japan. Such supersonic missile's, possibly even hypersonic, capabilities would likely remain largely unknown without test firings.

[Nikolaus Dunlap]

CHINA: Solomon Islands Sever Ties with Taiwan in Growing Trend

Summary: The Solomon Islands formally severing ties with Taiwan demonstrates the growing trend of Chinese influence against Taiwan. China likely encouraged the Solomon Islands to do so to advance its broader political and economic goals, not as a scheme to meddle in Taiwanese elections, as President Tsai Ing-wen claims.

Development: On 23 September, the Solomon Islands officially cut political ties with Taiwan. Since 2016, China has actively pursued Taiwan's political allies to further isolate the island from the rest of the world. China's promises to invest in infrastructure and other personal aid items has motivated many countries to cut relations with Taiwan since 2016. Currently, Taiwan holds political affiliations with only 16 countries, concentrated primarily in Central America and the South Pacific. Tsai, who has held a relatively moderate stance regarding the mainland, spoke to reporters in Taipei this week, commenting that this serves as further evidence of Beijing's efforts to influence the upcoming January elections in Taiwan. Tsai's previously moderate stance on China, however, has frustrated many younger Taiwanese voters, as they insist that China intends to isolate Taiwan politically and to secure more territory to employ soft power in support of the Belt and Road initiative.

Analysis: China likely pushed its influence on the Solomon Islands for two main reasons: to further separate Taiwan from its political allies and to win over more countries for its Belt and Road initiative. Tsai's claims that China aims to ruin her chances at re-election seem unlikely because she initially won her election on a platform centered around cordial relations with China. As such, China would probably prefer to leverage her stance to support its regional goals rather than push her out of power. It appears more likely that China offered investment to the Solomon Islands to better support its Belt and Road initiative while also delegitimizing Taiwan as a whole, not Tsai as a politician. In the next several years, China will likely focus its efforts on persuading Taiwan's remaining allies to cut ties with the island to advance its political views regarding Taiwan.

[Tyler Bigham]

ISRAEL: Airstrikes in Iraq Demonstrate an Increased Attack Strategy Against Iran

Summary: The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) conducting of airstrikes on an armed, Iranian-backed militant group's supply depot in the southern region of Iraq may drive Israel to continue its more aggressive stance against Iran.

Development: On 22 September, the IDF conducted a series of strikes against Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Syria and Iraq. Additionally, the IDF recently bombed PMF supply depots. Israel tracked the supplies heading to Syria, where another Iranian-backed group Hezbollah resides as well. In response, Israel conducted an airstrike in southern Iraq for the first time in decades. On 24 September, Iraq stated that Israel bombed official Iraqi military personnel in their strikes.

Analysis: Israel will likely maintain its military and diplomatic strategies to combat Iran despite the worsening relations with Iraq. With Iranian-backed groups spread across this region, Israel had to respond swiftly to any threats or risk further threats to its security. As long as Iranian-backed groups continue to engage in violence near Israeli borders, the IDF will likely continue to respond with force. This may result in a cycle of violent responses between Israel and surrounding militant groups, inevitably escalating the conflict with Iran. The firm message that Israel has sent to the PMF through its strikes will likely drive Iraq to take a defensive position and reiterate its claims that the IDF targeted official Iraqi military personnel. Israel may then respond by justifying its strikes in claiming that Iraq likely also maintains support of Iranian-backed groups.

[Melea Tucker]

JORDAN: Amman Unlikely to Yield to Teacher Strike Demands

Summary: Amman will likely not comply with the Jordanian Teachers Syndicate (JTS) demands of a 50% salary increase. Instead, Amman will likely compromise by implementing an incremental income increase over the next several years.

Development: On 8 September, the JTS began a strike, demanding Amman pay the 50% salary increase Prime Minister Abdulla al-Nosour promised to them in 2014. Amman claims it did not and does not have the funds available to pay the teachers' demands. Negotiations between Amman and the JTS began on 9 September and continue. Amman offered the full 50% salary increase to teachers on a performance basis in an attempt to end the strike. Several days after the strike began, other unions and professions also demanded a salary increase including both the Jordanian Doctors Syndicate and the Jordanian Engineer's Union. A tax reform law and price increases sparked mass protests, which the JTS heavily engaged in, in 2018. Lack of results from the 2018 protests along with increased prices and taxes over the past 10 years drove the teachers to strike this year.

Analysis: Fear of another set of mass protests, as seen in 2018, will probably motivate Amman to compromise with the JTS. Lack of results from the 2018 protests along with increased prices and taxes over the past 10 years likely drove the teachers to strike this year. Despite Amman's offers to provide a 50%, performance-based pay increase, the JTA will likely not agree and maintain its original demands for two reasons. First, it believes Amman must uphold its 2014 promise. Secondly, many teachers will unlikely do the extra work required just to receive the pay raise they have demanded for their current work. Amman, however, almost certainly will not pay the full amount demanded by the JTS as to disincentivize other professions from striking or protesting for a pay raise. Thus, Amman will likely offer an incremental pay raise over several years to the JTS to satisfy the demands on their own terms.

[Katelyn Williamson]

NORTH KOREA: Tensions with Russia Escalate Over International Poaching

Summary: North Korea's continued poaching in Russian-claimed territorial waters in the Sea of Japan likely demonstrates its plans to continue to fish in Russia there despite frequent and severe clashes with Russia's security service.

Development: On 27 September, Russia announced it had seized three North Korean fishing vessels carrying 262 crew members and over 30,000 poached squids. Russian security forces arrested the poachers and transported them to the Russian port of Nakhodka. On 17 September, Russian border guards seized two North Korean fishing vessels and arrested 161 poachers in a similar encounter. One North Korean poacher died of wounds sustained during the arrest after Russian border guards opened fire on one of the vessels, while several Russian border guards and other poachers also sustained injuries during the encounter. Moscow summoned a North Korean diplomat over the incidents, and Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, called for immediate action in the region to curb North Korean poaching.

Analysis: In continuing poaching despite the increase in frequency and severity of clashes with Russian border guards, North Korea is likely indicating that it has no intention of abandoning its poaching in Russian territorial waters. North Korea will likely continue to send fishing vessels in an effort to secure food for the nation, as it suffers continual famine. While Moscow insisted these events will not impact its ties with Pyongyang, Russia may increase patrol and apprehension in the Sea of Japan, or it may push for further diplomatic discussion to peacefully resolve the issue. Regardless, North Korea has shown it has no issue violating fishing rights in the already much disputed Sea of Japan, so it will likely continue to do so.

[August Kather]

This is a global intelligence briefing prepared by the students of the Global Security and Intelligence Studies program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona. The views expressed in this briefing are those of the students, not the university.

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