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**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE  
JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**



**LOGISTICAL FORESIGHT: SUSTAINING THE JOINT STAND IN FORCE IN  
THE FIRST ISLAND CHAIN**

**By**

**Felix Guerra III**

***Lieutenant Colonel, United States Marine Corps***

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**LOGISTICAL FORESIGHT: SUSTAINING THE JOINT STAND IN FORCE IN  
THE FIRST ISLAND CHAIN**

**REQUIREMENTS**

*by*

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.**

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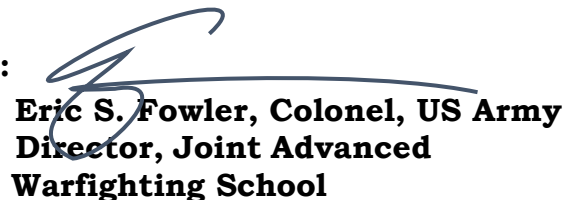
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## **Abstract**

Sustainment is a necessary activity in war that can determine victory or defeat. The United States has long had the freedom of maneuver to ship and fly massive numbers and amounts of troops and material needed to win a war anywhere on the globe. China's development of an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy, however, prevents the United States from freely maneuvering forces and material along the first island chain in the Pacific, where the U.S. has treaty allies and key partners. In the event of a conflict, China's A2/AD strategy creates a contested environment where the People's Liberation Army dominates the air and sea domain. The best method the United States has to counter China's network of A2/AD sensors and missiles is to have a stand in force dispersed geographically within the first island chain with allies and partners. This research examines how the United States and China arrived to its current state as peer competitors. Using the United States experience in the Philippines from December 1941 – April 1942, this research shows the best method to sustain a force when lacking sea and air dominance is to have pre-positioned war time material stocked to allow a force to complete its mission. Examining the United States relations with countries in the first island chain, it determines which countries could allow the United States to store material in its territory.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The United States allocates its resources in areas of national interest, and for Washington the priority is the Indo-Pacific. The population in Asia consists of over half the world's populace, and China, India, and Indonesia alone accounted for 26% of the world's economy in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Geopolitically, East Asia has remained economically crucial to the United States and global economy. In the Pacific, the United States has five treaty allies—Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand—and vital security partners, including Taiwan.<sup>2</sup> Five of the U.S.'s top ten trading partners come from Asia: China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and India.<sup>3</sup> The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also represents ten countries in Asia with long financial ties with Washington. An excess of 6,200 American companies operate across ASEAN's member states, which employs nearly 1 million people, and all U.S. states export goods to ASEAN, allowing for more than 625,000 jobs in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Due to the U.S.'s economic dependence and security of its allies and partners, Washington views stability in the region as a vital interest.

Following WWII, the United States shaped the liberal world order that allowed for trade and organizations such as ASEAN to thrive, while also acting as a security guarantor for regions around the globe to include the Indo-Pacific. With the collapse of the Soviet Union thirty years ago, the United States remained a great power in a unipolar world. Today, however, China has made massive gains to become a peer competitor of the United States economically, diplomatically, and militarily. Once again, the international system has entered a bipolar world. China's burgeoning strength has boosted its confidence, ability, and willingness to stake its claims over the South China Sea (SCS) and Taiwan.<sup>5</sup> Over the last twenty-five years, China developed a way to counter U.S. aircraft carriers and amphibious ready groups by developing an

Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy, and Beijing spent vast sums of money to modernize its navy and ground forces. China's confidence and growing bellicosity emerged after China found leverage in A2/AD over the U.S. military and once Xi Jinping took over as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012. The current National Security Strategy (NSS) for the United States acknowledges that the People's Republic of China (PRC) poses as America's most significant geopolitical test.<sup>6</sup>

A government has a military to provide it political leverage and, when needed, win a war. The Marine Corps defines war as a "violent clash of interests between or among organized groups characterized by the use of military force."<sup>7</sup> For an organized group to wage war, a few items it needs include weapons, ammunition, clothing, food, water, and transportation to get to the violent clash. Therefore, a fundamental part of any military and a function of warfighting is logistics. As Carl von Clausewitz states, logistics, specifically supply, is an item to maintain the force that "...most directly affects the fighting. It takes place almost every day and affects every individual. Thus it thoroughly permeates the strategic aspects of all military action."<sup>8</sup> Any conflict in the Indo-Pacific will require the United States to transport logistics via the air or sea, but a A2/AD strategy complicates sustaining American forces.

The United States kept a large military presence in the Indo-Pacific region after WWII, and today it has around 375,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel assigned to the United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) area of responsibility.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, the United States has approximately 100,000 troops in and around Japan and South Korea.<sup>10</sup> Yet, exercises or security cooperation training disperse thousands of Marines, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Coastguardsmen throughout the first and second island chains. The first island chain includes the countries and waterways surrounding southern Japan and its Ryukyus islands,

Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The United States Marine Corps has categorized its forces dispersed in the first island chain as the Stand in Force (SIF). In the event of a conflict, the SIF will essentially hold the line until naval and joint forces can enter the region. It assumes China will control all domains, but the SIF can disrupt China's dominance in an armed conflict by conducting sea denial, among other tasks.<sup>11</sup> The SIF will fight the "initial reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance battle, gaining the initiative by disrupting adversary plans, and lowering the risk for naval and joint forces to penetrate into contested areas."<sup>12</sup> The Marine Corps has also introduced the concept of Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO), meant to integrate with distributed maritime operations to support sea control and sea denial of potential adversaries.<sup>13</sup> This thesis will seek to answer: in the event of conflict, how can the joint SIF in the first island chain best sustain itself in a contested environment.

Although analysts recognize contested logistics as a problem, no grounded solutions have materialized. Sustaining the SIF does not rest solely on the Marine Corps to solve, but the joint force must resolve the issue since all services will have forces in the first island chain in the event of a conflict. For decades, the United States has enjoyed dominance in all domains needed for logistics, such as the air, land, and sea. In the event of a conflict with China, the United States loses its command of all domains and becomes vulnerable to targeting. If a conflict arises with China, some in the U.S. Army believe China even has the capacity to frustrate the U.S. Army's ability to mobilize from the continental United States, a concept called a contested deployment.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, sustainment of the joint force within the first island chain is an essential problem to solve. Not since the early months of the Pacific theater in WWII has the United States military faced this situation. Analysis on sustainment in a contested environment is sparse. The EABO manual states sustainment will require minimized storage location footprints and development of

a cache network.<sup>15</sup> Yet, to sustain a joint force, to include EABO Marines, for an extended period of time requires a large footprint of supplies. The Marine Corps acknowledges difficulties in sustaining the SIF. It advises to avoid “logistically intensive systems,” focus on pre-positioning stocks, use local contracting, and acquire “small and plentiful vessels capable of connecting SIF inside the contested area to distribution nodes outside the contested area.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Thesis**

In the event of an armed conflict with the PRC in the first island chain, the best way to guarantee support to the joint SIF is through prepositioned supply depots in allied and partner countries.

### **Chapter 2: Methodology and Orientation to the First Island Chain and Logistics**

This paper will first show how the United States and China came to the present situation by evaluating actions of both countries over the last thirty years. The paper will then consider a brief case study of the Philippines in late 1941 through early 1942, which was the last time the United States faced contested logistics while having to sustain a deployed force. The case study will provide a sobering account of how Army quartermasters sought to sustain its forces when the United States lacked dominance in the air and sea. The paper will then research Washington’s and Beijing’s relations with countries in the first island chain and determine the host nations’ appetite to support sustainment of U.S. forces in their respective countries. The paper will conclude with the options available for the United States to sustain its forces in the first island chain in the event of a conflict.

The concept of island chains dates back to the beginning of the Cold War. Chinese analysts point out the origins of the concept began under President Truman’s Secretary of State Dean Acheson in 1950 who devised a Pacific defensive perimeter extending along the Aleutians,

Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippines.<sup>17</sup> Secretary of State John Dulles under President Eisenhower stated Taiwan forms an “important link in the so-called ‘island chain’ that bounds the western rim of the Pacific.”<sup>18</sup> Literature varies on which islands compose the first island chain that surround China. One group sees it as the Japanese Archipelago through Taiwan and the Philippines.<sup>19</sup> Other analysts include Malaysia in the chain,<sup>20</sup> while still some include Vietnam and Singapore.<sup>21</sup> For this paper the first island chain will include analysis on Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. The geography of these countries forms the chain that permits China’s access to the sea-lanes through the Indian and Pacific Oceans.



Figure 1. The first island chain and second island chain.<sup>22</sup>

Military logistics across the services contains similar themes. Antoine Jomini received credit for first defining logistics in 1838.<sup>23</sup> He states “logistics is the art of moving armies. It

comprises the order and details of marches and camps, and quartering and supplying troops; in a word, it is the execution of strategical and tactical enterprises.”<sup>24</sup> Jomini’s explanation, formulated through his experiences in the Napoleonic Wars, holds similarities to today’s definitions. The Marine Corps defines logistics as the part of military operations that focusses on the “procurement, transportation, and maintenance of military material, facilities, and personnel.”<sup>25</sup> Logistical functions for the Marine Corps include supply, maintenance, transportation, general engineering, health service support, and services.<sup>26</sup> For the Navy, logistics “provides for and sustains the operational readiness of the naval forces, and it supports the operational readiness of other forces as directed.”<sup>27</sup> In the U.S. Army, logistics falls under an overarching warfighting function of sustainment, which also includes personnel services, financial management, and health service support. Logistics for the U.S. Army entails “planning and executing the movement and support of forces” and includes maintenance, transportation, supply, field services, distribution, operational contract support and general engineering support.<sup>28</sup> The U.S. Air Force categorizes logistics as combat support, the Air Force’s ability “to field, base, protect, support, and sustain Air Force forces during military operations across the competition continuum.”<sup>29</sup> Defense expert Moshe Kress offers a trove of insights in his study of operational logistics and finds the purpose of logistics involves facilitating movement and fire, treating and evacuating casualties, deploying and position human resources, and supplying the troops with sustenance and other personal needs.<sup>30</sup> Kress defines logistics as “a discipline that encompasses the resources needed to keep the means of a military process (operation) going in order to achieve its desired outputs (objective).”<sup>31</sup>

Sustaining the joint force lies at the operational level of logistics. Joint Publication 4-0 defines Joint sustainment as the “provision of logistics and personnel services to maintain

operations until mission accomplishment and redeployment of the force.”<sup>32</sup> Kress defines operational logistics as “a collection of means, resources, organizations, and processes that share the common goal of sustaining campaigns and large-scale military operations. This collection, which is derived from strategic logistics, is utilized as input for the tactical logistics. Operational logistics is designed to sustain battles that are distributed in time and space.”<sup>33</sup> Kress breaks down logistics into three basic terms: a force can *obtain* its requirements on the battlefield, *carry* its requirements among the force, or *ship* its requirements from a rear area to the forces dispersed in the forward area.<sup>34</sup> Supplying the SIF needs to factor the aforementioned terms. In considering logistics in a contested environment, Lines of Communication (LOCs) become important. LOCs include the network of roads, paths, rail-roads, sea lanes, sea ports, air routes, and airports.<sup>35</sup> In a contested environment, LOCs become susceptible to targeting. Kress also presents an important concept called logistical foresight, the ability to constantly and systematically consider the possible future directions of the operation, and as a result forecast its logistical ramifications.<sup>36</sup> Sustaining a joint SIF will take considerable logistical foresight.

