

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

U.S. MILITARY OVERSEAS PRESENCE IN THE NORTHEAST ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

by

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ABSTRACT

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Military presence overseas has been an important element of the United States National Security Strategy since World War II. The military's overseas basing has been a visible commitment to defend America's interests and its allies. This was particularly important to containing and deterring the spread of communism to foreign countries by the Soviet Union and other communist regimes. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 -1991, the threat from communist expansionism has diminished and appears to have eliminated the core rationale for maintaining an overseas presence. To remove all of our forces and close our facilities in this region is not a practical solution. Such a policy change ignores the reality of our commitment to our allies and would negatively affect our ability to rapidly engage an adversary overseas. The more relevant issue confronting the Defense Department is whether or not our overseas bases could be reconfigured as power projection sites rather than static installations. Is it possible to reduce the overseas installation footprint by repositioning forces without degrading our military capabilities? Would a repositioning of forces have a detrimental impact on our relations with our Allies?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
U.S. MILITARY OVERSEAS PRESENCE IN THE NORTHEAST ASIA-PACIFIC REGION	1
U.S. FORWARD PRESENCE.....	1
REGIONAL SECURITY AND INTERESTS	4
JAPAN	4
KOREA.....	6
CHINA.....	8
PHILIPPINES.....	9
ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE.....	10
CHANGING U.S. MILITARY CAPABILITIES	11
SUMMARY	12
ENDNOTES	15
BIBLIOGRAPHY	19

U.S. MILITARY OVERSEAS PRESENCE IN THE NORTHEAST ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Military presence overseas has been an important element of the United States National Security Strategy since World War II. This presence overseas has been a visible commitment to defend America's interests and its allies. This was particularly important to containing and deterring the spread of communism to foreign countries by the Soviet Union and other communist regimes. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-1991, the threat from communist expansionism has diminished and appears to have eliminated the core rationale for maintaining an overseas presence.

With this change in the political balance of power, Dr. Chalmers Johnson, a noted authority on the Asian-Pacific region, argues that the Bush Administration should seek equitable state-to-state alliances without any permanent military presence. He suggests that our forward-deployed United States (U.S.) forces have become "militarily provocative and one of the main sources of instability and the moral consequences of the American military enclaves are destroying any basis for trust and cooperation among the peoples involved. Moreover, if we do not dismantle our satellites in East Asia in an orderly manner, they will surely rise up against us, as the former Soviet Union's satellites did in Eastern Europe."¹ Is Professor Johnson correct in calling for a change in our overseas presence in Asia-Pacific? Are there alternatives available to achieve the same strategic goal? Should the U.S. and its allies continue to support installations in Korea, Japan, and Singapore? In this paper, I will examine the regional political, economic and military issues related to forward basing of military forces. Based upon these current regional interests, I will recommend a policy for the realignment and redistribution of military forces in the Asia-Pacific region.

U.S. FORWARD PRESENCE

"Prior to 1898, the Nation deployed almost no land forces in peacetime outside the territory that became the continental United States.... For the most of the 19th century, U.S. forces did not have to go overseas to engage external presence challenges."² At the turn of the century, America's involvement in foreign conflicts increased and required deployment of U.S. military forces. During and after World War II, however, America's military forces developed a significant presence at an array of bases and facilities in the Asia-Pacific region. With the subsequent outbreak of the Korean War and the Vietnam War, additional troops were stationed throughout the same region. This was in response to both the need for troops in support of armed conflicts, as well as, to demonstrate America's commitment to the Truman Doctrine

(1947) to support free peoples from outside pressures. The Truman Doctrine signaled America's post war embrace of global leadership and ended its longstanding policy of isolationism.³ In the Pacific, the military served as a deterrent to Soviet and Chinese ambitions in the region. During the late 1960's, however, the number of forces forward deployed were reduced as a result of "the Nixon Doctrine to more balance the burden sharing in alliance relations, reduced defense spending and the move to the all-volunteer force."⁴

During the 1990's, U.S. overseas presence in East Asia was further reduced. The most significant reduction in personnel and installation size was the closure of Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base in the Philippines. This action was precipitated by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo volcano, as well as, anti-American feelings within the Philippine government and its desire to be independent from the U.S.

