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**PEACETIME ENGAGEMENT OF THE
CHINESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY GROUND FORCES
BY THE UNITED STATES ARMY**

BY

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ABSTRACT

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This paper presents a strategy for peacetime engagement between the United States Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) ground forces. A generation of PLA officers, several who fought us in the Korean War, is preparing to pass the leadership of the PLA to a new generation. This new generation of PLA leaders' contacts with the United States Army is virtually nonexistent. It is imperative these young officers learn about us and we about them. If not, the U.S. Army may again, as did American soldiers in the Korean War, find itself on some Asian terrain, surprised, outnumbered, isolated and cutoff by an Army who will give no quarter.

This paper recommends three steps for the U.S. Army to open effective lines of communication with the PLA. They are: synchronize the Army's message to the PLA throughout the force, and across the world; assist the PLA in its mission of nation building; and bring the strengths of the U.S. Army Reserve and Army National Guard to this effort. These measures, combined with efforts from other DOD and U.S. government departments, can help the U.S. and China become honest, frank and forthright neighbors for peace in the Asia-Pacific region.

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PEACTIME ENGAGEMENT OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY GROUND FORCES BY THE UNITED STATES ARMY

The emergence of the People's Republic of China as a stable, prosperous and peaceful member of the world community is among America's highest national security priorities.¹ As part of the strategy to obtain this goal, the service components of the United States Pacific Command have been asked to develop strategies to interact with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in "peacetime engagement."² The hope is that by talking and working with the PLA now, we can avoid any conflicts with them in the coming years and decades of the 21st century.

Unfortunately, the historical relationship between the PLA and the United States Army has been confrontation rather than cooperation. If we wish to change this, we need to understand the intended audience: the PLA and the officers who lead it. These individuals must be convinced that working with the United States will not threaten their country. Unfortunately, today, if we would not say we are enemies, we cannot proclaim ourselves partners, either.

The purpose of this paper is to recommend three steps the United States Army can take to establish effective lines of communication with the current and future senior military leadership of the ground forces of the PLA (hereafter referred to as PLA). These three steps are: synchronizing our message to the PLA throughout the Army, and across the world; assisting the PLA in one of its basic missions, nation-building; and fully integrating the strengths of the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard forces in the engagement effort. These measures, combined with measures from other DOD and US government departments, can help us become honest, frank and forthright neighbors for peace in the Asia-Pacific region. Once our two countries reach that point, we should have the confidence to take the next steps toward cooperation, and perhaps partnership.

BACKGROUND TO ENGAGEMENT

Military contact between the United States and the PLA extends back to War World II. Prior to the outbreak of the war, the Nationalist forces of General Chaing Kai-shek fought the Communist forces of Mao Tse-tung for control of China. Once World War II broke out, the Nationalists and Communists set aside their fight, to concentrate on the Japanese forces occupying China. During the war, the US principally worked with the Nationalist forces of General Chiang Kai-shek. In 1944, against the wishes of General Chiang Kai-shek, a small unit of Americans was sent to the Communist stronghold of Yen-an, in northern China. Their mission was to work with the Communists to record weather data, provide a point of return for downed American airmen recovered by the Communist forces and report any intelligence the Communist forces acquired on the Japanese forces. This effort became known as the "Dixie Mission".³ It remained with the Communist forces until 1947, at which time it was withdrawn and contact between the United States military and the PLA ceased.

The next time U.S. military forces confronted the PLA was during the first winter of the Korean War. It was November 1950 and U.S. forces had pushed their way through North Korea and were near the

Yalu River, which serves as the border between Korea and China. The 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry, 7th (United States) Infantry Division was on the eastern edge of the Chosin Reservoir.⁴ This unit was one of the first groups of Americans to learn the PLA had entered the war. They learned it the hard way. Surprised and unprepared for an attack, they were destroyed as a fighting force as they tried to retreat back to United States Marine positions on the western side of the Chosin Reservoir. The active hostilities of the Korean War terminated in 1953. Since that date, U.S. and PLA officers have been in contact with each other over truce violations along the Korean Demilitarized Zone established under the truce agreement.

As the Cold War carried on throughout the '50's, 60's, and 70's virtually no contact, other than that in Korea, occurred between the U.S. military and the PLA. President Nixon is said to have opened China with his historic visit in 1972. However, very little changed between the two country's militaries.