### **Chapter 3: The Evolution of the United States and China in the Pacific**

#### **U.S. Approach to the Pacific**

The United States aided and streamlined China entering the world order. In the 1980s, Washington gave China a Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, which granted China highly advantageous trade terms with the United States, and, despite the Tiananmen Square Massacre and fall of the Soviet Union, Washington continued granting MFN status to China.<sup>37</sup> In 2000, the United States established “permanent normal trading relations” with Beijing, paving the path for its entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001.<sup>38</sup> China expert Aaron L. Friedberg views that United States politicians offered three justifications for expanding ties with Beijing:

China could help Washington tackle international challenges; American businesses would benefit, which would allow China to have a market-based system; and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would become less authoritarian.<sup>39</sup> Some argue Washington's approach proved beneficial because intertwining the United States and Chinese economies over the years served and continues to operate as a deterrent to war, and United States economic engagement brought China out of poverty, modernized it, and created a middle class.<sup>40</sup> Despite the best intentions, China has not liberalized, opened its markets freely, or acted as a responsible participant in the international order.<sup>41</sup> In fact, China not only remained an authoritarian, illiberal country, but Beijing has also become more aggressive towards its neighbors and the United States. Many analysts view China as a revisionist country because it intends to not only replace United States dominance in East Asia but also globally surpass America's supremacy.<sup>42</sup>

Washington has regarded a rising China as a potential threat since the turn of the century. Prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld planned to focus the United States military on the Pacific.<sup>43</sup> All subsequent administrations, likewise, wanted to reorient on the Pacific. Yet, global commitments prevented a full pivot to the region. Although always concerned about China's growing strength, Washington's assertiveness against Beijing only took shape in 2016. The Trump administration initiated a containment approach toward China, started a trade war with Beijing, advanced stronger ties with Taiwan, and disputed China's claims in the SCS.<sup>44</sup> When it expired in 2019, the Trump administration also exited the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), which, since 1987, prohibited the United States and Russia from having ground based launched ballistic and cruise missiles that could range 500-5,500 kilometers.<sup>45</sup> The Biden administration has continued many of the previous administration's policies.<sup>46</sup>

The 2022 NSS for President Joe Biden stated that the United States would work with partners in the region to “keep the Indo-Pacific open and accessible and ensure that nations are free to make their own choices, consistent with obligations under international law.”<sup>47</sup> The NSS also reaffirms the United States’ commitment to its allies and partners in the region, as well as reiterating Washington’s obligations to ensuring security in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>48</sup> The NSS defines the challenges facing the United States. The document describes the PRC as an authoritarian, revisionist power with the means and intent to reshape the international order.<sup>49</sup> President Biden confirms U.S. commitment to international organizations in the region, such as ASEAN and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States.<sup>50</sup> The NSS views the PRC as the pacing challenge for the U.S. military.<sup>51</sup> The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) agrees with the NSS’s assessment and finds the PRC as the most challenging factor to national security through its antagonistic actions to modify the region and international system to align with its interests.<sup>52</sup> The NDS’s approach to the Indo-Pacific region has the PRC in its focus. The document states the military will reinforce its security architecture in the region to maintain the regional order by working with partners to counter the PRC’s intimidating actions against Taiwan, in the SCS, and throughout the East China Sea.<sup>53</sup>

The United States has always relied on military power projection in Asia to ensure stability. Washington’s unmatched ability to exhibit combat power abroad has served as the definitive guarantor of strategic order.<sup>54</sup> Washington has traditionally relied on its Navy and Air Force for power projection in the region, demonstrated in the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis.<sup>55</sup> Yet, China has found a way to neutralize the U.S. Navy’s and Air Force’s leverage through the People Liberation Army’s (PLA) A2/AD capabilities. Nonetheless, the United States must remain in the region. For example, under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, Washington has provided security to its

allies, many of whom have the human and financial capital to produce their own nuclear weapons. For over a decade, U.S. analysts have called for the U.S. military to revamp its strategy in the region and to break from its antiquated organizational ingrained impulses to purchase weapons systems that support doctrine against the Soviets.<sup>56</sup> Military analyst Robert Haddick notes that for decades the U.S. military has focused on systems and platforms that provide it no depth.<sup>57</sup> In the early 2010s, the U.S. Navy and Air Force developed the Air-Sea Battle (ASB) to counter the A2/AD environment. The ASB confronted the A2/AD challenge by developing “networked, integrated forces capable of attack-in-depth to disrupt, destroy, and defeat adversary forces (NIA/D3).”<sup>58</sup> Criticisms of the ASB concept included it not being a fully formed strategy and that it favored the U.S. Navy and Air Force with little consideration for the Army and Marine Corps.<sup>59</sup> In 2015, the Department of Defense (DoD) added the U.S. Army to the concept and changed ASB to Joint Access and Maneuver Concept for the Global Commons (JAM-GC).<sup>60</sup>

China’s A2/AD network has potential vulnerabilities. Key to its A2/AD strength include its long-range precision strike assets with supporting intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms, hypersonic weapons, and integrated air defense system (IADS).<sup>61</sup> A report details that the “PRC has a robust and redundant IADS architecture over land areas and within 300 nautical miles (nm) (556 kilometers (km)) of its coast that relies on an extensive early warning radar network, fighter aircraft, and a variety of Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) systems. The PRC has also placed radars and air defense weapons on outposts in the SCS, further extending the range of its IADS.”<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, retired Admiral James Foggo sees gaps in China’s A2/AD strategy. He believes the PRC achieves longer ranges in its A2/AD system by combining satellite coverage, land and sea-based radars, and reconnaissance aircraft, but reduction or loss of any part of the interconnected platforms can severely degrade target

detection and, as a result, range of weapons.<sup>63</sup>

With ground forces part of the counter-A2/AD concept since 2015, both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps have undergone changes. In 2017, the U.S. Army formed its first Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF).<sup>64</sup> The echelon-above-brigade sized element during competition will “gain and maintain contact with our adversaries,” during crisis “deter adversaries and shape the environment by providing flexible response options to the combatant commander,” and during a conflict “neutralize adversary A2/AD to enable joint freedom of action.”<sup>65</sup> The MDTF provides an array of choices for sensing and kinetic options through its four battalions: Brigade Support Battalion, Air Defense Battalion, Strategic Fires Battalion, and Intelligence, Information, Cyber, Electronic Warfare, and Space Battalion.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the U.S. Army has a Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB) aligned to INDOPACOM. The SFAB maintains a continuous presence in the region through deployments of training teams to train with partners and allies.<sup>67</sup>

In 2020, the Marine Corps initiated its Force Design 2030 plan to align the service closer to the U.S. Navy and meet the demands from the NDS to compete with China.<sup>68</sup> One initiative from this generational redesign of the Marine Corps created the Marine Littoral Regiments (MLRs), tasked to conduct EABO, perform strike operations with a mixture of systems, coordinate air and missile defense operations, and support maritime domain awareness, naval surface warfare operations, and information operations.<sup>69</sup> The MLRs will serve as part of the SIF. It consists of a command element; a littoral combat team, which includes an infantry battalion and anti-ship missile battery; littoral anti-air battalion; and combat logistics battalion.<sup>70</sup> The Marine Corps plans to procure three capabilities worth mentioning to counter A2/AD and enable EABO, the MLR, and the SIF. First the MLR will have the Navy/Marine Corps

Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) in its missile battery. The NMESIS system has two Naval Strike Missiles (NSMs) containers on an unmanned, remote-operated Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV), with the NSM ranging around 100 nautical miles.<sup>71</sup> The MLR also has the Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR), a multifunctional, expeditionary radar system to augment the MLR's ability to conduct air defense and counterfire missions, such as defending against Unmanned Aerial Systems (UASs) and cruise missiles.<sup>72</sup> Finally, the Navy-Marine Corps is investing in a Light Amphibious Warship (LAW) to support distributed maritime operations and EABO. Nine LAWs would support one MLR, with the first LAW expected in FY25.<sup>73</sup>

### **China's Vision**

China, for a long time, has felt pressure from the United States' presence in the Indo-Pacific region and has viewed Washington as hostile to the existence of the CCP. Contrary to many analysts in America, analysts from China and some in the West view the United States as the revisionist power. For example, a study published in *Contesting Revisionism* showed that China has modified its policy positions and became more entrenched in multilateral diplomacy to align with the predominant international consensus; whereas, in recent decades, the United States trended diplomatically against the global consensus.<sup>74</sup> With United States interventions abroad, specifically Iraq and Afghanistan, and Washington's growing security pacts with Asian countries, China sees itself the victim of a bullying, revisionist power.<sup>75</sup> Due to the view of the United States being the revisionist power, over the last thirty years China has gained strength not only as an authoritarian power in its domestic policies but also as a military power that can compete with America.

Politically, the CCP has strengthened its authoritarian control over China during the last thirty years. The CCP claims the authority to employ far-reaching and unrestricted control over

every group, organization, and individual, which includes the military, police, educational institutions, press, industry, and, if allowed to operate, labor unions and churches.<sup>76</sup> The CCP retains control of the economy and finds ways for Chinese companies to circumvent WTO regulations.<sup>77</sup> Aaron Friedberg in his analysis of how the United States has taken the wrong strategy with China describes Xi Jinping, who assumed general secretary of the CCP in 2012 and president in 2013, as a revivalist who seeks to revitalize the communist party and guarantee its primacy.<sup>78</sup> Xi has also elevated his position throughout the CCP, to include creating a new position for himself as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, he amended the constitution to remove term restrictions for the president.<sup>80</sup> Xi, unlike previous Chinese Presidents, focuses on ideology of the CCP. In a 2013 speech, Xi said that ideological rot caused Soviet communism to collapse, the West is sowing ideological disagreement in China, and the PRC needs to end all forms of internal political dissention.<sup>81</sup> Xi has promulgated a “great rejuvenation” as his vision for China that includes China emerging as the foremost Asian and international power by 2049.<sup>82</sup> Benchmarks to Xi’s “great rejuvenation” include China completing the modernization of its armed forces and becoming a medium-level developed economy by 2035.<sup>83</sup> Xi also seeks to specifically enrich the political loyalty of the armed forces, and strengthen it through reform and technology by 2035.<sup>84</sup> In 2013, Xi also changed Chinese diplomacy. Since the early 1990s, China had followed Deng Xiaping’s strategy of China “hiding its strength, biding its time, and never taking the lead,” but Xi felt China had sufficient comprehensive collective power to take a more assertive role in international politics.<sup>85</sup>

Following the end of the Cold War and throughout the 1990s, China realized it must counter the United States’ military strengths. Despite the Soviet Union no longer existing, the NATO alliance expanded and President Clinton in 1995 reassured Washington’s Asia allies that

it would keep around 100,000 U.S. forces in the region.<sup>86</sup> The continued presence of U.S. forces in the region confirmed the CCP's suspicions of Washington's hostility toward it and reinforced its views as the United States being the revisionist power. Three key events in the 1990s made China realize its vulnerability to U.S. sea, land, and air power. First, the United States' easy success in offensive land operations against Saddam Hussain's armies during Operation Desert Storm made Beijing understand its own weakness because it had similar equipment and doctrine as Iraq.<sup>87</sup> Second, in 1996, Washington deployed two carrier battle groups off the coast of China to deter Beijing's interference in Taiwan's election, and, finally, in 1999 during the war in Kosovo, the United States mistakenly attacked the Chinese embassy in Belgrade causing three deaths.<sup>88</sup> The embassy attack in particular motivated then Chinese President Jiang Zemin to have China develop a plan to seize Taiwan by force.<sup>89</sup> A 2015 RAND study found that "modernization has largely optimized capabilities for conflict across the Taiwan Strait and has focused on developing air and naval forces, conventionally armed ballistic missiles, and counterspace and cyber capabilities."<sup>90</sup> China termed the solution to counter the United States as an "anti-intervention" strategy, consisting of A2/AD capabilities.<sup>91</sup> Starting in the early 2000s, China purchased Russian anti-ship missiles and associated launch platforms, as well as expanded research and development with Russian experts to modernize Chinese defense industries.<sup>92</sup> Throughout the 21st century, China would focus on not only developing and refining its ballistic missile capabilities but also its naval and land forces.