In Korea, negotiations are on-going to close and relocate military installations from Seoul and the de-militarized zone. In Okinawa, local political unrest over U.S. basing rights continues to threaten the closure of installations. The return of Marine Corps Air Field Futenma was the center of intense negotiations between local and national Japanese government officials. Other installations on the Japanese island of Honshu have been returned to the government of Japan or are currently being considered for transfer. Overall, these changes are primarily infrastructure related and have not significantly reduced number of personnel since the 1960's. "Today, the United States deploys about 235,000 troops overseas from all three services: 93,000 in Asia."⁵

Despite the recent changes in overseas posture, the United States National Security Strategy still calls for a continued overseas presence of our military forces. It is based upon the belief that these forces and installations "promote key security objectives, such as deterrence, assurance of friends and allies, the provision of timely crisis response capabilities, regional stability and generally, security conditions that in turn promote freedom and prosperity."⁶ The 1994 National Security Strategy during the Clinton administration stated that, "We will maintain a robust overseas presence in several forms, such as permanently stationed forces, deployments and combined exercises, port calls and other force visits. The benefits of permanently stationed forces overseas are to:

- Give form and substance to our bilateral and multilateral security commitments.
- Demonstrate our determination to defend U.S. and allied interests in critical regions, deterring hostile nations from acting contrary to those interests.

- Provide forward elements for rapid response in crises as well as the bases, ports and other infrastructure essential for deployment of U.S. –based forces by air, sea and land.”⁷

President Bush’s 2002 National Security Strategy further commits to a forward military presence. He wrote that, “to contend with uncertainty and to meet the many security challenges we face, the United States will require bases and stations within and beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia, as well as temporary access arrangements for the long-distance deployment of U.S. forces.”⁸

It is clear that forward presence continues to be a vital element of our National Security Strategy as a means to protect our interests and deter our adversaries. Forward presence in the Asia-Pacific region is especially important. In a statement before a House subcommittee on June 26, 2003, Peter Rodman, Assistant Defense Secretary for International Security, explained that the Asia-Pacific region remains a vital interest to the U.S. “Some critical facts about Asia illustrate why:

- More than 50% of the world’s economy and more than half the world’s population reside in Asia
- U.S. businesses conduct more than \$500 billion in trade with Asia each year
- Half a million U.S. citizens live, work, and study in the region
- Asia is home to four of the seven largest militaries in the world, some of them nuclear powers.
- Real defense spending has risen 30 percent in the region since 1985, despite the end of the Cold War and Asia’s economic crisis of 1997-1998.”⁹

The threat from communist expansion has clearly diminished, yet the U.S.’ economic and political ties in the region continue to be strong. To remove our forces and close our facilities in this region as suggested by Dr. Johnson is not a practical solution. Such a policy change would ignore the reality of our commitment to our allies and would negatively affect our ability to rapidly engage an adversary. The more important issue confronting the Defense Department is whether or not the current overseas bases could be reconfigured as power projection sites rather than static installations. Is it possible to reduce the overseas installation footprint by repositioning forces without degrading our military capabilities? Would a repositioning of forces have a detrimental impact on our relations?

REGIONAL SECURITY AND INTERESTS

The Asian-Pacific region is comprised of a wide variety of countries. This region ranges from Russia in the north to Australia in the south. Each country presents its own individual interest and influence to the security and stability of the region. American military forces have deployed through out the region with the largest concentration of forces located in South Korea and Japan. Any change in overseas basing will have the most significant impact upon U.S. security relationships with the countries located in the Northeast Asia-Pacific region.

For the purposes of this paper, this region is defined geographically as the area between the Republic of the Philippines, China, the Korean peninsula, and Japan. Although the Republic of the Philippines is normally considered a Southeast Asian country, historically, it has been linked through its military, diplomatic and economic relationships with these other countries and the U.S.. This interrelationship has a significant impact upon the region's security and stability.

This paper will not include a specific analysis of the affect a change in overseas basing will have on other Asia-Pacific countries. While Russia is geographically, historically and culturally an Asian-Pacific nation, it is traditionally considered a European power. Southeast Asian countries including Australia, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Singapore have played a role in the overall security of Asian-Pacific region. However, the U.S. has not permanently stationed significant military population or facilities within these countries. Therefore, in order to limit the scope of this paper, discussion will be confined to Northeast-Asian Pacific countries. Any change in U.S. overseas basing policy must take into account these countries' reactions and strategic implications for executing our National Security Strategy.