The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the US recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1979 led to increased contact between the PLA and the United States Military until 1989. These military contacts were initially limited to senior officer exchanges, as well as visits by senior civilian leaders of the United States Department of Defense. As the decade of the 80's progressed, the US-PLA military contacts increased to include PLA senior officer visits to U.S. Army training bases, training of PLA soldiers on U.S. counterfire radars at Fort Sill Oklahoma, and the selling of U.S. Blackhawk helicopters to the PLA.⁵ The events of Tiannamen Square in 1989 led then-President Bush to terminate all contacts between the U.S. military and the PLA.

The inauguration of President Clinton in 1992 saw a renewed effort at engagement of China, and these efforts included the United States military. The efforts were limited to senior officer and civilian leader exchanges, ship port calls and visits to Senior Service Colleges by leaders of both militaries. Despite the increased tensions resulting from the 1996 Taiwan Strait's crisis, limited contact between the two nations military continued.

The 1999 bombing of the Chinese Embassy during the Kosovo campaign caused a total halt of all contact between the two militaries. This halt continued for several months, until the end of 1999, when the Chinese allowed the limited renewal of U.S. Navy ship port calls, and in January, 2000, the visit of PLA General Xiong Guankai to the Pentagon in Washington, DC⁶

The purpose of these renewed efforts, according to the National Security Strategy, The National Military Strategy, and the United States Security Strategy for East Asia-Pacific Region is to increase the transparency and openness of the PLA's actions and intentions.

To attain this desired transparency, in 1998 Secretary of Defense Cohen called for a, "threefold approach to engagement –deepening our current joint efforts, modestly broadening them into new areas, and advancing from confidence building to real-world cooperation."⁷ Admiral Dennis C. Blair, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Pacific Command, stated the purpose of the U.S.-China military exchange program is to develop, "knowledgeable, professional respect between the two militaries", and demonstrate the US desire to, "work in concert with (our) Chinese counterparts (on) mutual security

concerns.”⁸ The United States Army, Pacific, currently has the objective of opening effective lines of communication with the PLA.

UNDERSTANDING THE PLA

China has stated “(it) is enthusiastic for expanding military relations with the United States.”⁹ In its Defense White Paper, China indicates military contacts should be based on China’s Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect, understanding, friendship, and mutual benefit and cooperation. Chinese Defense Minister, Chi Haotian, put it directly, “We (meaning the US and China) come together because of shared interests, not shared values.”¹⁰ This last point is probably closer to reality than anything in China’s official documents. Certainly, the Chinese and the United States have a shared interest in peace in the Asia-Pacific Region. War would disrupt the US economy and the economies of its Asian-Pacific allies, Japan and Korea. But, it also would destroy China’s ability to achieve its number one goal of economic development. And without economic development, the PLA’s drive for modernization is ended. So, despite their suspicions of the U.S. the leaders of the PLA know peaceful cooperation must happen. The alternative is too destructive.

The PLA is an army undergoing change due to modernization. Today’s PLA is really three armies. Most of the PLA is still rooted in the force structure and doctrine of Mao’s “People’s War.”¹¹ These units, referred to by some as “millets and muskets”¹², still focus on trading China’s immense territory for time, allowing them to draw an enemy into the interior of China, and then using guerrilla hit and run tactics – defeat the force over time. Their equipment is 1950’s or 1960’s era, and considered obsolete by many countries of the world.

A smaller portion of the PLA ground force has undergone modernization efforts. These units, often referred as “fist”¹³ units, resemble the rapid reaction light forces of the United States. They have received equipment upgrades, tend to have more realistic and longer training periods, and focus on the ability to rapidly move to meet any force that threatens China. However, these forces are hampered by a lack of sufficient aircraft to move them rapidly in large numbers.

The third element of the PLA is the strategic thinkers of the army’s higher level educational institutions such as their National Defense University. These individuals, referred to by some as the “blackboard PLA”¹⁴, tend to produce the literature that spells out the current thinking on the future doctrine and force structure envisioned by these academicians.

Thus, the PLA is an army largely structured and trained for the least likely war it will fight. The officers who lead this army are keenly aware of this shortcoming. They are constrained in rapidly modernizing the entire force because China’s political leadership has placed the country’s economic development ahead of military development. As a result, the PLA ground force has undertaken a modernization effort aimed at insuring those units most likely to face a high technology threat are upgraded first, with the majority of the PLA to follow once the Chinese economy will support such an endeavor.