By the late 2010s, China surpassed the United States with the largest navy and leads the development of the world's most advanced anti-ship missiles. In the last twenty years, China created and refined existing ballistic missiles to launch from ships, submarines, aircraft, and land platforms to destroy ships.<sup>93</sup> It continues to hone its anti-intervention capabilities, launching

more ballistic missile tests than all other nations combined.<sup>94</sup> The U.S. DoD reported that the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), numerically, has the world's largest navy, to include modern multi-role ships and submarines.<sup>95</sup> China's ship building capacity dwarfs the United States' ability. The U.S. Secretary of the Navy reported in 2023 that "China has 13 naval shipyards, with one of these facilities having more capacity than all seven US naval shipyards combined."<sup>96</sup> In China's Maritime Report No. 14 in 2021, it felt it had "eroded" U.S. military advantage.<sup>97</sup> China is not wrong in assessing it has emerged as a military competitor to the United States.

China fully recognizes ongoing competition with the United States. A 2019 defense white paper published by the State Council Information Office of the PRC explicitly stated global strategic competition has increased by the United States acting as the instigator in China's domestic and international policies and Washington's desire to achieve military superiority through technology.<sup>98</sup> The defense white paper also asserts China's defense priorities. Beijing will decisively preserve its "sovereignty, security, and development interests."<sup>99</sup> Specifically, it will contest Taiwan independence, protect Beijing's maritime rights and interests, and recognizes SCS islands and Diaoyu Islands as "inalienable parts of Chinese territory."<sup>100</sup> In opposing Taiwanese independence, China states it makes "no promise to renounce the use of force" to keep China united.<sup>101</sup>



Figure 2. The first island chain from China’s point of view.<sup>102</sup>

Politically and militarily, China’s aggressiveness converges in the first island chain. China sees itself vulnerable in the first island chain because it does not control any land there. In the 1980s, Admiral Liu Huaqing, commander of the PLAN, defined the first island chain containing the Aleutian Islands, the Kurile Islands, the Japanese archipelago, the Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan Islands, the Philippine archipelago, and the greater Sunda Islands in the western Pacific.<sup>103</sup> Asia-Pacific expert Toshi Yoshihara views the geography of the first island chain remaining of vital interest to China for three main reasons. First, all of China’s maritime energy imports must travel by ship through sea LOCs in the first island chain.<sup>104</sup> China’s ship imports could become subject to naval harassment from neighboring countries or, worst case, a blockade. Second, China contests ownership of resources below the continental shelf and has territorial disputes amongst almost all its neighboring countries in the island chain.<sup>105</sup> China declared a controversial “nine-dash line” within the first island chain, which Beijing claims sovereignty

over all land features or islands surrounding the nine-dash line, something Brunei, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam disputes.<sup>106</sup> Finally, most major Chinese coastal cities lie within striking distance of long-range ballistic missiles fired from the first island chain.<sup>107</sup>

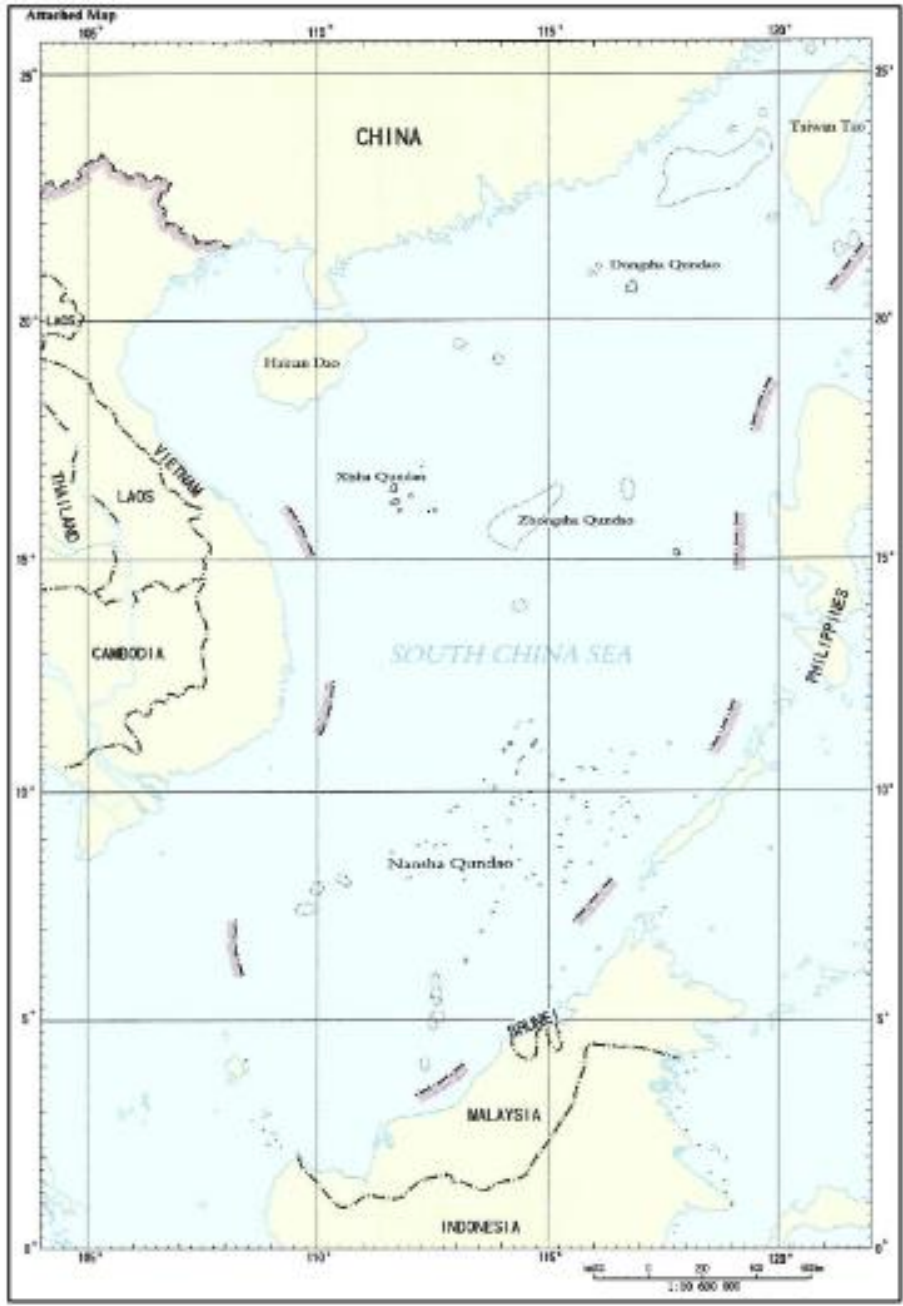


Figure 3. China's nine-dash line submitted to the UN in 2009.<sup>108</sup>

Beijing claims a defensive strategy and highlights how its military acts differently than

the U.S. military. In 2020, the China Aerospace Studies Institute elaborated on China's defensive strategy. It recognized strategic deterrence rose to prominence after WWII with the introduction of nuclear weapons.<sup>109</sup> The study claims Washington uses the guise of strategic deterrence to act as an aggressor around the world. For example, it stated the United States since WWII has used nuclear deterrence, but it waged war and executed an aggressive and expansionist foreign policy.<sup>110</sup> The document iterates that, unlike America, China focuses on the defensive aspect of deterrence. China prioritizes strategic deterrence, breaking it down into self-defense, which it finds limited, flexible, and effective.<sup>111</sup> China views strategic deterrence as a means to its active defense. It further criticizes the United States in using strategic deterrence as promoting its hegemony, power politics, and international strategy by applying pressure via military power on other countries.<sup>112</sup> China, on the other hand, uses strategic deterrence to “contain foreign aggression; safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests; and maintain a peaceful and stable internal and external environment.”<sup>113</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As mentioned, the United States has traditionally organized and planned to wage war against the Soviets. Some describe the “American way of war” as the “United States’ ability to slowly and safely amass an ‘iron mountain’ of military power adjacent to an adversary’s homeland and then, at a time of Washington’s choosing, launch an overwhelming assault to suppress enemy defenses.”<sup>114</sup> Yet, China’s military approach in the first island chain neutralizes the “American way of war.” In 2006, China published its “Science of Campaigns,” which explains the missions for its rocket forces. It recognizes possible missions include missile deterrence, missile firepower destruction raids, and missile firepower blockades.<sup>115</sup> China clearly has a reference for target selection that would isolate a SIF in the first island chain from support.

In its interpretation of active defense the PRC could attempt to forcefully reunify with Taiwan, which falls in line with Beijing's strategic deterrence to national sovereignty. One study found a more likely scenario for China is to seize a smaller contested target in the first island chain, such as the Spratly Islands or Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.<sup>116</sup> Chapter 5 will show that both the Spratly and Senkaku Islands are governed by mutual defense treaty allies of the United States. In either scenario, China would likely strike first and the differences in power, time, distance, and interest would work against an effective U.S. response.<sup>117</sup> The study also found that American forces in the early phase of a crisis would lose air and naval dominance and precision strikes would damage U.S. forces' port facilities, air strips, and fuel depots.<sup>118</sup> The relevance of this research again presents itself, how can a joint SIF sustain itself in a contested environment to disrupt the Chinese A2/AD advantage.

