



U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Hearing on “China’s Active Defense Strategy and its Regional Impact”

Opening Statement of Commissioner Larry M. Wortzel

January 27, 2011

Washington, DC

Thank you, Commissioner Bartholomew, and good morning. We want to acknowledge and thank Congressman Whitman and the House Armed Services Committee for securing this room for us today.

Ensuring freedom of navigation around the world has been a priority for our nation since nearly its founding. *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, states, “The sea-lanes and supporting shore infrastructure are the lifelines of the modern global economy.” Therefore ensuring free transit along global air and sea lanes is vitally important to both the United States and the world. Open lines of communication in global commons also enable U.S. military support for our friends and allies around the globe. In the Pacific, a continual U.S. military presence has ensured peace for decades. However, should our allies or friends in Asia begin to doubt the U.S. military’s ability to support its own interests in the region, an arms race could ensue.

China’s recent actions and statements on freedom of navigation in the region, including claims of what activities are permitted in its exclusive economic zone are at odds with established international norms. Beijing’s unique interpretation of the Law of the Sea is increasingly backed up by the use of its growing maritime security forces. China also makes excessive territorial claims in the South China and East China Seas that conflict with the claims of its neighbors in the region. This assertive approach has led to clashes with its neighbors, including Japan, a U.S. ally. The 2009 *Impeccable* incident where various Chinese ships harassed a U.S. surveillance vessel in international waters and a similar incident with the *Bowditch* in the East China Sea demonstrate a more aggressive stance on the part of China.

This hearing will discuss China’s military strategy of “Active Defense.” The strategy has elements that meld traditionally defensive operations with offensive action, as acknowledged by China’s own military thinkers. The PLA claims that in order to defend China from attack, it must be able to seize control across all domains of war. In the view of PLA’s military thinkers, only by acting quickly and decisively in the early stages of a conflict can it hope to win a modern war, especially one involving the United States. Furthermore, to the extent that the PLA’s

“Active Defense” strategy allows for preemptive attacks, it is conceivable that the U.S. military could face a PLA attack in a conflict with little or no warning.

China’s “Active Defense” strategy has a geographic aspect. In the event of a conflict, the PLA would seek to exert control over the vast maritime territory within what China refers to as the “First Island Chain,” which extends from Japan through Taiwan, the Philippines, and into Indonesia. The goal of area control is expanding. In recent years, PLA military literature appears to endorse extending its area of operations east of Taiwan and Japan up to the “Second Island Chain,” over 1,800 miles into the Pacific at its widest mark. The PLA’s growing ability to conduct operations, and its doctrine on the use of missiles, means that we must be concerned about offensive operations against all U.S. bases and supply lines west of Hawaii, to include the island of Guam.

Finally, we regret that although Commission extended invitations to the Office of the Secretary of the Defense, the U.S. Navy, Joint Forces Command, the Pacific Command and Strategic Command to provide their views on these important issues, all declined to testify.