It is important to note that the ground forces of the PLA are the last elements of the PLA to receive modernization dollars and equipment. The equipment they do receive tends to be produced within China, unlike the equipment being fielded to the Chinese air and naval forces. Priority for modernization is to the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and the PLA Navy (PLAN). These two services are receiving equipment produced outside of China, mostly from Russia, but countries such as Israel are also providing upgraded equipment to the Chinese. Most experts agree that the Chinese ground forces are 20 years away from having the capabilities seen in the U.S. Army in the 1990's.¹⁵ It faces an uphill fight to accomplish this goal. It must wait for dollars from a government focusing on economic development, and it must improve the educational level of its soldiers.

The soldiers¹⁶ of the PLA tend to come from rural rather than urban areas of China. As a result, their educational level does not support their officers' drive for taking the PLA from a People's Army to a High-tech Army. They come from a society, and into an army, which rewards obeying orders from above over individual initiative. Yet, such initiative is critical to developing a productive noncommissioned officer corps, which must exist if the PLA is to achieve its goal of becoming a modern, high technology army.

Today, the PLA is slowly shifting from a continental defense; ground forces focused organization to one that is developing forces capable of projecting high technology offensive power beyond China's land borders. Since the assumption of power by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949, the ground forces of the PLA have been the main effort among the military services. The high level leadership of the PLA overwhelmingly comes from officers with backgrounds in the PLA ground forces. However, with the transition to a force focused on high technology, the PLAAF and PLAN are receiving more emphasis, and budget dollars, than in the past. The traditional premier force, the ground PLA, has to give ground to the Air and Naval forces portending a potential change in who directs the overall development of the PLA. As the pressure for faster modernization of the ground forces grows, there will be increased tension between the ground, air, and naval components that could be harmful to the overall PLA.

The PLA officer corps, like the army it leads, is also undergoing change. In the case of the officers, it is a generation change. The rising senior officers are no longer from the revolutionary cadre who fought alongside Mao and the other founders of the CCP. They are younger than the officers whom they are replacing. Most lack any combat experience. If they have such experience, it is either from the Korean War, or later wars with India and Vietnam. Nonetheless, they, as well as more junior officers, have focused on service as field officers, developing themselves as "dirty boot leaders"¹⁷ as opposed to political officers. They are more technical than ideological. They exhibit characteristics of a professional officer corps, rather than characteristics of a guerrilla army. But they do still serve in a "Party-army"¹⁸ and will support the CCP. They are serious about transforming the PLA from a 1950's and 1960's defensive organization into a modern, high technology army fully capable of offensively engaging any force that threatens the sovereignty of the PRC. They are very aware of the limitations they face, both in material and people in achieving their modernization goal. They are an officer corps threatened by the corruption derived from running their own economic enterprises in the last several years. They lack exposure to the

outside world, especially contact with the United States, except in confrontations over Taiwan. As a result, the officers of the PLA view the United States through harsh and limited lenses. Many, if not most, believe the United States, while not an imminent threat to the PRC, wants to contain China to prevent their country from assuming its rightful place as a major power in the region, and the world. This new generation of officers shares a major trait of those who preceded them: They don't trust us.

Therefore, the officers of the ground forces of the PLA, at whom our confidence building steps are directed, are proud, dedicated to defending their country, willing to serve under the leadership of the Party, intent on modernizing their forces and uncertain of their future relationship with the United States military.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT

What does the preceding mean for the U.S. Army? It means we have to engage an officer corps that faces pressures from within and from without as it attempts to modernize both its equipment and people. In many ways, we are the army they desire to be: high tech, capable of projecting and sustaining decisive force anywhere our vital national interests dictate. It is an officer corps that believes we represent a nation trying to prevent China from assuming its rightful place among the major economic and military powers of the world. We represent the army that can prevent them from accomplishing a forced recovery of Taiwan. Today, we are viewed as a spoiler; tomorrow we could be an enemy.

Our mission is to convince these officers we are not their enemy and they can work with us to maintain a peaceful, prosperous Asia-Pacific region. How do we do this? We must begin at the beginning, by opening effective lines of communication. Under the current conditions, this can best be accomplished in three ways:

First, the U.S. Army needs to synchronize the message to the PLA throughout the U.S. Army. Then, allow these informed members of the army to disseminate this coordinated message to the PLA, both in the Asia-Pacific region, and other parts of the world. This requires providing the Total Army Force with the Army's intent in engaging the PLA. It enables the Army to provide our message in a clear and consistent voice at every encounter with the PLA.