#### **Chapter 4: Case Study – U.S. Sustainment in Bataan, 1941-1942**

The worst military defeat experienced by the United States occurred in 1942 in the Philippines at the hands of Imperial Japan. From December 8, 1941 until May 8, 1942, when U.S. Army Forces in the Far East (USAFEF) surrendered from Corregidor, the United States and its Filipino allies fought an enemy that dominated the air and sea domain. The Japanese controlled the exterior LOCs and had the ability to frustrate interior LOCs. The United States and the Filipinos fought the Japanese on northern and southern Luzon, then consolidated on the Bataan Peninsula, and finally held out from the island of Corregidor before surrender. Analyzing the conflict on Bataan shows the necessity of stocking supplies for an anticipated operation because a reliance on local sources and foraging and the dependence on outside resupply proved impractical in combat against a peer enemy.

By annexing the Philippines in 1898, the United States became a regional power player in

the Pacific. With Washington concerned about its interests in the Philippines, particularly from Japan, it hosted the Washington Conference in 1921-22 that sought to limit the number of capital ships nations could own, as well as pledging not to fortify the Philippines.<sup>119</sup> Japan left the conference in 1934, but domestic politics prevented Washington from fortifying the Philippines.<sup>120</sup> Also occurring in 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Tydings-McDuffie Act, which initiated a commonwealth period for the Philippines that the Act stated would last until July 4, 1946, when the Philippines would finally gain independence.<sup>121</sup>

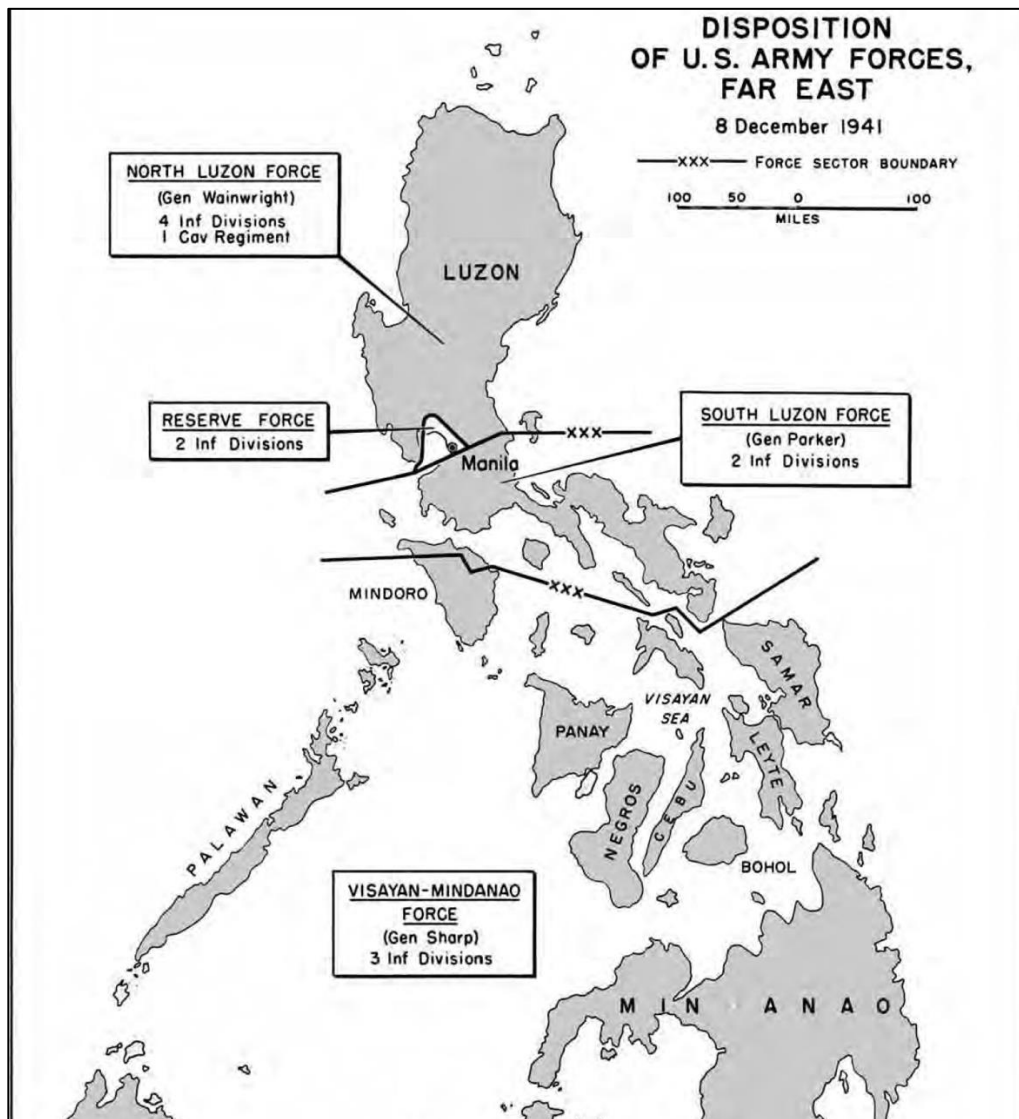


Figure 4. Map of U.S. disposition in the Philippines December 1941.<sup>122</sup>

In the 1930s, both the U.S. Navy and Army had pessimistic outlooks on defending the islands. Located 5,000 miles from Hawaii, the Philippine Archipelago consists of more than 7,000 islands.<sup>123</sup> The U.S. Navy recognized that the U.S. fleet would need 68 days to reach the Philippines from the west coast of America, while the Japanese Navy could reach the Philippines in four days from Formosa.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, the U.S. Army believed it would need to fight for a little over two months without support, but the Navy assessed it would take two to three years to retake the Philippines from the Japanese.<sup>125</sup> War Plan Orange-3, (WPO-3) developed in 1940-41, saw the complexity in defending all of the Philippine archipelago and called for only the defense of Manila and Subic Bays.<sup>126</sup> WPO-3 recognized that if the enemy landed on Luzon, then the U.S. and Philippine forces would conduct delaying actions while withdrawing to the Bataan Peninsula, essential terrain in defending Manila Bay.<sup>127</sup> At the outbreak of war, WPO-3 called for the Office of the Chief Quartermaster (OCQM) in the Philippines, led by Brigadier General Charles C. Drake, to move provisions to Bataan until enough supplies could sustain 43,000 personnel for 180 days, at which time supplies and reinforcements would arrive from America.<sup>128</sup>

WPO-3 was the U.S. plan to defend the Philippines until General Douglas MacArthur came out of retirement. MacArthur became field marshal in the Philippines in 1935, and, after his retirement in 1937, served as a civilian advisor to Commonwealth President of the Philippines Manuel L. Quezon.<sup>129</sup> On July 27, 1941, Washington recalled MacArthur to active duty to command all of the Philippine Commonwealth and USAFFE and to oversee a \$10 million budget to spend toward the defense of the islands.<sup>130</sup> With MacArthur in charge of USAFFE, he received approval in August 1941 to alter WPO-3, which he viewed as a “defeatist plan.”<sup>131</sup> He felt with the Commonwealth army increasing its manpower and the creation of

USAFFE as a headquarters, protection for all the islands could occur. MacArthur envisioned Commonwealth forces aided by U.S. forces could “fight it out on the beaches.”<sup>132</sup> He now focused on defending the islands of Luzon and Visayan than merely Manila and Subic Bay.<sup>133</sup> By December 1941, estimates put USAFFE consisting of approximately 100,000 Filipino troops and about 20,000 U.S. forces.<sup>134</sup> General Jonathan M. Wainwright would command North Luzon’s forces primarily along Lingayan Gulf, while General George Parker commanded the South Luzon forces dispersed along a thin line between Lamon Bay and Batangas Bay.<sup>135</sup> The significant change in the defense of the Philippines required a completely new plan for supply. The OCQM now arranged to complete by December 1, 1941 three new supply depots away from Manila to support the forces on the beaches in Luzon.<sup>136</sup>

Japan’s plan sought to neutralize the U.S. bases in the Philippines, followed by an occupation of the islands. The Japanese attack on the Philippines was part of a greater strategy to attack U.S., British, and Dutch bases throughout the Pacific.<sup>137</sup> Formosa and Conton provided the logistical bases for Japanese operations south.<sup>138</sup> Once given the command to attack, “x-day” would have Japan bomb allied air bases, then established Japanese air bases on seized territory to ultimately destroy all allied resistance.<sup>139</sup> Japan was prepared to execute “x-day” as early as November 1941.<sup>140</sup> Yet, MacArthur was sure Japan would not attack before April 1942, giving him time to raise 150,000 Filipino troops by April 1, 1942 and receive additional U.S. air power, which the U.S. Army had earmarked hundreds of fighters and bombers to arrive by March 1942.<sup>141</sup> On November 27, 1941, Washington sent MacArthur and Admiral Thomas C. Hart, commander of the U.S. Navy in the Philippines, a warning of war with Japan.<sup>142</sup> Nevertheless, MacArthur doggedly insisted no attack from Japan was possible before March 1942.<sup>143</sup>

At the start of war, Japan acted swiftly to gain air and sea dominance. In the early

morning hours of December 8, 1941, USAFFE learned of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and anticipated Japanese air attacks at first light.<sup>144</sup> By approximately 1230 on December 8, 1941, Japanese bomber and fighter aircraft conducted an air raid on Clark and Iba Air Fields in Luzon, destroying 49 U.S. aircraft and the only early warning radar system.<sup>145</sup> The Japanese had essentially neutralized American airpower in the Philippines on the first day of WWII.<sup>146</sup> The United States lost all ability to attack Japanese targets in Formosa from the Philippines and could only use remaining aircraft from the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and Commonwealth Airforce to conduct reconnaissance missions or harass Japanese aircraft that now controlled the skies. On December 10, 1941, the Japanese landed on northern Luzon at Appari and Vigan, with the goal of gaining airfields to support seizing the Philippines.<sup>147</sup> The striking capability of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, Task Force-5, moved south on the first day of the war on the orders of Admiral Hart.<sup>148</sup> On December 10 the Japanese attacked the U.S. Naval base at Cavite Navy Yard, effectively destroying it, while also sinking one submarine and damaging two ships.<sup>149</sup> USAFFE, as a result, lost sea dominance early on as well. On December 12, 1941, the Japanese landed on the southeast part of Luzon at Legaspi, to again seize airfields.<sup>150</sup>

With logistical foresight, the OCQM began carefully stocking Bataan before the order to execute WPO-3. General Drake ordered a Quartermaster Officer to Bataan on 14 December who began transporting, dispersing, and camouflaging supplies throughout Bataan, making use of nighttime to avoid enemy detection from the air.<sup>151</sup> General MacArthur implemented WPO-3 and the withdrawal to Bataan on December 23, 1941.<sup>152</sup> General Drake would now have to stockpile Corregidor first with enough supplies to support 10,000 personnel for six months; then he would need to stock Bataan.<sup>153</sup> General Drake had seven days to complete repositioning supplies since the Japanese entered Manila on January 1, 1941.<sup>154</sup> By January 3, 1941, General Wainwright's

and General Parker's forces had established their battle positions on Bataan.<sup>155</sup> Although establishing sufficient stores of ammunition on Bataan, the OCQM could only move an unbalanced diet of food to last thirty days.<sup>156</sup> The Japanese attacked USAFFE positions in Bataan on January 9, 1942, but U.S. and Filipino forces fiercely repelled all attacks that by February 8, 1942, Japan halted offensive actions until reinforcements arrived.<sup>157</sup>