JAPAN

At a press roundtable in Tokyo, Admiral Fargo, Commander, Pacific Command stated that, "Our alliance with Japan is the most important alliance that we have and is the lynch pin of Northeast Asian security."¹⁰ It has the second largest economy in the world and is heavily dependent upon security agreements with the U.S.. The basing of U.S. forces in Japan was established by the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security of 1960. The agreement grants the U.S. use of facilities located throughout Japan for the purpose of maintaining regional security. Currently, U.S. Forces, which include Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force units, are dispersed among 91 facilities located on Honshu, Kyushu, and Okinawa and total approximately 50,000 military personnel, 52,000 family members 5,500 Department of Defense (DOD) civilians and 23,500 Japanese workers.¹¹

Japan recognizes the value of maintaining these forces as a part of their security strategy and has shared the cost burden of this support. During 1995, the Government of Japan paid \$4.25 billion of the \$7.7 billion required for maintaining these forces. This cost sharing has resulted in tremendous quality of life improvements, as well as, improved support facilities. However, the Yokosuka Naval Base, which has approximately 27,000 military and civilian personnel assigned during a working day, has limited physical space to perform its existing or future missions. Currently, approximately 25% of the U.S. population assigned to Yokosuka live off-base. Depending upon the eligibility, on-base housing wait can exceed three years.¹²

The U.S. Naval forward presence mission in the Asia-Pacific region is comprised of 17 strategically based ships in Japan. These Forward-Deployed Naval Forces (FDFN) consist of the USS KITTY HAWK Carrier Strike Group (CSG) in Yokosuka and the USS ESSEX Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) in Sasebo. Because of the physical location of FDFN the transit time to potential threat areas is significantly reduced. The following is a comparison of transit times:

- Transit times from San Diego:
 - o To Persian Gulf: CSG nineteen days, ESG twenty-seven days
 - o To Korea: CSG nine days, ESG thirteen days
 - o To Mediterranean via Panama Canal: CSG fifteen days, ESG twenty-one days
- Transit time from Japan:
 - o To Mediterranean via Suez Canal: CSG sixteen days, ESG twenty-two days
 - o To Persian Gulf: CSG eleven days, ESG fourteen days
 - o To Korea: CSG one day, ESG one day¹³

The Government of Japan has traditionally expressed concern about the presence of nuclear powered ships and weapons within their country. This is the primary reason for the policy of homeporting non-nuclear carriers at Yokosuka. However, the U.S. plans to decommission the USS KITTY HAWK, the oldest active Navy ship, within the next five years. The only possible replacement will be a nuclear powered aircraft carrier. This issue will surely draw a reaction from Japanese government officials, as well as, the public.

The bi-lateral security agreement between the U.S. and Japan is being publicly debated within Japan. "America has pressed Japan to play a bigger role in security and some Japanese want the country to be able to exercise collective self-defense. Right-wingers say it is too reliant on the "umbrella" provided by the alliance with America and that it is time to become a "normal country" with a recognized military force to back its foreign policy." ¹⁴ Japan's military capability

has improved with the acquisition of new weapon systems and recent initiatives to allow military activity beyond self-defense. For example, the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) deployed ships in support of U.S. lead coalition during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. This was the first naval deployment since the end of World War II.

The overseas basing of troops in Japan, including Okinawa, has served as a deterrent to other countries, keeping Japan from being attacked and maintaining peace. Japanese Liberal party leaders say "the U.S. military presence on Okinawa is a strategic key to that success, according the Yomuri report, which adds that the presence also serves to limit calls from those who want a stronger Japanese military or nuclear armament."¹⁵ Without U.S. commitment to its security, Japan would most likely pursue a nuclear missile defense capability and a build-up of military forces. This most likely would ignite memories of Japanese regional expansionism during the 20th century and lead to greater instability within the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁶

KOREA

The Korean peninsula has been a strategic interest of the U.S. since the 1950's. South Korea continues to be a close economic, diplomatic, and military partner in the region. The U.S. has maintained over 35,000 active duty troops as a deterrent to North Korean aggression and a clear commitment to the security of the Republic of Korea.¹⁷ North Korea continues to be a destabilizing influence throughout Northeast Asia. It recently demonstrated a missile capability that now threatens major population centers in both Japan and South Korea.