For example, there are a tremendous number of PRC citizens attending universities and colleges throughout the United States. There are several large communities of Chinese immigrants or citizens living in the United States who still have relatives in the PRC. Where we have members of the U.S. Army in these institutions of learning, or living and working in these communities, those members should be used to engage these audiences exposing them to our message to take back to the PLA.

Second, whenever you assist an organization with an important basic mission, it shows your desire for cooperation and builds trust. Nation building is one of the basic missions of the PLA.¹⁹ It also has been a historic mission for the United States Army. Thus, it is a mission common to both the United States Army and the PLA. It can be executed without heavy censorship due to concern over national security.

Third, employ the unique capabilities available in America's citizen-soldiers. Much of the expertise needed both to accomplish getting the desired message to the PLA and the nation-building mission is present in either the U.S. Army Reserve or the U.S. Army National Guard. We need to employ the capability of these two great assets in this important shaping mission.

SYNCHRONIZING THE MESSAGE

How does the U.S. Army synchronize its message throughout the force and the world? It accomplishes this in three ways. First, the U.S. Army needs to implement a block of instruction on our engagement strategy with China at each of its noncommissioned and commissioned officers resident and nonresident courses. This should provide a basic understanding of China's military, where the relationship currently stands, and more importantly, where the U.S. Army wants it to go. This will provide a basic understanding of this issue throughout the U.S. Army's leadership—from Sergeant to General. The periods of instruction need not be identical in the detail of information presented to each audience, but all leaders in the U.S. Army need to be prepared to discuss this issue intelligently based on factual information.

Second, any soldier who will be assigned to duty where contact with the members of the PLA is contemplated should receive either a period of instruction or, at the very least, a pamphlet outlining our engagement goals and objectives with the PLA. It is important to remember that as China moves onto the world stage, its military moves with her—and increasingly PLA representatives will appear outside China.

The PLA recently participated in UN missions in Cambodia, East Timor and Kuwait. In talking with U.S. Army officers who were assigned to the UNICOM mission in Kuwait, it was clear the PLA members came with an agenda of discussion items for when they encountered U.S. Army members of UNICOM. It was just as clear, painfully so, that these U.S. Army officers did not have a clear message to return to the PLA. Consequently, the Chinese are left with an inconsistent picture. While the Commander-in-Chief of the United States is speaking of a strategic partnership, many members of the U.S. military whom the PLA met are hesitant and silent. It is not enough to let China specialists handle this issue. As Chinese participation in UN sponsored missions rise, it is hard to predict whom, and at what rank, from the U.S. Army will encounter members of China's military. We need to insure that whomever the PLA encounters they get a clear and consistent message on our desire for peace and trust between our two nations.

Many citizens of the PRC attend universities in the United States. The United States Army sends junior officers to many of these same universities for advanced degrees. By including these officers in the educational effort recommended above, and by encouraging them to initiate discussions with the Chinese students, we have opened another path for our message. Some of these students may serve in the PLA; most will probably know either family members or friends who are in the PLA. In either case, the message gets back to the PLA.

This same rationale applies to U.S. Army soldiers on recruiting duty in areas with a predominant Chinese community. Of course, having knowledge of China also might improve their chances of

recruiting members from this community. More importantly, this knowledge would not only carry our desired engagement message, but would demonstrate a respect for China and its culture—a vital matter when one deals with the Chinese.

Therefore, the first step for the U.S. Army is to teach a clear and consistent message to its members—all of its members—about our desire for peace and cooperation with the PLA. Utilizing all of our soldiers, we won't miss an opportunity in face-to-face meetings with the PLA, whether they are in China, in the Asia-Pacific region, in the United States or elsewhere in the world, to send the PLA a clear and consistent message of our desire for peace and cooperation.

ASSISTING WITH NATION BUILDING

The second area for improving our lines of communication is in supporting the PLA in one of its basic missions—nation building. This is a mission shared by both the PLA and the U.S. Army. It is a mission embedded in the history of both armies. In the early years of the United States, the U.S. Army provided officers trained as engineers to survey the lands of the new country. Later, as the country grew and expanded westward, the U.S. Army built dams, reservoirs and waterways to facilitate flood control, the supply of water to urban areas, and movement of commerce. Recently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers received the mission to oversee the building of schools for the city of Los Angeles, California.²⁰ All of these examples are missions conducted by the PLA within China today.