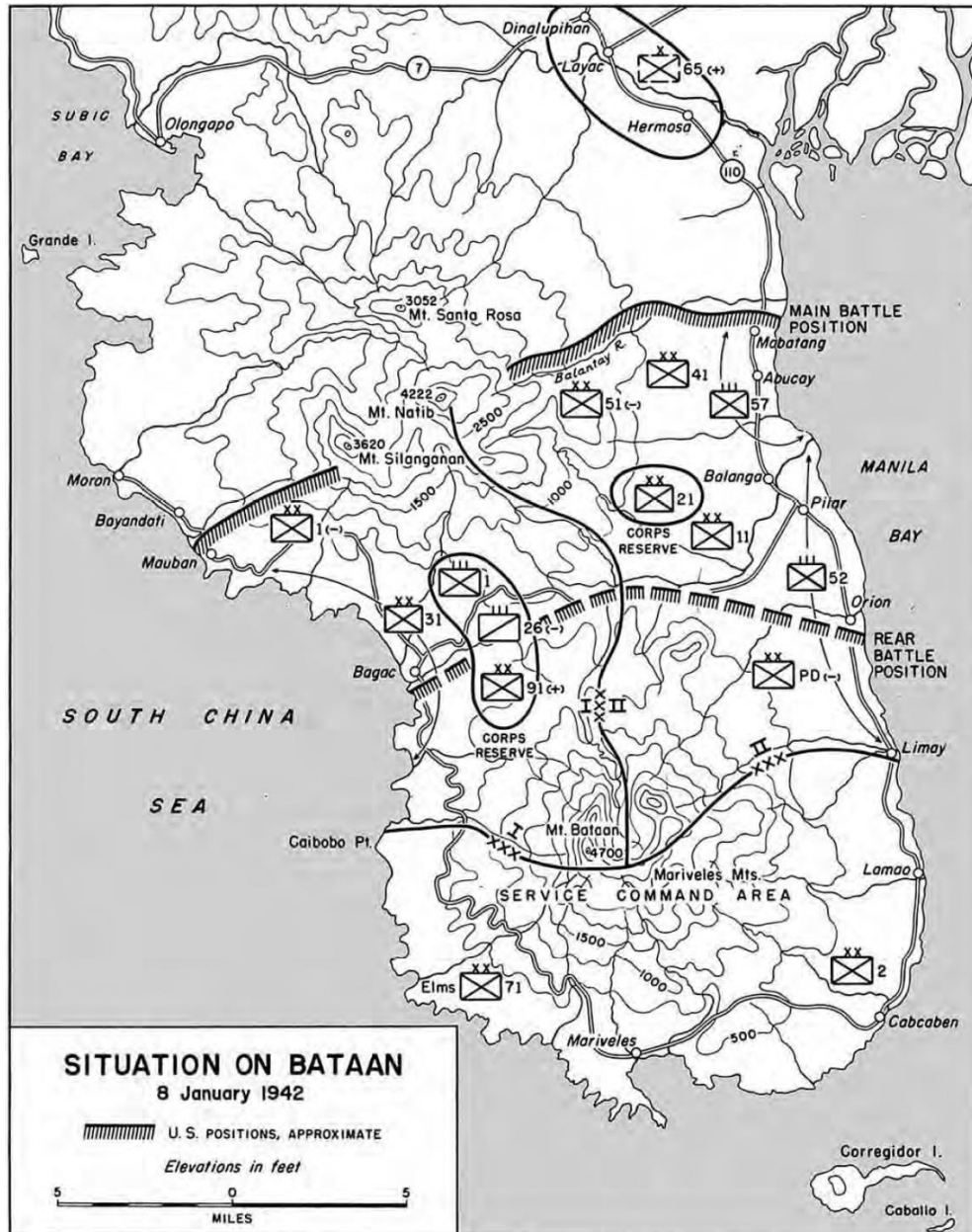


Figure 5. Map of Bataan Peninsula with Corregidor Island to the south.<sup>158</sup>

Despite having enough ammunition to continue fighting, the lack of sustenance ultimately defeated the USAFFE on Bataan. Half rations were ordered for the Bataan forces on January 5, 1942.<sup>159</sup> By late March USAFFE troops on Bataan only received 1,000 calories per day, under the 1,500 calories that medical doctors viewed as the lowest amount needed to carryout basic functions in life, and far below the 3,500 calories estimated that the body requires to operate in the jungles and mountains of Bataan.<sup>160</sup> The lack of food caused a deficient vitamin intake, leading to beriberi, further weakening front line USAFFE troops.<sup>161</sup> Malnutrition also led to other symptoms of diet insufficiency, such as edema and night blindness.<sup>162</sup> Malnourished, the USAFFE troops' immune systems also weakened, making them more susceptible to jungle diseases, with malaria running rampant, compounded by a lack of millions of anti-malaria pills needed to support USAFFE forces.<sup>163</sup> In early April, General Drake radioed to the U.S. Army's Quartermaster General that 75% of the Bataan forces are "flat on their backs with tropical disease due to malnutrition and lack of medical supplies and...the sickness was rapidly increasing."<sup>164</sup> With USAFFE forces in this enfeebled state, the Japanese finally launched their next offensive to seize Bataan. After receiving reinforcements, the Japanese attacked on April 2, 1942, and by April 9, 1942, General Edward P. King, Commander of the Luzon Force, surrendered USAFFE troops on the Bataan Peninsula.<sup>165</sup>

### **Problem 1 – Local, Legal, and Bureaucratic Issues of Sustainment**

Even though WPO-3 existed, peacetime restrictions prevented preparing for the plan. The OCQM ran into the issue of peacetime procedures not allowing the storing of stocks in quantities to satisfy the defensive reserve.<sup>166</sup> At the main supply installation, the OCQM could only stock supplies for sixty days to support U.S. troops and Filipino Scouts, far below the 180 days that WPO-3 required.<sup>167</sup> Even with a 60 day supply limit, for some supplies needed they delegated to

posts and stations to purchase in commercial markets, resulting in diminished supplies of rice, coffee, sugar, and perishable food—what the OCQM deemed as part of essential stocks—when war started.<sup>168</sup> Despite WPO-3 calling for 180 days of supply to sustain forces, at the start of the war food stocks fell well below.<sup>169</sup> Today, the joint force can expect similar restrictions on levels of supply that countries in the first island chain will allow. Furthermore, OCQM factoring purchasing certain essential items from the local economy proved unreliable once war started. To expect normal, peacetime market exchanges to resiliently endure a crisis or emergency, including the most extreme situation of an invasion, demonstrated wishful thinking that applies today.

Even with the invasion occurring, OCQM faced legal and bureaucratic constraints preventing them from obtaining and storing local supplies. For example, the Commonwealth Government, fearful of food becoming low for the local Philippine populace under a Japanese occupation, denied OCQM attempts to seize local provisions.<sup>170</sup> USAFFE Headquarters even had to deny commandeering supplies held by Japanese owned food companies in the Philippines.<sup>171</sup> The OCQM also discovered they were unable to transfer certain large food stocks purchased in one province for their advanced depots to another province due to local laws, which prevented the transfer of ten million pounds of rice to Bataan.<sup>172</sup> Regardless of the Philippines being a commonwealth of the United States in 1942, these instances prove that the United States has to respect the local rule of law, even during war. Local laws and bureaucracy will still impede storing supplies in the first island chain today or purchasing from the local economy.

The amount of personnel to sustain overwhelmed the OCQM. WPO-3 had called for a 180-day supply to sustain 43,000 troops; in actuality, over 105,000 would need support on Bataan, with troops totaling to 80,000 after the withdrawal to Bataan and 25,000 civilians seeking refuge on Bataan from the advancing Japanese.<sup>173</sup> This proves insightful since during a

crisis in the first island chain, U.S. and partner forces could consolidate in numbers not initially expected, and the humanitarian factor to provide for civilians is a reality. For instance, a cross strait invasion of Taiwan would likely see tens of thousands of Taiwanese flee conflict by boat to the nearest islands, where the joint SIF may be located. OCQM had low clothing stocks at the start of war, and USAFFE forces in the harsh tropical climate ran through uniforms, socks, and boots in the jungles and mountainous terrain of Bataan.<sup>174</sup> Fewer than 25% of troops on Bataan had mosquito nets, shelter halves, raincoats, or blankets.<sup>175</sup> After five months of continuous combat, USAFFE forces surrendered to the Japanese in Bataan, wearing threadbare, torn uniforms and inadequate footwear.

During a war where the enemy has air and sea dominance, freedom of maneuver along interior LOCs becomes frustrated. After MacArthur announced the return to WPO-3, moving prepositioned supplies and transporting troops from Luzon to Bataan turned into an arduous task for the OCQM. USAFFE had anything but an orderly withdrawal to Bataan. The U.S. Army Quartermaster's history of the war against Japan states "in central Luzon there was almost everywhere confusion created by defeat—abandoned railways, hijacked trucks, destroyed bridges, and roads congested by hundreds of vehicles and thousands of fleeing civilians and disorganized troops."<sup>176</sup> As troops withdrew, OCQM also found difficulty supplying at planned delaying positions because units withdrew faster than anticipated.<sup>177</sup> General Drake ordered commanders withdrawing to forage as best as possible; yet, lack of transportation for forward units made foraging difficult if not impossible.<sup>178</sup> The OCQM had relied on rail for transportation, but as early as 15 December local crews abandoned their jobs because of the risk.<sup>179</sup> Despite the OCQM procuring 1,000 local trucks at the outbreak of hostilities to augment USAFFE inventory, the Quartermaster history states no amount of trucks available could meet

the military need.<sup>180</sup> To make matters worse, frontline commanders fighting on the beaches, fearful they would be unable to move their forces, seized Motor Transport Service vehicles moving supplies.<sup>181</sup> Supplying front line troops on Bataan similarly tested the OCQM because the battle positions existed in undulating jungle terrain and across deep ravines with no roads leading to the locations.<sup>182</sup> All the issues the OCQM experienced in supplying along interior LOCs will apply to the SIF today. Apart from Taiwan, no other country in the first island chain risks an invasion. Still, in the event China seizes Taiwan, China will command the air and sea to prevent U.S. interference. Therefore, delivery systems and supply depots close to planned battle positions in the first island chain need consideration for a SIF.