The relationship between the government of South Korea and the U.S. remains strong. However, the form of support is under extensive review and negotiation by both governments. This is a reaction to a shift in Korean popular support for U.S. military forces and a re-evaluation of U.S. security strategy on the Korean peninsula.

South Korea is facing a shift in political power in which younger generations with a more liberal outlook have become mainstream. They demand breakthroughs in their relations with the U.S., as well as, North Korea in order to put an end to a South-North standoff and to expedite a peace regime on the peninsula.¹⁸ Many feel that U.S. presence is an impediment to achieving the reunification of Korea. "Nationalist anti-American sentiments seen among some South Korean media and citizens, and reactive anti-Korean sentiments in the U.S. that are often exaggerated by some American media reports, have led to an eruption of demands for reductions and relocations of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, further straining the time-honored alliance of the two nations."¹⁹

The Korean populace does not favor immediate reduction of U.S. military forces. "According to a Korean public opinion survey conducted in February 2003, only 7 percent of the respondents favored an immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea, while 43.1 percent supported gradual reductions, and 47 percent desired their continued presence. Nearly 90 percent of South Koreans favor some level of U.S. military presence on the peninsula. Many South Korean voices have called for a "more equal" alliance with the U.S. to reflect Korea's significant economic and political advancements."²⁰ This change in popular support necessitates a re-evaluation of the U.S. overseas basing in Korea.

The other significant change in the U.S.' relationship with Korea is re-appraisal of our military strategy. In the past, forces were deployed as a tripwire along the demilitarized border area as a deterrent to a North Korean invasion. Admiral Fargo dismissed this concept during a press roundtable in Tokyo, stating "I think the term or concept of tripwire is an antiquated one and doesn't bear a lot of relevance to current data. In a period of time when you have missiles that go hundreds of miles or actually thousands of miles, you can threaten a porch or an airfield a couple of hundred miles away, forces that are tens of miles away don't constitute a tripwire."²¹

South Korea and the U.S. have been involved in active negotiations to reduce/redeploy U.S. forces. At the 34th Security Consultative Meeting held in Washington in December 2002, South Korea and the U.S. agreed to conduct a joint study on the future of their alliance and signed terms of reference for the "Future ROK-U.S. Alliance Policy Initiative that will enable formal discussions on procedures for strengthening their alliance over the next 10 years."²² "The Commander of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) has reached agreement with the ROK government on a Land Partnership Plan (LPP) that will consolidate U.S. force presence. The plan will reduce the number of major U.S. bases in Korea from 41 to 23 while significantly enhancing training and combined warfighting capability – better supporting our long-term regional strategy."²³

The U.S. is also considering significant changes to the command structure of the forces within South Korea. During a recent visit to South Korea, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, expressed a desire to examine a concept to disband the United Nations headquarters in South Korea, dissolve the Combined Forces Command and relocate the four-star U.S. Army general who is in command of these organizations. "A primary reason for pulling back from South Korea is that the United States needs the 17,000 soldiers of the 2nd Infantry Division elsewhere. As Mr. Rumsfeld and military leaders have said repeatedly, U.S. forces are stretched thin. The U.S. Army has only 10 divisions and cannot afford to have one tied down in Korea."²⁴ While the

Secretary of Defense has proposed several changes in the force structure, he has reaffirmed U.S. treaty commitments to South Korea and Japan.

