



## The PLA's New Organizational Structure: What is Known, Unknown and Speculation (Part 1)

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*Note: This article is part of a two-part series examining changes to China's Military organizational structure and personnel. Part 1 examines what is known and unknown. Part 2 contains speculation as to changes that may occur in the future.*

On December 31, 2015, the China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) began its eleventh major reorganization since 1952. Most previous reorganizations focused on reducing the size of the infantry and bloated higher-echelon headquarters, turning over entire organizations, such as the railway corps, to civilian control, and transferring units to the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and the People's Armed Police (PAP). [1] To date, most Western analysis of the current reorganization has addressed the reasons for and policy implications of the current reorganization. Instead, this article addresses what is known about changes to the PLA's organizational structure—the essential factor needed to inform any credible analysis of the reasons for and the implications of the current reorganization. [2]

Although there are lots of media reports and blogs writing about the reorganization, much of what has been written has been incorrect or based on speculation. As a result, the “known” component of this article is based on official Chinese reporting in Chinese and English from the Ministry of National Defense's (MND) website, *China Daily*, and Xinhua.

Although there are many media and blog articles about various parts of the reorganization, until the information is available in official PLA or Xinhua reporting, this article identifies them as “unknown” or “speculation.” Another issue arising from the variety of reporting on the reorganization is terminology. One example is the “official” English translation for the geographic groupings that are replacing China’s military regions (军区). For example, the PLA officially has translated the term “zhanqu” (战区) as “theater of war,” “theater,” and “battle zone”; however, various Western analysts have translated it as “war zone” and certain unofficial media reports have used “combat zone” ([Bowen](#), January 9). [3] Due to the use of “Theater Command” in an article published by the Chinese MND announcing the official “standing up” ceremony on February 1, this article will use “Theater Command” ([MOD](#), February 1).

### **What is “Known”**

In November 2013, the Third Plenum of 18th Party Central Committee announced the decision to “optimize the size and structure of the army, adjust and improve the balance between the services and branches, and reduce non-combat institutions and personnel.” This rebalance is meant to correct the domination of the PLA Army, which with the Second Artillery, currently has 73 percent of the PLA’s total troops, followed by 10 percent for the Navy (PLAN) and 17 percent for the Air Force (PLAAF). The Central Committee also announced creation of a “joint operation command authority under the Central Military Commission (CMC), and theater joint operation command system” and to “accelerate the building of new combat powers, and deepen the reform of military colleges” ([CNTV.com](#), November 16, 2015). This announcement pointed to upcoming changes in four main categories: 1) PLA personnel size and force structure, 2) command organization and structure from the CMC down to the unit level, 3) modern military capabilities as found in “new type combat forces,” and 4) the PLA professional military education system of universities, academies, colleges, and schools.

Nearly two years passed before CMC Chairman Xi Jinping announced the first details of these reforms. At the September 3, 2015 military parade in Beijing, Xi proclaimed a reduction of 300,000 PLA personnel, bringing the size of the active duty PLA down to two million. An MND spokesman further clarified the cuts would be completed by the end of 2017 and would mainly affect “troops equipped with outdated armaments, administrative staff, and non-combatant personnel, while optimizing the structure of Chinese forces” ([Xinhuanet](#), September 3, 2015). The only specific unit reported so far to have been eliminated is the Nanjing Military Region Art Troupe, one of numerous performing arts troupes, which have traditionally provided entertainment for PLA units ([Global Times](#), January 25).

In November 2015, Xi declared the “current regional military area commands [also known as Military Region headquarters] will be adjusted and regrouped into new battle zone commands supervised by the CMC.” A three-tier combat command system from the CMC to theater commands to units would be created. But this system will be separate from the administrative chain of command running from the CMC to the four service headquarters to units. As such, service headquarters are responsible for “construction” functions, such as organizing, manning, and equipping units ([Xinhuanet](#), November 26, 2015). These changes will take place over the next five years through the year 2020. [4]

On the last day of 2015, Xi presided over the establishment ceremonies for the PLA Army's leading organ (national-level headquarters) (PLAA), the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF), and the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) and named their respective commanders and political commissars ([Chinamil.com](http://Chinamil.com), January 1). The Army headquarters was charged to transform from “the regional defensive type to the full-spectrum combat type” and the Rocket Force, identified as China's “core strategic deterrence power,” was upgraded to a full service (军种) from its former status of “an independent branch treated as a service,” (兵种). Later the *PLA Daily* indicated Rocket Force units would be the same as the former Second Artillery Force (PLASAF) ([www.81.cn](http://www.81.cn), January 10). As a service, the Rocket Force eventually could be expected to have its own distinctive uniform.