Regardless of the diminished rations, USAFFE sought to augment by foraging, which only provided meager enhancements for a limited time. Commanders sent foraging parties to scour Bataan for supplies, even penetrating the enemy lines at night.<sup>183</sup> OCQM established mills to produce rice on Bataan, yielding thirty days of rice.<sup>184</sup> The OCQM Veterinary Corps slaughtered animals such as carabao, draft mules, cattle, pigs, and horses to augment canned food, slaughtering between 30-40 animals every day, which provided four to five ounces of daily meat to individuals on Bataan.<sup>185</sup> The Veterinary Corps, however, had to slaughter all remaining animals by March 1, 1942 because the animals themselves became malnourished due to impracticalities of grazing.<sup>186</sup> Lacking refrigeration, meat had to be delivered immediately to front line troops or else tropical flies would produce maggots in the meat within thirty minutes of laying its eggs.<sup>187</sup> USAFFE troops on Bataan also slaughtered iguanas, dogs, monkeys, and snakes for sustenance, as well as experimenting with native plants, often resulting in sickness and sometimes death from toxins.<sup>188</sup> As mentioned, without proper stocks of preplanned provisions, USAFFE suffered the debilitating effects of malnutrition despite foraging efforts.

The experience on Bataan demonstrates foraging is not a practical solution in sustaining a force.

### **Problem 2 – Lacking Control of the Air and Sea**

With Japan dominating the sea and air, blockade running became an attempted solution to resupply USAFFE forces, but it ultimately became too risky. USAFFE would have to run the gauntlet of Japanese sea and air dominance in and around the Philippine Islands. Cebu City, on Cebu Island, became the main hub for the attempts to run supplies to Corregidor, where OCQM would then send supplies at night to Bataan.<sup>189</sup> Three medium sized ships successfully ran the blockade from Cebu City supply depot to bring supplies to Corregidor, while the Japanese sunk ten other ships attempting the run from Cebu.<sup>190</sup> The three successful blockade running ships delivered 10,000 tons of rations, 4,000,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, and 8,000 81mm mortar rounds.<sup>191</sup> Regrettably, the majority of the rations were hastily packed, poorly stored, and sloppily handled causing most to rot, but the forces on Bataan did receive a few days of Australian canned meat.<sup>192</sup> With the risks too high, MacArthur's Chief of Staff, Major General Richard Sutherland, ordered all blockade running around the Philippines ceased on March 1, 1942.<sup>193</sup> Even attempts to retrieve supplies closer to Corregidor only lasted for a month. The OCQM made blockade runs with small and fast motorboats from Corregidor to Cavite and Batangas to procure supplies but had to cease operations by mid-February.<sup>194</sup>

Few attempts to run the blockade from outside the Philippines succeeded. On January 18, 1942, MacArthur urgently requested for supplies, and the U.S. Army forces in Australia swiftly planned for blockade running from Australia and the Netherlands Indies.<sup>195</sup> The only ships fast enough and capable of carrying large supplies thousands of miles belonged to Allied governments, and they did not want to risk their ships running the blockade.<sup>196</sup> As a result, the U.S. Army purchase 10-12 older Filipino or Chinese coasters in Australia, but only three

successfully ran the blockade to Cebu, while the others turned back because of the increasing danger from Japanese air and sea patrols.<sup>197</sup> U.S. Army Cavalry Officer Colonel John A. Robenson arrived in Java on January 19, 1942 to procure ships, supplies, and crews for blockade running. After much effort, Colonel Robenson procured ammunition, rations, two Filipino freighters, and crews to run supplies from Java to Cebu.<sup>198</sup> Unfortunately, Japanese aircraft bombed both ships enroute to Cebu on February 19, 1941.<sup>199</sup> Submarines had better success blockade running, and five made it to the Philippines with ammunition, rations, and medical supplies; yet, the submarines lacked carrying capacity to truly aid in prolonging the defense.<sup>200</sup> On February 22, 1942, Brigadier General Patrick J. Hurley, on behalf of General George C. Marshall, ceased all blockade running operations because Washington could no longer justify the risks.<sup>201</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The U.S. experience in the Philippines from December 1941 to May 1942 demonstrates clearly that when the U.S. lacks air and sea dominance, ground forces must have adequate supplies accessible, or they will become combat ineffective. Lacking air and sea dominance makes an outside resupply of ground forces impractical. With Japan conducting offensive operations throughout this period, Japan presumably did not have the tightest blockade around the Philippines, and, even then, they sunk ten resupply ships within the Philippines, sunk two resupply ships sent from Java, and deterred several attempts from Australia. The experience also demonstrates the absolute need to have supplies fully stocked and pre-staged to support an operation. At the time of General Parker's surrender on April 9, 1942, a U.S. Army study assessed "ammunition stocks, too, though lacking antiaircraft shells and short of artillery shells, were still plentiful enough to last for another month at the existing rate of consumption."<sup>202</sup>

Therefore, starvation forced surrender, and it shows that tangible rations must be factored for feeding a force, not expectations to buy food from the local economy or live off the land.

USAFFE was placed in a difficult situation. MacArthur rapidly increased the Filipino forces and supplies were being sent to the Philippines. Nonetheless, troop levels should commensurately match the amount of supplies on hand and should not expect supplies to catch-up.

## **Chapter 5: The Relationship of the United States and China in the First Island Chain**

### **Japan**

Japan is a treaty ally with the United States and has concerns with the PRC's behavior in the region. Tokyo views Chinese aggression as a survival level national interest. Japan's Ministry of Defense views the strategic environment as the most intense and complex since the end of WWII.<sup>203</sup> Japan maintains close economic relations with China. Tokyo is China's third largest trading partner, while China exists as Japan's largest trading partner.<sup>204</sup> China is also the third largest investment destination for Japan.<sup>205</sup> Despite economic cooperation between the two countries, contention occurs in the first island chain. Japan administers the Senkaku Islands, but China, who calls the islands the Diaoyu Islands, and Taiwan, who calls the islands the Tiaoyutai Islands, both claim the Senkakus.<sup>206</sup> Chinese warships made their first incursion into Japanese territorial waters off the Senkaku Islands in 2015 and have steadily increased their aggressive behavior each year since, to include harassment of Japanese fishing vessels.<sup>207</sup> China also violates Japanese air space with military aircraft and spy balloons.<sup>208</sup> China's intimidating behavior towards Taiwan also threatens Japan, who in August 2022 received five of nine ballistic missiles fired from China toward Taiwan land in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).<sup>209</sup>

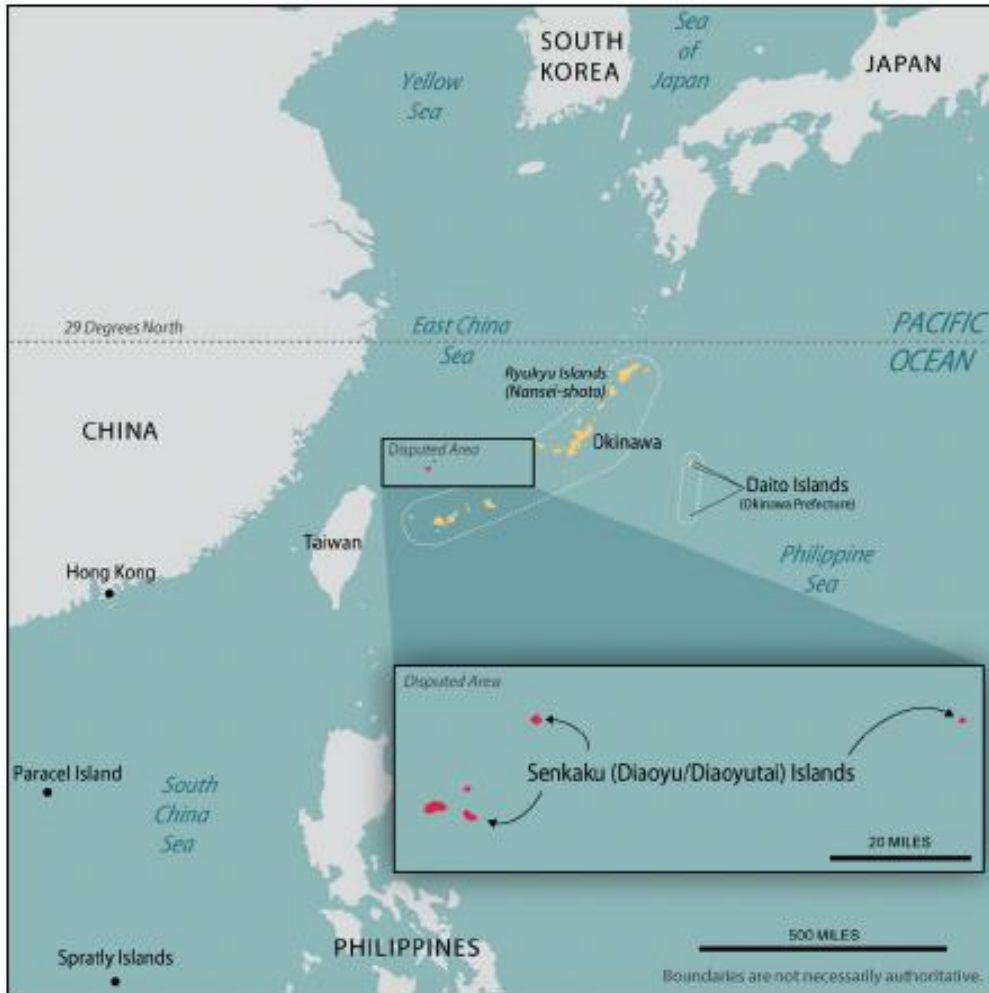


Figure 6. Map of disputed Senkaku Islands.<sup>210</sup>

Japan has taken significant actions to improve its defense against Chinese provocations. Japan focusses its strategy on deterrence and counterstrike capabilities. Japan’s Minister of Defense, Hamada Yasukazu, in 2023 published *The Defense of Japan* and stated “it is essential to make efforts to ‘defend our country by ourselves’ and increase deterrence.”<sup>211</sup> Yasukazu has two priorities for defense. First, Japan will optimize use of its current equipment while also improving its defense facility resilience. Second, Tokyo will procure new weapon systems that allow stand-off defense capabilities that can also serve as counterstrike means.<sup>212</sup> Japan’s 2022 NSS views “China’s current external stance, military activities, and other activities have become

a matter of serious concern for Japan and the international community, and present an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and stability of Japan...”<sup>213</sup> The NSS also states Tokyo will increase defense spending to 2% of its GDP by FY27, which if achieved would have Japan with the third largest defense budget globally.<sup>214</sup> By FY27, Japan will have new Aegis integrated surface-launched and ship-launched missiles to achieve a desired standoff defense, unmanned underwater vehicles (UUV) to achieve superiority underwater, and a space domain awareness capability.<sup>215</sup> Japan has also increased the defense of its southwest islands. The Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force have deployed surface-to-ship missile and surface-to-air missile units to Miyakojima, Ishigakijimi, and Yonoguni Islands in 2022 and 2023.<sup>216</sup> Yonoguni Island lies about 70 miles west of Taiwan. In 2016 Japan built a small base in Yonoguni, but since the Chinese missiles landing in Japan’s EEZ in 2022, Tokyo is expanding the base and deploying missile units to it.<sup>217</sup>