CHINA

After 50 years of U.S. dominance in the region, Beijing is fast becoming a major diplomatic, economic, and military power. China is often described as a “sleeping dragon” that is beginning to awaken. Its development, as a regional and global power, has a significant impact on the U.S. security strategy in the Asian-Pacific region. James Przystup, Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University wrote, “During the 1990’s, much of U.S. strategic thinking focused on...the process of China’s emergence as a great power in East Asia. That thinking is now passé. Today, China is East Asia’s great power.”²⁵

The U.S. relationship with China must recognize the fact that its national interests and security strategy are different than the former Soviet Union’s drive to globally expand communism. China views its security strategy as being defensive in nature. This means the U.S. security strategy does not have to posture forces as a means to “contain” China. China’s vision is focused on furthering economic development and regional stability. This is an opportunity for the U.S. to engage Beijing in cooperative agreements aimed at mutual interests.²⁶

The long standing conflict between the U.S. and China has been the issue of Taiwan. During oral testimony to the House International Relations Committee on Asia, Admiral Fargo stated “Taiwan clearly remains the largest friction point in the relationship between China and the U.S.. We seek peaceful resolution – free from the threat or use of force—as the only acceptable path. President Bush has made clear our support for the One China policy.”²⁷ This will continue to be a source of conflict for the next several years as both parties engage in political and military posturing. However, the growing economic interdependence and cultural ties serve to minimize any threat of an overt use of force by the Chinese.

The overseas basing of military forces within the Asian-Pacific region is increasingly viewed by China as unnecessary and de-stabilizing. “Chinese officials and security analysts see an Asia in which China, rather than the U.S., is the regional “balancer” and a unified Korea is aligned with Beijing. U.S. military forces, which to the Chinese are vestiges of the Cold War, are out of Asia and Japan’s political and economic roles in regional stability are minimized.”²⁸ China’s view of engagement is increasingly centered upon diplomatic multilateralism within the region. This is evidenced by their active leadership role in negotiations to defuse the threat of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. In addition, Beijing’s use of multilateral forums is a

tool being used to counter President Bush's perceived policy unilateralism.²⁹ If China is successful in maintaining regional stability through multilateral relations, this will reduce the regions dependence upon the forward presence of U.S. military forces.

The expanding role of China in the international and regional arena challenges the U.S. to adapt its security strategy to the new realities. "The Chinese economy has defied Western expectations by continuing to grow explosively. Economic ties between China and its neighbors are thus also expanding at a tremendous pace and have become central to the foreign policies of many local countries. It seems committed to the principle that its own national interest is best served by stability on its periphery and steady integration into the global economy."³⁰ A policy of strategic/constructive engagement offers an opportunity to enhance economic development and maintain America's national interests in the Asia-Pacific region. "China sees its interests are much more embedded in the international system," said Banning Garrett, a China specialist at the Atlantic Council, a mainstream think-tank in Washington. "If the system goes down, they go down, and the leader of the system, like it or not, is the U.S., so they need to work closely with Washington to survive, especially with global problems."³¹

PHILIPPINES

The Philippines has had a long-standing diplomatic, economic, and military relationship with the U.S.. Within the Asian-Pacific region, it has not enjoyed the same economic development as Japan or South Korea. China and the Philippines have shared a long history of trade. This relationship rooted in commerce is reflected in the important role currently played by many Filipino-Chinese in business and industry. It's economic stability is tied to the region and the U.S.. By itself, the Republic of the Philippines is not a major economic or military power. The Philippines, however, is significant to this discussion because of its strategic location in the lines of communication to Southeast Asia. During World War II and the Vietnam War, it was used by the U.S. for basing military forces and logistical support. American presence also served as a link in the containment strategy to prevent the spread of communism.

The U.S. is committed to the Republic of the Philippines national security based upon the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951. Recently, the U.S. has supported a robust security assistance program to train military units in counter-terrorism skills. A key facet is expanding the civic action and humanitarian assistance components to improve living conditions and prosperity of citizens by way of training and equipping a special engineering unit for civic/humanitarian projects. Admiral Fargo reconfirmed that "these alliances we have with our allies like the Philippines are tremendously important to them and our commitment to those alliances and the

friendships we have in Asia and the Pacific is strong and resolute and unchanging.”³² On May 19, 2003, the Presidents of the Republic of the Philippines and the U.S., issued a joint statement that included a commitment by the U.S. President to designate the Philippines as a Major Non-Nato Ally.³³