A potential area of cooperation under nation building is the lessons learned in transferring former military installations to civilian communities. Both the PLA and the U.S. Army have undergone force reductions over the last few years. The United States Army gained a tremendous knowledge about what is required to close a military installation. This includes transferring the property and buildings to a new owner, finding jobs for those civilians and soldiers displaced by the base closure and cleaning up any environmental damage which may have occurred over the years due to military training or testing on the installation. The impact on the surrounding communities when an installation closes and ways to mitigate the impact is another area with valuable lessons useful to the PLA.

Under nation building, I include disaster planning and relief. In both countries, the Army frequently inherits the mission of assisting its people when disasters strike. Several areas of common interest to the United States Army and the PLA exist here. They are evacuations from hurricanes (typhoons in China), preventing or controlling flooding along rivers with large populations adjacent to them and earthquakes in large urban areas.

The United States recently experienced a large hurricane threatening the East Coast. Since the storm was so large and strong, several state governors, along with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, ordered simultaneous evacuations. This caused a tremendous movement of large numbers of people in a short period of time. This resulted from the population explosion along the southeastern coastline of the United States over the last 10 – 20 years. It quickly became obvious the old planning assumptions about when to order evacuations, how many people would be moving, and where they would go no longer applied or worked. The Chinese also have a long coastline with major population

centers located on it. They have experience in dealing with huge typhoons. Working together, the two armies could provide valuable ideas as to how to minimize the threat to property, how to anticipate where the storms will hit, and better ways of moving the large numbers of people out of harm's way. They could also share information on smart ways of orchestrating the populations return and repair of the damage from the storm.

The United States has flooding along such major rivers as the Mississippi, Missouri and other rivers each year. The Chinese experience the same along the Yangtze and Yellow rivers each year as well. The lessons learned by both armies, not only in dealing with the actual disasters, but about what works and does not work in trying to control such large rivers, and precluding disease outbreaks after such an event is valuable information to both countries.

Both countries have large cities located along or near earthquake fault lines. Again, how to prepare for such events, what kind of building construction is best, information on predicting earthquakes, and how best to move people to safety are all collaborative areas which both armies have an interest and can approach on a basis of equality.

All of the foregoing are common tasks derived from a historic mission common to both the PLA and the United States Army. Both armies have expertise in the tasks discussed above. These are candidates for forums, conferences, and possibly, exchange visits between the U.S. Army and the PLA. They are topics where both can come to the table as equals, as the PLA desires, with mutual respect by both, to learn and share ideas to help their people. It provides the U.S. Army, both in word and deed, an opportunity to communicate our country's desire for peace and demonstrates our willingness for cooperation. It can be done with virtually little threat to either country's national security.

The final area of cooperation under nation building concerns corruption. The PLA, as it attempts to divest itself of its economic enterprises, must deal with a serious threat to its officer corps: corruption. If the current situation goes unchecked, the PLA faces the situation where its core values will crumble and it will become more of a Mafia than a professional military capable of defending China. We, in the U.S. Army, have our share of challenges with corruption.²¹ While not on the scale facing the PLA, it is present. To minimize corruption requires a continuing vigilance and commitment to swift and sure punishment to keep it from threatening the ability of the U.S. Army to accomplish its missions. This commitment to the rule of law, and how we developed a strong belief in it, is a story we can share with the PLA. This will have to be done in a manner not seeming to be condescending to the PLA. One approach would be to share our current problem of fraternization and sexual harassment. These issues are as corrupting an influence as money, and if unchecked, may cause irreparable harm to the U.S. Army.

EMPLOY AMERICA'S CITIZEN-SOLDIERS

The final recommendation for opening effective lines of communication with the PLA involves the United States Army Reserve and Army National Guard. Much of the true expertise for both opening effective lines of communication, as well as nation building, is in these two organizations.

Within both the United States Army Reserve and the Army National Guard are members with Chinese heritage. Many of these members serve in units in the continental United States. However, because of Hawaii, and other United States' Pacific possessions, we have members of these organizations living and working in the Asia-Pacific region everyday. While many have been United States' citizens for generations, they still study, learn and practice traditions from China. Several can still speak, read and write in Chinese. They may have relatives living in China. Their understanding of Chinese history, culture and language can be used in two ways.