Though buried in an article about the reforms, another important target of the reforms was mentioned: reducing the size of the militia ([Chinamil.com](http://Chinamil.com), January 1). The militia is not part of the PLA, but one of three elements of the Chinese armed forces (the other elements being the active and reserve units of the PLA and the PAP). Militia units are commanded by the system of local PLA headquarters from provincial Military Districts down to Military Sub-districts/Garrisons to People's Armed Forces Departments (PAFD) in counties and below. No details of the militia reduction have been announced, but this development opens the door for potential reductions also in local headquarters, particularly at the Military Sub-district/garrison and PAFDs at county and grassroots levels.

On January 11, 2016, a new CMC organization with 15 functional departments, commissions, and offices was announced ([Chinamil.com](http://Chinamil.com), January 11). One significant detail included was that the new CMC National Defense Mobilization Department will be responsible for “leading and managing the provincial military commands [i.e., also known as Military Districts],” a task previously assigned to Military Region headquarters. A photograph accompanying the announcement showed a total of 69 uniformed officers, of which 58 were PLAA/PLARF, six were PLAN, and five were PLAAF, which is not an auspicious start for greater jointness at the most senior levels of the PLA command structure.

On February 1, at a ceremony attended by the entire CMC, five new “theater commands” were established and their commanders and political commissars (PC) announced. In what appears to be their protocol order, the new headquarters are the Eastern (东部), Southern (南部), Western (西部), Northern (北部), and Central (中部) Theater Commands. [5] The new headquarters have been tasked to respond to security threats from their strategic directions, maintain peace, deter wars and win battles, and assist in “safeguarding the overall situations concerning the national security strategy and the military strategy” ([Chinamil.com](http://Chinamil.com), February 1). All theater commanders and PCs were senior Army officers. The theater commands will have Army, Navy, and Air Force components based, respectively, on the “relevant naval fleets” and air forces of the former Military Regions (MR)—Rocket Forces were not mentioned. On February 2, *PLA Daily* reported the formation of the Army headquarters under the Eastern Theater Command (东部战区陆军) in Fuzhou, Fujian Province, but the ceremony to establish the new headquarters had been held earlier on January 24. This first Army headquarters to be set up in one of the new theater commands is commanded by LTG Qin Weijiang (秦卫江), son of former Defense Minister GEN Qin Jiwei,

with MG Liao Keduo (廖可铎) as PC ([81.cn](#), February 2). [6] PLAAF Commander Ma Xiaotian presided over the creation of five PLAAF theater commands on February 5 ([81.cn](#), February 5).

More general information about the reforms is expected to be announced officially over time, but many operational- and tactical-level details likely will only be learned by close analysis of the Chinese media. Since an objective of the reforms is to improve the “joint operation command authority” of the force, it will be necessary to restructure PLA officer corps billets to create new opportunities for non-Army personnel to serve in senior joint command and staff assignments. The new force and personnel structure may require changes to the PLA’s existing system of grades and ranks.

### The Grade and Rank Foundation

The foundation for understanding the reorganization is the PLA’s 15-grade structure shown in Table 1, which was last modified in 1988. [7] Under the existing system, every PLA organization and officer is assigned a grade from platoon level to CMC to designate their position in the military hierarchy. Organizationally, units can only command other units of lower grade levels. For example, a corps leader grade unit is authorized to command divisions, but not vice versa. Officers are assigned grades along with military ranks. Each grade has two or more ranks assigned to that level. On average officers up to the rank of senior colonel are promoted in grade every three years, while they are promoted in rank approximately every four years. In the PLA, an officer’s grade is more important than his rank. [8]

Part 2 of this article will address the options for changes in the grade and rank systems that appear likely to accompany the extensive changes anticipated in the PLA organization and structure. Table 1 is included here to assist in understanding the organizational changes already underway and discussed in Part 1.

**Table 1: PLA’s 15-grade Structure since 1988**

Grade	Primary Rank	Secondary Rank
CMC Chairman (军委主席) Vice Chairmen (军委副主席)	None General	
CMC Member (军委委员)	General	
MR Leader (正大军区职)	GEN/ADM	LTG/VADM
MR Deputy Leader (副大军区职)	LTG/VADM	MG/RADM
Corps Leader (正军职)	MG/RADM	LTG/VADM
Corps Deputy Leader (副军职)	MG/RADM	SCOL/SCPT
Division Leader (正师职)	SCOL/SCPT	MG/RADM
Division Deputy Leader (副师职) (Brigade Leader)	COL/CPT	SCOL/SCPT
Regiment Leader (正团职) (Brigade Deputy Leader)	COL/CPT	LTC/CDR
Regiment Deputy Leader (副团职)	LTC/CDR	MAJ/LCDR

Battalion Leader (正营职)	MAJ/LCDR	LTC/LCDR
Battalion Deputy Leader (副营职)	CPT/LT	MAJ/LCDR
Company Leader (正连职)	CPT/LT	1LT/LTJG
Company Deputy Leader (副连职)	1LT/LTJG	CPT/LT
Platoon (排职)	2 LT/ENS	1LT/ENS

## New CMC Organizations

As mentioned above, on January 11, 2016, CMC Chairman Xi Jinping met with all of the new leaders of the reorganized CMC's directly subordinate elements. Table 2 provides information about the 15 functional sections comprised of seven departments (including the important General Office), three commissions, and five directly affiliated offices. The new CMC structure expanded its former subordinated elements through the incorporation of many functions previously found in the former four General Departments, namely the General Staff Headquarters (also known as the General Staff Department [GSD]), General Political Department (GPD), General Logistics Department (GLD), and General Armament Department (GAD).

