

Testimony of the Honorable Rob Simmons
U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission
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Introduction

Chairman D'Amato, Commissioners, thank you for that generous introduction. And thank you for holding today's hearing on Taiwan Strait issues and China's defense modernization. This is an important issue that requires the attention of our Legislative Branch. To date the U.S. Economic and Security Review Commission has provided Congress with a sober, bipartisan assessment of the military capabilities and intentions of the People's Republic of China. I hope I can build upon that record today by giving you my view of the security situation in the Taiwan Strait and the key issues facing us right now. My formal statement includes an essay on U.S. undersea warfare I published recently with former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Carlisle Trost.

Overview

The military balance across the Taiwan Strait is steadily moving away from the Republic of China on Taiwan and towards the People's Republic of China. The People's Liberation Army is

executing – simultaneously – a broad defense modernization program and an aggressive defense buildup. The buildup and modernization efforts are aimed not only at Taiwan’s defense forces, but also the United States Armed Forces – especially the U.S. Navy. We have followed these developments closely in the House Armed Services Committee under the leadership of Chairman Duncan Hunter of California.

A New People’s Liberation Army

China is in the midst of a massive buildup of modern attack submarines and fourth-generation fighter aircraft as part of a new cruise missile strategy against regional naval forces.

In July, the Department of Defense reported to Congress that the PRC has 55 attack submarines, slightly more than the U.S. Navy. Though many of these attack submarines are dated, China’s submarine fleet is rapidly modernizing.

Today, China is buying new submarines literally by the dozen.

- China has at least 25 submarines under contract today.
- About 16 are under construction now.

- Half of those are state-of-the-art Russian Kilos currently under construction in three separate Russian shipyards.
- China itself is building four different types of submarines – three fast attack classes and one ballistic missile “boomer” that will be capable of hitting cities in the continental United States from the safety of its own coast.

By comparison, the U.S. Navy now buys just one attack submarine a year. This rate would eventually leave the Navy with just 33 boats.

Current trends will give China at least a two-to-one numerical advantage over the U.S. submarine fleet by 2025 – probably sooner. Some of China’s submarines are not considered “modern” by Western standards, but even older boats are useful in a shooting war because they can serve as “bait” to take U.S. ships out of hiding. Older submarines would also be useful if China fired the first shot.

High force levels have a quality of their own. The United States has on station a relatively small percentage of its submarine fleet on a given day. With a force of about 50 submarines, we could

expect roughly a dozen to be on station worldwide. In the event of a crisis, which is likely to come at a time of Beijing's choosing, China could enjoy an overwhelming subsurface advantage in and around the Strait.

China's new submarines and surface ships carry some of the most deadly and sophisticated weapons on the world market today. Fired in mass – a traditional Russian and Chinese tactic – they could overpower the defenses of our surface ships.

- China has already purchased from Russia the *Klub* anti-ship cruise missile system, specifically designed to defeat U.S. shipboard defenses. The Office of Naval Intelligence says the *Klub* system employs a rocket-propelled terminal sprint vehicle that travels Mach 3 in the last 10 miles of flight to the target as it performs high-g maneuvers to fool ship defenses. The missile's range far exceeds the defensive perimeter of a U.S. aircraft carrier. This means Chinese submarines could fire lethal volleys at a U.S. flattop from multiple directions well before they are detected by Navy sensors.

- China deploys on its destroyers *Sunburn* supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles it obtained from Russia. Specifically designed to kill U.S. carriers, this missile can also reach Mach 3 with the potential to perform high-g defensive maneuvers.
- The *Shkval* rocket-propelled torpedo is another Chinese weapon that threatens our surface fleet. The *Shkval* can reach underwater speeds of 230 kilometers by producing an envelope of super-cavitating bubbles from its nose and skin that coats the entire weapon surface in a thin layer of gas.
- What's more, the PLA Air Force is fitting its new Russian-made fighter-bombers with anti-ship cruise missiles just as deadly as these shipborne weapons.

The PLA's is putting anti-ship cruise missiles on its older aircraft and naval platforms. China could also use shore-based cruise missiles and even ballistic missiles to attack our surface ships.