The first way is to utilize them to teach the rest of the U.S. Army about China. This provides the U.S. Army with a readily available resource for educating soldiers at U.S. Army schools, as well as soldiers destined to serve in missions where contact with the PLA is anticipated. The U.S. Army is already funded for these soldiers; therefore, this approach will not require extra dollars, or only a minimal amount. It should not increase the requirement on the individual soldier selected for such duty since where he or she performs their weekend or summer training sessions can be adjusted based on the needs of the U.S. Army.

The second method of utilization for these soldiers with Chinese heritage is to serve as members of delegations that meet with members of the PLA. In this way, the PLA will hear the Army's message for engagement from not only members of the Army, but members who clearly understand both cultures. In many instances, the members of the PLA will hear it in their own language. This approach also demonstrates the value of having a diverse population in one's army. This point will not be lost to the members of the PLA since they have numerous ethnic groups within China.

In these two ways, as educators and as members of U.S. Army delegations to the PLA, these members of the U.S. Army Reserve and the Army National Guard can assist in opening lines of communication with the PLA, and serve as effective messengers of our engagement strategy.

Both the United States Army Reserve and the Army National Guard provide an excellent source of professional, experienced subject matter experts in nation building. Specifically, individuals with expertise in financial management, resolving the impacts of base closures on civilian communities, agricultural management, as well as disaster planning and relief, are all found in these organizations. Often, in these areas, their expertise is greater than active duty military members.

Financial management expertise will serve the PLA in two ways. First, those members of the U.S. Army Reserve or National Guard with this experience either own a successful business or serve in very responsible positions in large, capital-rich industries. No matter the source of their expertise, they bring a tremendous amount of experience and knowledge in how to make businesses profitable and honest. As the PLA seeks to divest itself of its economic enterprises, it is still operating others. Utilizing members from the U.S. Army Reserve and Army National Guard would provide the expertise to make them profitable. When the time came for the PLA to divest itself of a business, it would not be giving a failed business to the state. This surrendering of failed business enterprises to the state is a major drain on the Chinese economy, and must be fixed, if China is to become a stable and prosperous country.

Second, the officers of the PLA would see the benefits of commitment to duty and the rule of law when a profitable business is transferred to the civilian economy. This would be achieved when the greater revenues from these profitable businesses, now operated by civilians, enables the central government to provide better equipment, more dollars for training and the ability to improve the living conditions of the PLA. It would not entail any loss of manpower or training time by the PLA. It would eliminate a major source of corruption among PLA officers and provide a strong boost to those PLA officers who seriously desire to eliminate the corruption tearing at the PLA.

A further positive outcome resulting from the successful transfer of business enterprises from the PLA to the civilian economy is the generation of new jobs. Not only will jobs be created for unemployed civilians, but also jobs will be created for employment of soldiers when they leave active duty with the PLA. This will assist China with a growing problem of unemployment, especially among recently deactivated members of the PLA.

Another area related to the improvement of economic conditions associated with the PLA is the transition of military installations to civilian use. This includes the development of programs to retrain both soldiers and civilians impacted by the closure of a military installation. Many members of both the Army Reserve and Army National Guard have had experiences, often painful, with this issue. And, unlike their active duty brothers-in-arms, the Reserve and Guard members have felt the pain from in and out of uniform.

Consider the example of an Army Reserve member who serves as a commander of a reserve unit on an installation slated to close, and who also serves as the Mayor of the town just outside the gate of the soon-to-close base. He or she will have to deal with finding the members of their military unit new positions on new installations. Then, as Mayor, they have to solve the problem of retraining and finding new businesses to hire the civilians impacted by the base closure. Add to this the need to assist civilian businesses in the community that relied on the soldiers from the closed installation for their customers. The lessons learned, and the message that one need not panic from such an occurrence, can provide great assurance to members of the PLA who may face a similar situation.

Agricultural management is another area of nation building in which the U.S. Army Reserve and Army National Guard can assist the PLA. As with financial management, many members of the Reserve and National Guard have expertise that will assist the PLA, and by extension the Chinese people, with food production, crop management, soil conservation, operation of small farms, plant and animal disease prevention, and livestock management.