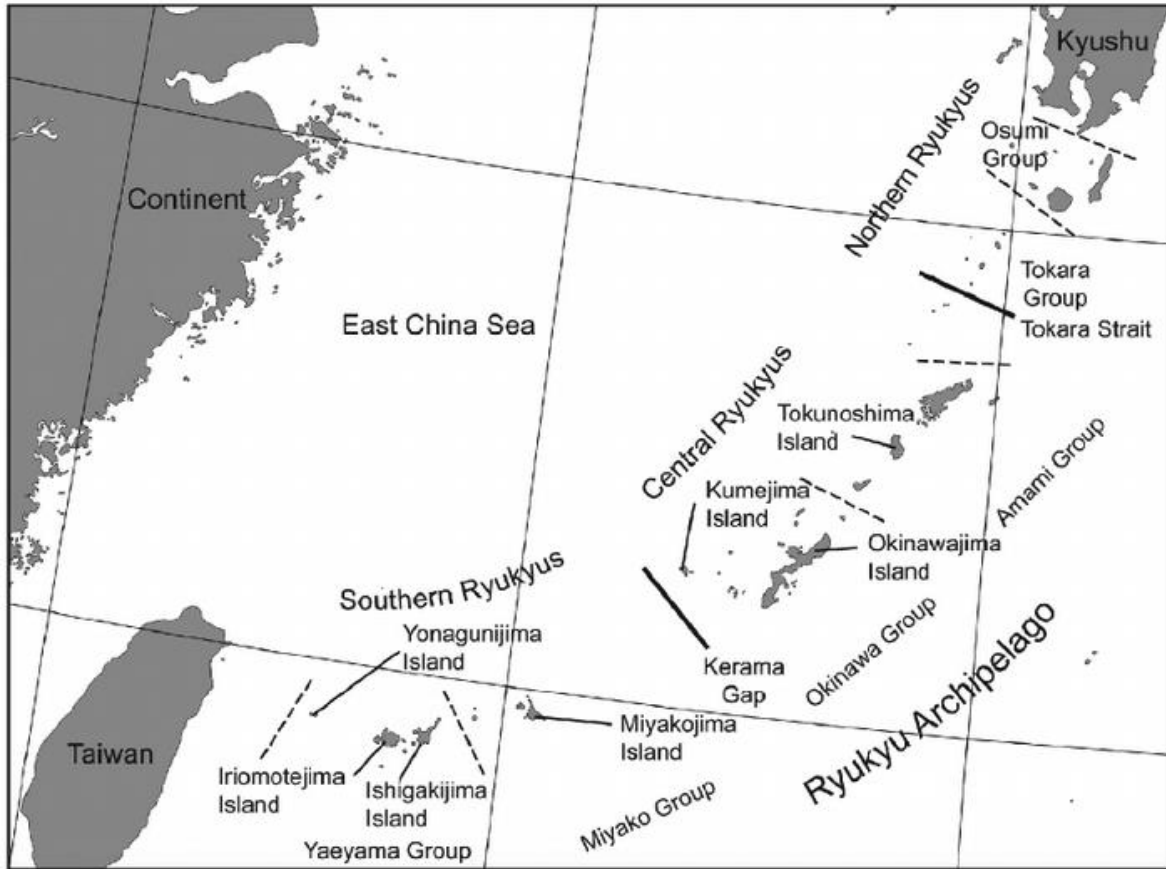


Figure 7. Japan's Ryukyu Islands.<sup>218</sup>

Japan realizes to accomplish its defense objectives it needs to strengthen the alliance with the United States via deterrence and response capabilities.<sup>219</sup> Washington and Tokyo signed the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security in 1951, but for the past several decades, Japan has increased its military capabilities to provide its own defense.<sup>220</sup> Japan hosts almost 54,000 U.S. troops who have access to 85 facilities throughout Japan's territory, with Okinawa hosting the most troops and facilities.<sup>221</sup> Article V under the 1960 U.S-Japan Security Treaty states an attack on either party in territories under Japan's administration would cause them to meet the common danger, which includes an attack on Japanese forces in the Senkaku Islands.<sup>222</sup> Japan remains one of the United States' strongest allies in the region and globe.

### Taiwan

Taiwan, a key partner with the United States, faces an existential threat from China. Taipei views Chinese aggression as a survival level national interest. Xi perceives unification with Taiwan as necessary for rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.<sup>223</sup> Taiwan, since 1996, has acted as a strong democracy with a highly developed economy. Taiwan is the United States' ninth largest trading partner and one of the world's largest producers of advance communication and information technology, key to global supply chains.<sup>224</sup> Foreign direct investment between the United States and Taiwan results in tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of profit for both countries.<sup>225</sup> Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-Wen best represents the country's political aspirations with four commitments. First, Ing-Wen vows Taiwan will continue to have a free and democratic constitutional system. Second, Taiwan and the PRC will not be subordinate to one another. Third, Ing-Wen assures that Taiwan will resist annexation or encroachment on its sovereignty. Finally, the president affirms the Taiwanese people alone will decide Taiwan's future.<sup>226</sup>

PRC provocations against Taiwan have increased each year since Xi assumed power. Some view China as waging a grey zone campaign by increasing its military activities incrementally closer towards Taiwan but remaining below the threshold of war.<sup>227</sup> PLA aircraft incursions into Taiwan's air defense identification zone have steadily increased and ballooned to 139 separate incidents in July 2023.<sup>228</sup> In 1955 the U.S. military drafted an unofficial dividing line in the Taiwan Strait that Beijing and Taipei had respected for decades, but since 2019 the PRC regularly crosses the line with its aircraft.<sup>229</sup> Some view China's large scale military exercises around Taiwan as rehearsals to blockade the island to support a future invasion.<sup>230</sup> Xi told the PLA to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027.<sup>231</sup> China also influences other countries to sever relations with Taiwan. For example, Honduras ended its relationship with Taipei in 2023,

leaving only thirteen countries that recognize Taiwan.<sup>232</sup>

The United States is Taipei's most significant partner. The United States supports a "one China policy," in that one China exists with Taiwan part of it. Yet, the United States supports Taiwan deciding its future, not China determining the future of Taiwan. Washington shut down its embassy in Taiwan in 1979 and replaced it with an American Institute, essentially a de facto embassy ran by the State Department.<sup>233</sup> Washington passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) in 1979 that transferred diplomatic relations to Beijing but kept unofficial relations with Taipei.<sup>234</sup> The TRA committed the United States to continue commercial and cultural relations and to provide Taiwan arms of a defensive nature.<sup>235</sup> It also obligated the United States to "resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan."<sup>236</sup> A 1982 communique under the Reagan administration reaffirmed two previous communiqués that the PRC was the only legal government of China and gave a conditional pledge for the United States to decrease arms sales to Taiwan.<sup>237</sup> Beijing's provocative behavior, however, has not caused a decrease of U.S. arms sales to Taipei. The Reagan administration also gave Taiwan six assurances stating that the United States: has not set a date to end arms sales, will not consult with the PRC on arms sales, will not act as a mediator, will not revise the TRA, reaffirms Taiwan's sovereignty, and will not pressure Taiwan to negotiate with the PRC.<sup>238</sup> The TRA, three communiqués, and six assurances drive United States policy with Taiwan. None of the policies commit the U.S. to defend Taiwan like a treaty would. As a result, the United States has what many consider "strategic ambiguity" towards the defense of Taiwan.

### **The Philippines**

The Philippines is another treaty ally with the United States who faces a belligerent

China. Manila views Chinese aggression as a survival level national interest. The Philippines has relationships, at times complicated, with both the United States and China. The Philippines' top trading partner include both the U.S. and China.<sup>239</sup> President Rodrigo Duterte, Philippine president from 2016-2022, limited cooperation with the United States and sought Chinese investments. Beijing pledged tens of billions of dollars in loans, aid, and investments, but only a small percentage materialized.<sup>240</sup> Ferdinand Marcos Jr won the presidential election in 2022. In January 2023 Marcos Jr visited Beijing to meet with Xi Jinping and received the promise of infrastructure development, loans, and investments.<sup>241</sup> In November 2023, however, the Philippines rejected China's latest Belt and Road Initiative investment worth \$1 trillion in favor of Japanese and other western rivals investments.<sup>242</sup> Many speculate Manila's departure from Chinese investments stems from territorial disputes with Beijing. The disputed territory in the SCS is resource rich, such as the Malampaya gas fields.<sup>243</sup> Since 2012, China escalated the dispute in the SCS by placing outposts in and around the Spratly Islands, where Chinese vessels routinely harass Philippine fishing and military ships.<sup>244</sup> Philippine President Benigno Aquino, 2010-2016, sought arbitration on the disputed territory from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), who ruled in 2016 the Spratly islands fall in Manila's EEZ and Beijing's "nine-dash line" has no legal basis.<sup>245</sup> Beijing rejects UNCLOS's findings and continues to harass Filipino shipping.



Figure 8. EEZs overlapping China's nine-dash line.<sup>246</sup>

The United States has a long history in the Philippines spilled in blood fighting against each other, and, as Chapter 4 demonstrated, valiantly fighting alongside one another against a common enemy. The United States has had a Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines since 1951. Article IV of the treaty states any attack in the Pacific area would cause either party to meet the common danger.<sup>247</sup> Article V of the treaty specifies meeting the common danger if any attack occurs on the metropolitan territory, island territory, or armed forces, public ships, or aircraft in the Pacific.<sup>248</sup> As recent as August 2023, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, reaffirmed U.S. commitment to the treaty after Chinese Coast Guard vessels attacked Filipino vessels with water cannons.<sup>249</sup>

The Philippines is the largest recipient of U.S. military assistance in the Pacific/East Asia and hosts multiple large scale multi-lateral training exercises with the United States each year.<sup>250</sup> In 2014, Manila and Washington signed the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement

(EDCA), allowing for an increased rotational U.S. military presence in the Philippines, more United States access to Philippine military bases, and the ability for the United States to store certain items in the country.<sup>251</sup> In May 2023, the United States and Philippines formally reaffirmed the bilateral defense guidelines. The EDCA specifically allowed the United States access to five bases for training, response to natural disasters, and modernization. The EDCA also permits the United States to enhance the bases with construction projects. Of note, one base includes Antonio Bautista Air Base on Palawan that the United States plans to renovate storage warehouses, to include ammunition and fuel depots.<sup>252</sup> In April 2023, the Philippines announced the EDCA would expand to four additional locations. One base is located on Balabac Island, southwest of Palawan and further along the first island chain. Two other bases are located in Luzon's most northern province of Cagayan, south of Taiwan.<sup>253</sup>

### **Borneo Countries: Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia**

The land mass of Borneo, part of the greater Sunda Islands, exists as another key island in the first island chain consisting of Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The United States has diplomatic, economic, and military relations with each country, and geopolitically Malaysia and especially Indonesia are the more important countries. Indonesia completes the first island chain with the island of Sumatra, essential terrain along the Strait of Malacca, controlling access from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean. The United States has strong economic relations with Indonesia and Malaysia, but China is the largest trading partner with each country, as it is with most countries in South East Asia.<sup>254</sup>

Each country takes issue with China's nine-dash line and views the matter as a vital national interest. Both Brunei and Malaysia have territorial claims in the SCS that contend with other countries and particularly with China's nine-dash line. Indonesia lacks contested territorial

claims in the SCS with China, but China's nine-dash line has a maritime claim within Indonesia's EEZ.<sup>255</sup> China's incursions have caused Jakarta to align closer to the Washington on security matters. For example, United States foreign military sales (FMS) sales have increased with Indonesia, and Washington has constructed a maritime training center in the country.<sup>256</sup>