In 1992, the closing of the base facilities and withdrawal of U.S. forces changed the relationship between the U.S. and the region. There was a misperception that the U.S. was withdrawing from its security commitments to the region. In fact, the U.S. has remained committed to the region through deployments, training exercises, and security assistance. From early 2002 until July 2002, the Bush Administration sent about 650 American advisers to train Philippine soldiers fighting the Abu Sayyaf Group. In March 2003, the administration proposed sending U.S. combat troops but downgraded their assignment to training and intelligence work because of widespread opposition from a Philippine public still sensitive about any hints of U.S. colonialism.³⁴

Current cooperative efforts to combat terrorism demonstrate the flexibility of American forces to deploy as needed, but the application of these forces are subject to limitations imposed by the host nation. This situation highlights the need to ensure common interests and support among our partners. Overseas basing of U.S. combat troops in Subic Bay or Clark Air Force Base would not have guaranteed their use within the Philippines to pursue terrorists. The Philippine government would still have to consider public opinion. The closure of facilities in 1992 should be viewed as a validation of America's ability to change overseas basing posture without negatively impacting its security interests.

ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The regional dynamic further complicates the security relationships within the region. The common interest of all these countries is a belief that regional stability is beneficial to each country. In order to maintain the current stability, the U.S. has served as the buffer to real and/or perceived threats to individual national interests. For example, many of the countries distrust Japanese intentions because of the past aggression. This has further been compounded by the Government of Japan's unwillingness to publicly accept responsibility for various atrocities committed during its occupation. Another consideration is China's changing role as a regional power. How the other Asian countries respond will have a significant impact on the role of the U.S. within the region.

Regardless of the changing relationships, the U.S. will continue to be economically, diplomatically, and militarily tied to the Asia-Pacific region. “Attaining national security and

defense objectives in the Asia-Pacific region requires a broad understanding of threat capabilities, a frank assessment of political-military realities, and a well-charted course supported by meaningful and mutually beneficial security cooperation.”³⁵

CHANGING U.S. MILITARY CAPABILITIES

The ability to reposition or redeploy forces from overseas bases depends upon the capability of the U.S. forces to fulfill the security requirements of the National Security Strategy. Is it possible to develop logistic prepositioning opportunities and power projection access within the Asian-Pacific region that provides deterrence and allows for rapid reaction to defeat any threat? In answering this question, one must consider three factors that will influence any solution. The first consideration is the impact from the current Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). This is introducing new information systems, technology, and structures throughout the military. “It is expected that RMA will produce forces that are more sophisticated than today’s, that operate differently, have different doctrines, require different logistic support and have somewhat less manpower than now.”³⁶ The impact of this revolution was witnessed during Operation Iraqi Freedom in which the military was able to leverage its asymmetric capabilities without deploying massive troops in a war of attrition.

The second area to consider is the changing nature of the threat environment. Our overseas forces were arranged against Cold War threats, necessitating a large build up and movement of forces. “The new U.S. strategy is one of engagement and is animated by three concepts: “shaping” the international strategic environment, “responding” to a wide spectrum of potential contingencies, and “preparing now” for an uncertain future. Our strategy must account for these concepts and design our overseas presence to make these concepts operational.”³⁷ Sea basing is the Navy’s strategy that will help achieve this concept. Admiral Vern Clark wrote, “As...the availability of overseas bases declines, it is compelling both militarily and politically to reduce the vulnerability of U.S. forces through expanded use of secure, mobile, networked sea bases.”³⁸ Positioning forces overseas will need to be flexible to respond to smaller and more diverse threats.

Finally, most recent conflicts have been across a wide geographical area. In order to respond to these conflicts, the U.S. has increased the operational tempo of its personnel and equipment. Limited resources, however, have resulted in policy-makers using forces that were traditionally maintained for only a specific region. For example, U.S. Army forces in Korea have normally been used in defense of South Korea. Now some of these units are being considered as replacements to help with peacekeeping efforts in Iraq. In addition, as the U.S. continues to

pursue its campaign against global terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, there will be greater demands to shift forces to locations that are not in areas where forces have been traditionally positioned. This will further add to the strain on the readiness and morale of the military.

SUMMARY

These factors do not eliminate the need for forward deployed forces. However, they do challenge the current overseas force structure world wide, including the Northeast Asia-Pacific region. It is an opportunity for policymakers to re-examine the composition and location of forward deployed forces. The U.S. has options available today and in the future that can optimize our use of resources and achieve our national security objectives. The DOD must evaluate our force structure in the Northeast Asia-Pacific region in terms of possible reductions in personnel and infrastructure. The new force structure should reflect our capability to project power without the need for major installations.