If current predictions hold, China will become a food importer in the next few years. By sharing information with the PLA in the above areas, we can assist the Chinese people in insuring they get the most from the land they till. Further, we can share our knowledge in turning previously infertile soil into fertile soil. The irrigation projects in our western states have direct applicability to currently untillable areas of China. These areas, with proper irrigation, could produce sufficient quantities of foods to reduce

the need for imported sources, as well as opening new lands for farming, thereby providing new employment opportunities to otherwise unemployed Chinese.

In the operation of small farms, many members of the Army Reserve, but especially the Army National Guard, are small farmers themselves. Their knowledge of crop management, financial management, crop diversification, and government programs designed to assist small farmers can be shared with the PLA, as well as other members of the PRC government.

Earlier, possibilities for cooperation in the area of disaster planning and disaster relief operations between the U.S. Army and the PLA were discussed. Tremendous amounts of expertise on these issues reside in the Army National Guard. It is this organization which bears the brunt of the responsibility for responding to such emergencies. In addition to having a tremendous knowledge of on-the-ground operations, many officers from the Army National Guard serve as the interface between the active duty army, federal agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the state agencies dealing with the disaster. This makes them a valuable source of lessons learned in coordinating local, regional, and national efforts during such emergencies.

Based on the foregoing, it is important to bring the many talents and capabilities of the members of both the United States Army Reserve and Army National Guard to our engagement strategy efforts with the PLA. To not do so precludes the organizations from contributing which possess, in many cases, the most valuable tools for insuring we achieve success in opening lines of communication with the PLA.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has discussed three steps the United States Army can take to meet the current guidance for engagement with the PLA. It has focused its recommendations on measures to improve the lines of communication with the PLA. The steps and their supporting tasks are, in the view of this writer, the ones best suited for execution by the U.S. Army. They may not all occur immediately, but as the relationship develops in a positive manner, they provide natural routes to increase cooperation between the two nations ground forces.

The first step is to teach the U.S. Army's desired message for the PLA to all the soldiers of the U.S. Army. This will provide a synchronized, consistent message to the PLA, no matter where or when U.S. soldiers meet members of the PLA.

The second step is to assist the PLA in one of its basic missions—nation building. This step, by helping the Chinese people in areas such as business management, agricultural production, disaster planning and relief and transformation of former military installations to productive civilian uses provides a clear and unequivocal sign of our desire for peace, and the benign intent of our engagement efforts.

The third step involves utilizing the portion of the U.S. Army's Total Force best suited for the first two steps—the United States Army Reserve and Army National Guard. Many of the soldiers who already have the needed knowledge for the efforts outlined in this paper are proud members of these two organizations. They can do the best job, the most effective job, at opening the needed lines of

communication. Through their efforts we are more likely to gain the confidence of the PLA to move from confidence building to cooperation, and perhaps, partnership for a stable, secure Asia-Pacific region.

Word Count = 6085.

ENDNOTES

¹ The White House, *A National Security Strategy for A New Century* (Washington, DC, December 1999), p. 36.

² According to the *National Military Strategy*, available from <http://www.dtic.mil/jcs/core/executiv.htm>; Internet; accessed on 16 December 1999, "Peacetime military engagement encompasses all military activities involving other nations intended to shape the security environment in peacetime.", 4. The majority of such activities are conducted with countries that the United States either has a defense agreement, or maintains close diplomatic and military contacts. Our effort with the People's Republic of China, while not in the classic sense of peacetime engagement, are our best effort with a country neither friend nor foe to shape the Asia-Pacific security environment for a future of peace and stability.

³ Carolle J. Carter, *Mission To Yenan: American Liaison with the Chinese Communists, 1944 – 1947* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997)

⁴ *History of the 7th Infantry Division*, available from <http://www.carson.army.mil/7ID/Historylong.html>; Internet; accessed 20 February 2000, p. 9 of 16.

⁵ I used the following sources to compile the activities cited: Colonel Jer Donald Get, *What's With The Relationship Between America's Army and China's PLA?*, (Strategic Studies Institute Homepage, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, September 15, 1996), pp. 2 – 4, 23 –24, available from <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usassi/ssipubs/pubs96/between/between.html>; Internet; accessed 5 October 1999 and Thomas L. Wilborn, *Security Cooperation with China: Analysis and a Proposal* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, November 25, 1994), pp. 2 – 10.

⁶ Bill Gertz, "Pentagon, PLA To Resume Military Exchanges Today," *Washington Times*, 24 January 2000, p. 3.