The United States has security relations with each country and conducts regular training exercises, but each country sticks to a non-alignment policy. Indonesia and Malaysia have a long history of a non-alignment policy that dates back to the Cold War. Although each country struggles against an aggressive China in the SCS, neither country would likely consider the United States storing equipment in its territory for fear of Beijing seeing it siding too closely with Washington. Malaysia, for example, repeatedly stresses a neutral position between the United States and China rivalry.<sup>257</sup> A director from Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated Indonesia would remain neutral in a U.S.-China conflict concerning Taiwan.<sup>258</sup>

## **Chapter 6: Options for the United States**

### **Pre-Positioned War Reserve Material**

The United States has pre-positioned war reserve material (PWRM) strategically located around the world to support combatant commanders (CCDR) in the initial stages of a conflict. Responsible for the size, management, and pre-positioning of resources rests with the respective services.<sup>259</sup> Services can store the PWRM either "afloat" or "ashore" to decrease the reaction time and enable timely support for U.S. forces doing the initial phases of an operation until follow-on capabilities arrive and the establishment of a supply chain.<sup>260</sup> Apart from reducing the strain on the DoD's strategic mobility command, PWRM also reassures the United States commitment to its allies.<sup>261</sup> Locations in the Indo-Pacific that the services have stored PWRM include Diego Garcia, South Korea, Japan and Okinawa, and Guam and Saipan.<sup>262</sup> Each service

also has ships for the afloat PWRM. In the Indo-Pacific, the U.S. Army possesses seven ships, the Navy and Marine Corps has 14 ships organized into two forward deployed squadrons in the area, and the Air Force has two ships.<sup>263</sup>

Current issues exist in the PWRM strategy. All services repeatedly report shortfalls in their PWRM.<sup>264</sup> A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report also detailed concerns with PWRM in the Indo-Pacific because a lack of storage space, storage locations geographically separated by large distances from likely points of use, perishable items not getting replaced, and aging ships needing maintenance.<sup>265</sup> The GAO also notes the tyranny of distance in the Indo-Pacific presents challenges, as well as difficulties in receiving host nation agreements to store PWRM and the associated labor costs to secure and maintain it.<sup>266</sup> A Congressional Research Service (CRS) report recognizes with services changing operational concepts, such as the MLR and MDTF, sustainment of the joint force will cover a wider geographical area than in past decades.<sup>267</sup> The report suggests CCDRs will need both ashore and afloat PWRM assets to become more widely distributed and resilient.<sup>268</sup> Both the GAO and CRS recommend the DoD needs better oversight on its PWRM strategy.

The United States has taken efforts to improve the PWRM strategy. As a result of China's increasing military power, Congress passed the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) in 2021, which seeks to improve U.S. deterrence and defense, while assuring allies and partners in the region.<sup>269</sup> The PDI includes funding to improve infrastructure and logistics and to pre-position equipment.<sup>270</sup> The FY24 budget included \$9.1 billion to fund the PDI, a 40 percent increase from FY23.<sup>271</sup> It appears PDI funding will support the wider distribution of the joint forces in the region. In an October 2023 Pacific Industry Forum Conference, U.S. INDOPACOM identified more than \$8.9 billion in projects of interest in countries and territories that include

Palau, the Philippines, Papa New Guinea, Guam, Marshall Islands, and other island nations.<sup>272</sup>

The investments will cover runways, piers, hangars, and other infrastructure supporting the U.S. Navy.<sup>273</sup>

### **Proposed Solution to Sustain in the First Island Chain**

PWRM needs to extend further in the first island chain. Sustaining a joint SIF requires storing supplies wherever the SIF is located. Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines all appear as willing partners to receive equipment and supplies. Nevertheless, access necessitates careful diplomacy since the will of local people could prevent storage of supplies. The history of non-alignment from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei will prevent the United States from storing supplies in any of the Sunda Islands.

The U.S. joint force recognizes the importance of Japan in meeting national interests. Just as Japan works to make its military more resilient, so should the United States. Washington should work with Japan to allow the United States to have access to its military bases in the southwest islands, particularly in Yogaguni Island, key terrain with its proximity to Taiwan. The United States must stock essential classes of supply on the island to support contingency operations for the MLR or MDTF. The Ministry of Defense also realizes its alliance with the U.S. needs to mitigate the impact on its local communities.<sup>274</sup> Therefore, the United States needs to look at the essential capabilities with a minimum footprint it requires in Yogaguni Island and plan to have stocks to support it, while also remembering a conflict in Taiwan would likely see Yogaguni Island receiving tens of thousands of Taiwanese refugees fleeing hostilities.

Taiwan is an essential country in the first island chain, and the joint force should carefully maintain its relationship with the country. Taiwan was the largest purchaser of United States FMS in FY2020-2022.<sup>275</sup> It will likely remain a large purchaser of United States FMS into

the future. Washington has recently established a small footprint of U.S. troops in Taiwan for training.<sup>276</sup> With the joint force in Taiwan, it needs sustainment in the event of a potential cross strait invasion. The joint force should work with Taiwan to construct resilient storage facilities that can support U.S. forces in the country. Beijing will protest the U.S. storing supplies and equipment in Taiwan, but it does not violate U.S. policy toward the country and can still support “strategic ambiguity.”

The United States and Philippine security relationship has moved in the right direction to allow the United States to support the Philippine territorial sovereignty in the SCS. Access to bases in Palawan, Balabac Island, and Cagayan allow the U.S. to strengthen allied and partner capabilities in the first island chain. The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement, however, constrains the type of supplies the United States can store in the Philippines. The agreement limits supplies to support humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and rescue operations. The agreement specifically excludes storing major end items, spare parts for major items, and missiles and torpedoes in the Philippines.<sup>277</sup> Washington needs to renegotiate with Manila to allow the storage of major end items, parts, and ammunition, specifically missiles and torpedoes, essential items of PWRM the joint SIF requires to support kinetic operations.

Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei may align closer to the United States as the PRC continues its aggressive behavior in the SCS, but each country will never allow the United States access to store PWRM. Nonalignment is a bedrock of their foreign policy. Also, Washington’s history and continued support to Israel, a contentious subject with each countries’ populace, will prevent the countries from ever aligning too close to the United States. Nonetheless, Washington should maintain security ties with each country to build their capacity to deter China’s belligerent behavior in the SCS.

## **Pros and Cons of Proposed Solution**

This strategy shows U.S. commitment to its allies. By storing PWRM in an allied country, it demonstrates the United States will honor its treaty to meet the common danger. As the GAO report details, PWRM “allows for responding to multiple contingencies without a fully developed supply chain, and reduces forces deployment response time.”<sup>278</sup> PWRM ashore also alleviates the need for outside support from PWRM afloat ships risking getting targeted in a contested environment. Furthermore, storing PWRM in the first island chain could also serve as a deterrent by showing to the PRC the U.S. and allies readiness to conduct kinetic actions. Finally, storing PWRM in the southwest islands of Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines guarantees the joint SIF has sustainment in the event of conflict.

This strategy also comes with risk. The most obvious risk appears during conflict when the PWRM sites become vulnerable to targeting. As a result, PDI funding must make logistical facilities resilient. Interior LOCs from supply depots to front line troops, who could be forward on small islands, likewise presents a challenge during a conflict. Yet, the joint force is experimenting in ways to still support forces with UAV and UUV delivery, which will prove essential in a conflict. Much like the Marine Corps/Navy development of the LAW ship, the U.S. Army is similarly developing the Maneuverable Support Vessel Light.<sup>279</sup> The LAW and this vessel will act as crucial links along interior LOCs.

The United States faces risk in improving its relationship with the Philippines. President Aquino took initiatives to expand ties with the United States, President Duterte stalled the relationship with his erratic behavior, and, currently and conversely to his predecessor, President Marcos Jr seeks to enhance relations. Manila’s next presidential election could have the pendulum swing back to a president that shares Duterte’s policies. The United States should

anticipate another lag in the relationship in 2027 depending on who the Filipinos elect for president.

Another risk is escalating the action-reaction between the United States and China. Describing escalation in the SCS, Malaysia Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said in 2018 that “a warship attracts other warships.”<sup>280</sup> Considering Mohamad’s insights, the United States positioning PWRM further within the first island chain will certainly elicit a reaction from China. The PRC will undoubtedly object to the United States basing PWRM in the Philippines, further in Japan, and especially in Taiwan. Yet, the United States having the ability to sustain its forces in the first island chain is a robust action that can endure the PRC reaction. Storing PWRM in the first island chain demonstrates to the PRC that Washington will honor its treaties with the Philippines and Japan and the TRA with Taipei.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

The PRC’s development of a robust and integrated A2/AD system has frustrated the United States’ strength that for decades had given Washington the ability to transport and mass its forces anywhere around the globe. The PRC has emerged not only as a peer competitor with the United States, but it also continues to grow, refine, and technologically advance its military. The best method the United States has to counter China’s network of A2/AD sensors and missiles is to have a joint SIF dispersed geographically within the first island chain with allies and partners. The first island chain consists of Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Washington’s strong relations with these countries and the United States military’s ability to project power in the first island chain allows for regional stability and freedom of navigation. The PRC, particularly under Xi, has increased its aggressiveness within the first island chain and SCS to enforce its unilaterally perceived territorial waters in its nine-

dash line.

As the research has shown, in the event of conflict, China has the ability to prevent the United States from resupplying or reinforcing the joint SIF in the first island chain. For the joint force, particularly the MLR and MDTF, to meet the intent of their service and the INDOPACOM Commander, the units must retain the ability to operate in the first island chain. History has revealed, particularly the United States experience in the Philippines from December 1941-April 1942, the importance of having adequate stocks of supplies when the enemy dominates the air and sea domains. Overreliance on the local economy to sustain a force or “living off the land” exists as a chimera in a conflict where the enemy has air and sea superiority and the ability to employ long range, accurate missiles. The joint force needs the ability to supply its forces in the first island chain with the means to fight, which is why mission success will depend on gaining access in storing PWRM in the southwest islands of Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan.

Engagement with host nation officials from General Officers at INDOPACOM, DoD, U.S. Ambassadors, and Department of State officials must occur to receive the approvals to store needed supplies. The storing of lethal munitions on foreign soil will require careful and skilled diplomacy. Although Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei have each contested the PRC’s territorial claims in the SCS, the countries will continue their long history of non-alignment. The United States should continue security relations with Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei to enhance their capability to resist and deter PRC aggression in the SCS. The best potential the United States has to achieve storing PWRM in the first island chain lies with Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

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<sup>13</sup>United States Marine Corps, *Tentative Manual for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations 2nd Edition*, May 2023 1-1, <https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Docs/230509-Tentative-Manual-For-Expeditionary-Advanced-Base-Operations-2nd-Edition.pdf?ver=05KvG8wWlhI7uE0amD5uYg%3D%3D>

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