Any evaluation must take into consideration the economic prosperity of these countries, as well as, the growing interdependence among them. Former Japanese prime minister Toshiki Kaifu, at the Northeast Asian Economic Forum, May 2002, expressed his view that, "Japan and other neighboring countries should not irresponsibly consider (China) as a threat. On the contrary, we should devote ourselves thoroughly to economic development, complement each other with the unique advantage of each side and achieve common prosperity."³⁹ At the same conference, former Republic of Korea (ROK) prime minister Hong-Koo Lee said "economic and trade relations and scientific and cultural exchanges between the ROK and China have been expanding very rapidly since the two countries established diplomatic ties a decade ago. The two countries and Japan enjoy broad prospects for economic cooperation."⁴⁰ For example, in 2002, China surpassed the U.S. as South Korea's largest export market.⁴¹ Regional stability and security goals are increasingly being aligned with the national interests through economic growth. As a result, a smaller U.S. military footprint would be acceptable to the peoples of the region and still achieve the U.S. interests of stability and security through regional cooperation.

It is important for America's policy-makers to perform this evaluation now. Our Allies in the Asia-Pacific region might welcome a realignment or reduction of overseas basing in their countries. No country desires to have a foreign force occupying the territory of their country unless there is a perceived defensive advantage. The general populace often views U.S. military presence with disdain stemming from a variety of issues – crime, accidents, noise, and environmental damage. Returning installations and reassigning personnel would be favorably

viewed by these countries. This could strengthen our long-term relationship and ensure future military cooperation.

Another advantage to conducting a re-evaluation now is to ensure required military capabilities are properly matched to our forward deployment strategy. If the Navy is to supplement sea basing strategy for overseas bases, then resources will need to be shifted to ensure proper funding for the development of ships and equipment. The Air Force “may place a greater premium on long-range operations that are well beyond normal flying radius. If so, the Air Force will need to buy or upgrade the necessary long-range combat aircraft, tankers, and other equipment.”⁴² The Army will need to ensure its rapid and mobile deployment of forces can be projected without the use of overseas intermediate staging areas.

The opportunity to remove forces from the Northeast Asia-Pacific region exists today. In Japan, for example, the primary operational forces have been the carrier battle group and amphibious readiness group. A conventional powered aircraft carrier has been the key ingredient in this operational force since 1973. However, USS KITTY HAWK (CV-62) is scheduled to be de-commissioned within the next 5 years. The only available replacement option is a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier which will face tremendous resistance from the Japanese people. In addition, it will require the Navy to invest in a nuclear-capable maintenance facility and related infrastructure in Yokosuka, Japan. The Navy could establish a homeport for a nuclear carrier in Guam or Hawaii without the political ramifications. In addition, the U.S. would be in a position to reduce personnel and close smaller facilities. The ESSEX ESG could be re-located in Yokosuka and the base expanded as a joint use facility with the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force.

Diplomatic efforts should be pursued to establish territorial access rights to allow the U.S. to conduct mutually agreed upon operations. Such as agreements providing security assistance, humanitarian efforts, or combat support services. This type of relationship has already been successful in the Philippines. The visit of a U.S. Navy war ship to Vietnam in November 2003, has opened the door to the possibility of establishing access rights to support facilities within Vietnam. The advantage to establishing these type of relationships is the reduced commitment of overseas based forces and the associated cost. The risk will be the possibility that the host nation will deny access during a crisis. This risk can be minimized through efforts to develop multiple access agreements and to encourage mutual interests.

U.S. overseas presence will continue to be an important element of our National Security Strategy. The wholesale removal of our forces would be detrimental to achieving our goal of deterrence and maintaining a capability to quickly engage our adversaries. However, the U.S.

needs to re-evaluate the core purpose of today's overseas presence. Changes in technology and capabilities offer an opportunity to shift our strategy to be focused more on projecting stability rather than maintaining a massive presence. The time is right for this appraisal. It would enhance our goodwill with our Allies and ensure tough resourcing issues are properly addressed by Congress and the President.

WORD COUNT= 5,585

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