I go into this level of detail because Congress needs to understand that China is tailoring its forces for a confrontation with the U.S. Navy, and that the threat to our ships is real today. Our surface fleet has no credible defenses against these systems, especially when used in a “mass fires” strategy of large salvos from multiple directions.

In the past, we comforted ourselves with the belief that the Chinese military could not put such precision weapons on target over the horizon because they lacked C4ISR needed to locate our warships. Those days are gone. The PRC has benefited from Russian and Western intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance technology that will allow its forces to use these weapons accurately and reliably.

When challenged technologically, China closes the gap through low-tech solutions -- such as the use of commercial fishing vessels or helicopters to target foreign warships - or illegal transfers. For instance, on Tuesday, four naturalized U.S. citizens pleaded guilty to illegally exporting to Beijing-controlled entities items that are used in a wide variety of defense weapons systems,

including radar, smart weapons, electronic warfare and communications.

We know that the PLA has ready access to our commercial satellite products with military value and that China's military will benefit from its participation in Galileo, the European Union's GPS project. In fact, Beijing has launched dozens of satellites the PLA could use to help target U.S. platforms. China already has the global positioning technology that revolutionized U.S. forces by the early 1990s.

Together, these qualitative and quantitative developments would enable China to blockade Taiwan, an island democracy of 23 million. It could also be used to defeat or deter U.S. intervention in a Taiwan Strait crisis. In the long-run, China's defense buildup could challenge the United States' role in the Western Pacific, an area of growing importance to our economy and our national security.

In fact, China is shifting its most capable naval forces to its South Sea Fleet opposite Taiwan. From there, China will be best

positioned to use its long-range anti-ship cruise missiles to defend the normal U.S. approaches from the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Captain Shen Zhongchang, a strategist from the Chinese Navy Research Institute, predicted in 1996 that the most powerful naval weapon in future warfare would be submarines. Shen wrote:

“After the First World War, the dominant vessel was the battleship. In the Second World War, it was the aircraft carrier. If another global war breaks out, the most powerful weapon will be the submarine.”

Captain Shen knew that the proliferation of cruise missiles and rocket-propelled torpedoes make surface combatants especially vulnerable in a modern naval conflict against China. The United States and Taiwan must understand this reality if they are to safely deter aggression.

Taiwan Deficiencies

I am not certain that the U.S. and Taiwan have come to terms with the growing naval threat in the Western Pacific. Though it faces grave danger, the Republic of China on Taiwan may make

the situation worse by failing to move forward with a much needed special budget to fund critical defense requirements.

The U.S. Department of Defense has consistently told the government of Taiwan that its three greatest weaknesses are anti-submarine warfare, anti-missile defense, and C4ISR.

In 2001, President Bush wisely approved for sale to Taiwan eight diesel-electric submarines, 12 anti-submarine warfare aircraft, and 6 Patriot missile defense batteries interceptors. I have asked the State Department to notify Congress of the approval, one of the last steps in the foreign military sales process. To date they have not done so.

President Chen Shui-bian has responsibly urged the Legislative Yuan to pass a special defense budget to pay for these critical weapon systems. Elements in Taiwan have obstructed the special budget in parliament.

The people of Taiwan should know two things:

- First, delaying passage of the special budget and Taiwan's procurement of these weapon systems – which will take years to deliver – leaves Taiwan defenseless and will only encourage aggression.
- Second, blocking this arms package tells the United States – correctly or not – that Taiwan's leadership is not serious about the security of its people or its freedom. The American People have come to the aid of foreign countries in the name of freedom many times in our history; but Americans will not in good conscious support countries that are unwilling to defend themselves.

These may seem like tough words for our friends in Taiwan, but it is also well-meaning encouragement.

Both the United States and Taiwan must prepare their Armed Forces for the worst in the Taiwan Strait. Congress can do this by ensuring that we have a Navy that is best suited for undersea warfare in the Western Pacific. The Taiwan Legislature can prepare itself by helping President Chen pass the Special Budget and acquire the defensive system the island desperately needs.

Thank you for your attention. Chairman D'Amato,
Commissioner Robinson, I am pleased to answer questions you
may have for me now.