⁷ Prepared remarks by Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen at the Academy of Military Sciences, Beijing, China, January 19, 1998. p. 5 of 6. Available from <http://www.defenselink.mil:80/speeches/1998/s19980119-secdef.html>; Internet; accessed on 4 February 2000.

⁸ Congress, House, Armed Services Committee, Written Statement of Admiral Dennis C. Blair, USN, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, *House Armed Services Committee On Fiscal Year 2000 Posture Statement*, 3 March 1999, p. 5 of 11. Available from <http://www.pacom.mil/ref/99/sst/hasc-s.html>; Internet; accessed on 16 November 1999.

⁹ Information Office of the State Council, The People's Republic of China, *White Paper—China's National Defense* (Beijing, 1998), p. 14 of 24. Available from <http://www.china-embassy.org/Cgi-Bin/Press>; Internet; accessed on 9 December 1999.

¹⁰ This quotation was taken from an epigraph to a printed version of Chi Haotian's remarks to the U.S. National Defense University delivered on 10 December 1996 in Washington, DC

¹¹ The term "People's War" refers to Mao's use of China's immense terrain and large population to defeat any invading force by trading terrain for time, until the invading army is outnumbered and surrounded by the PLA guerrilla style army, and then destroyed. It also supported Mao's idea of how a less advanced military could defeat a more advanced military, such as the former Soviet Union, should it choose to invade China. The type of ground force developed under the "People's War" doctrine has very little (read virtually no) power projection capability.

¹² David M. Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy," in *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age*, ed. James Mulvenon and Richard H. Yang, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999), p. 144. Available from <http://www.rand.org/publications/CF/CF145/index.html>; Internet; accessed on 20 January 2000.

¹³ Colonel Russell D. Howard, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army: "Short Arms and Slow Legs"* (USAF Institute for National Security Studies, USAF Academy, Colorado, September 1999), p. 12 of 16. Available from <http://www.usafa.af.mil/inss/ocp28.htm>; Internet; accessed on 16 November 1999.

¹⁴ Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy", p. 144.

¹⁵ Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, Prepared Statement of LTG Patrick M. Hughes, US Army, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC, *Global Threats and Challenges: The Decades Ahead*, 2 February 1999, p. 7 of 13. Available from <http://www.defenselink.mil/cgi-bin/dlprint>; Internet; accessed on 16 November 1999.

¹⁶ The comments in this and the remaining paragraphs of this section are compiled from the following sources: Ellis Joffe, "The Military and China's New Politics: Trends and Counter-Trends," in *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age*, ed. James Mulvenon and Richard H. Yang, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999), p. 42. Available from <http://www.rand.org/publications/CF/CF145/index.html>; Internet; accessed on 20 January 2000; Dennis J. Blasko, "A New PLA Force Structure," *Information Age*; Blasko, "Better Late Than Never: Non-Equipment Aspects of PLA Ground Force Modernization" in *Chinese Military Modernization*, ed. C. Dennison Lane, Mark Weisenbloom, Dimon Liu, (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 1996), pp. 127 – 130; James C. Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Chinese Officer Corps: Trends and Implications* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999); Michael D. Swaine, *The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 1998)

¹⁷ The term "dirty boot leaders" is used in the United States Army when one describes an officer who spent most of their career in the field leading soldiers, as opposed to assignments on senior officers staffs.

¹⁸ The term "Party-army" refers to the fact the PLA and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are described as having an "interlocking directorate". From the beginning of the PLA, much of its leadership was also the leadership of the CCP. This was true under Mao, and continued to be true under Deng. As such, the senior military leadership of the PLA displayed virtually unquestioned loyalty and obedience to the leader of both the Party, and the Army. While the PLA still strongly supports the CCP, some will argue the unquestioned loyalty to the party leader, in this case Jiang Zemin, is no longer present among the senior officers of the PLA.

¹⁹ Information Office of the State Council, The People's Republic of China, *White Paper—China's National Defense* (Beijing, 1998), p. 11-12 of 24. Available from <http://www.china-embassy.org/Cgi-Bin/Press>; Internet; accessed on 9 December 1999.

²⁰ EarlyBird extract of L.A. Times, February, 2000.

²¹ Commanders assigned overseas, in areas such as Korea, must constantly be alert to soldiers, and their dependents, involvement in black-marketing of Commissary and Post Exchange items.

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