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Developments in China's Military Capabilities  
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The military balance of power in the Taiwan Strait continues to shift in China's favor. China's military modernization program is a long-term, comprehensive effort to improve its capabilities. Most importantly, China's power projection and access denial capabilities continue to grow and will provide it with a greater range of capabilities to counter third-party intervention in a future Taiwan Strait conflict. Consistent with a near-term focus on preparing for Taiwan Strait contingencies, China is deploying an increasingly large number of its most advanced systems to the military regions opposite Taiwan.

Since 2000, China's modernization has included a wide range of capabilities such as advanced air, naval, ground, and ballistic missile systems, in concert with a focused effort to improve the level of operational proficiency within the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The mix of these developments has improved not only the overall quality of the weapons systems in China's inventory, it also has improved the PLA's overall capabilities for any future contingency in the Taiwan Strait. DIA believes this trend will continue at a steady pace with future PLA efforts focused on improving command and control, developing guidelines for its nascent joint operations capabilities, and streamlining its logistics system.

The PLA Navy (PLAN) modernization focuses on presenting a credible threat to Taiwan and preventing any third party that might intervene on Taiwan's behalf in a crisis. The PLAN has been one of the major beneficiaries of China's rising defense budgets and has purchased or developed a range of new capabilities to include modern diesel submarines, modern destroyers with long-range air defense systems, long-range maritime strike aircraft, and a host of sophisticated anti-ship cruise missiles. The PLAN also has focused on its operational proficiency with increasingly sophisticated exercises designed to improve the level of coordination between various PLAN components.

The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) has been another prime beneficiary of China's rising defense budgets. PLAAF modernization focuses on enhancing its defensive capabilities while developing its offensive strike capability. The PLAAF purchased and developed a number of advanced fighter aircraft, bombers, command and control, and support aircraft with the ultimate goal of enabling a mobile, all-weather, day-night, over-water force capable and flexible enough to quickly perform multiple operational tasks. Similar to the PLAN, the PLAAF also is actively improving its training programs and focusing on developing increasingly complex tactics, improving mobility, and increasing realism in day-to-day training.

The PLA ground forces are modernizing on a number of fronts and are improving the quality of armor, aviation, artillery, and amphibious equipment across the PLA. The

focus of ground force modernization is on offensive combat employing deep battle concepts. To accomplish this goal, recent training has concentrated on improving PLA long-range mobility and improving the combined-arms operations of China's ground forces. While training across the PLA continues to lag behind that of the PLAN and PLAAF, in recent years DIA has seen substantial efforts dedicated to improving the overall professionalism and proficiency of the ground forces. Notable examples of these efforts include developing a professional noncommissioned officer corps, improving professional military education for army officers, reforming and improving the quality of training, and an emphasis on integrating information technology into daily operations.

China's short-range ballistic missile forces form a core operational capability and are a center of excellence within the PLA. The most telling sign of China's modernization and the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait is demonstrated by the large number of short-range ballistic missiles directly opposite Taiwan. This force is growing at an average rate of 100 missiles per year; the range and accuracy of these systems is improving as well.

China's current special operations forces (SOF) comprise "rapid reaction" forces in the Army, Air Force, and Navy as well as dedicated army, marine, army aviation, and airborne SOF units. Following observations of U.S. Special Forces in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the PLA began to place greater emphasis on expanding China's own SOF capability, particularly as a force multiplier in a Taiwan Strait scenario. PLA researchers continue to study SOF involved in U.S. and Coalition operations. In 2002, the PLA reportedly set up a dedicated unit to monitor U.S. Special Operations activities, including target acquisition and use of unmanned aerial vehicles, in Afghanistan. The PLA also studied the role of special operations forces in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

In addition to these critical areas, the PLA continues to seek solutions that will allow it to "leapfrog" from an army based on mechanization to one built around advanced information technology. Critical developments in this realm include PLA advances in space capabilities, information operations, electronic warfare, and advanced command and control systems. While developments in these areas are moving forward at varying paces, they will form the backbone of future PLA capabilities and are a central part of any consideration of the cross-Strait military balance. The PLA will vigorously pursue modernization in these critical areas.

Another key component of China's military modernization is the PLA's ambition to conduct joint operations. This effort can be traced to lessons learned from U.S. and Coalition operations since the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Although the PLA has devoted considerable effort to developing joint capabilities, it faces a persistent lack of interservice cooperation and a lack of actual experience in joint operations. The PLA hopes eventually to fuse service-level capabilities with an integrated C<sup>4</sup>ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) network, a new command structure, and a joint logistics system. Since 2000, the PLA also has improved its multiservice exercises, improving PLA experience levels and yielding some insights into its future direction. These insights will become clearer as

more advanced weapons, sensors, and platforms enter the inventory and training begins to reflect true multiservice operations.

Lastly, at an all-Army conference in June 2006, President Hu Jintao instructed the PLA to concentrate its efforts on military training. Hu provided the direction for the future development of military training, and PLA was expected to adjust its training plans accordingly. To meet the requirements of joint integrated operations in local wars under “informatized” conditions (the application of information technology to equipment, operations, training, etc.), Hu’s guidance is aimed at transforming military training from training under mechanized conditions to joint training under informatized conditions; military training contributes to innovations in military theory, research and development of weapons and equipment, and fostering development of high-quality officers and men.

China’s capability for limited and relatively precise uses of force is growing, expanding the military options available to People’s Republic of China (PRC) leaders. While these capabilities are not uniquely tailored to a conflict in the Taiwan Strait, the PRC’s options for the use of force in a future crisis are far greater than they were in 2000. As China’s military modernization program continues to improve the quality of PLA weapons systems and personnel, the balance of military power in the Taiwan Strait will continue to shift in China’s favor.