As can be seen from the new CMC structure, the biggest loser organizationally is the former General Staff Department and its leader, the Chief of the General Staff. The new Joint Staff Department has lost the GSD's oversight of military training and education, mobilization, strategic planning, and likely cyberwar and electronic warfare units, not to mention the personnel and functions transferred to the new Army headquarters. Moreover, the new Political Work Department is responsible for "human resources management," which implies that it has taken over the GSD's oversight of enlisted personnel in the former Military Affairs Department. If true, the new Political Work Department will be responsible for all personnel matters concerning both cadre and enlisted personnel.

Table 2 includes the current organization name, the name of the person who has been assigned as the leader, as well as that person's previous position and grade. Based on each person's previous grade, it is assumed that they are still filling a billet of the same grade. It is also assumed that the MR Leader Grade and Deputy Leader Grade will be renamed Theater Leader Grade (正大战区职) and Deputy Leader Grade (副大战区职), respectively.

While the new offices are identified as CMC "functional sections," it is not yet clear how the command or leadership relationships will work between the CMC leadership and the subordinate organizations. Also, while the general departments have gone away in name, the functions of all four departments continue under the new CMC structure and the new organizations have retained their same CMC member as the Chief of Staff (formerly Chief of the General Staff) or Director (for the GPD, GLD, and GAD). Only one of the functional sections—the Agency for Offices Administration—appears to be a new entity, probably because it is not clear where its component offices came from (possibly a management office from each general department). The other functional sections can be traced back to their former general department or office and, in many cases, they have retained the same leadership. As discussed elsewhere in this paper, it is not yet

clear what the organizational grade of the 15 sections will be. For example, the corps-grade organizations listed in Table 2 could reasonably be expected to be raised to a higher grade reflecting their apparent enhanced status as a CMC-subordinate organization; however, any such change will affect every billet in the organization.

**Table 2: CMC Functional Sections**

<b>CMC Organization</b>	<b>Organization Assessed Grade</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Leader's Previous Position</b>	<b>Leader's Previous Grade</b>
General Office (办公厅)	Theater Deputy Leader	LTG Qin Shengxiang	Director CMC General Office	MR Deputy Leader
Joint Staff Department (联合参谋部)	CMC Member	Gen Fang Fenghui (房峰辉)	Chief of the General Staff	CMC Member
Political Work Department (政治工作部)	CMC Member	GEN Zhang Yang (张阳)	Director, GPD	CMC Member
Logistic Support Department (后勤保障部)	CMC Member	GEN Zhao Keshi (赵克石)	Director, GLD	CMC Member
Equipment Development Department (装备发展部)	CMC Member	GEN Zhang Youxia (张又侠)	Director, GAD	CMC Member
Training and Administration Department (训练管理部)	Theater Deputy Leader	MG Zheng He (郑和)	Deputy Commander, Chengdu MR	MR Deputy Leader
National Defense Mobilization Department (国防动员部)	Theater Deputy Leader	MG Sheng Bin (盛斌)	Deputy Commander, Shenyang MR	MR Deputy Leader
Discipline Inspection Commission (纪律检查委员会)	Theater Leader	Gen Du Jincai (杜金才)	Deputy Director, GPD & Secretary, CMC Discipline Inspection Commission	MR Leader
Politics and Law Commission (政法委员会)	Theater Deputy Leader	LTG Li Xiaofeng (李晓峰)	Chief Procurator, PLA Military Procuratorate	MR Deputy Leader
Science and Technology Commission (科学技术委员会)	Theater Deputy Leader	LTG Liu Guozhi (刘国治)	Director, GAD S&T Commission	MR Deputy Leader
Office for Strategic Planning (战略规划办公室)	Corps Leader	MG Wang Huiqing (王辉青)	Director, GSD Strategic Planning Department	Corps Leader
Office for Reform and Organizational	Corps Leader	MG Wang Chengzhi (王成志)	Director, GPD Directly Subordinate Work Department	Corps Leader

Structure (军委改革和编制办公室)				
Office for International Military Cooperation (国际军事合作办公室)	Corps Leader	RADM Guan Youfei (关友飞)	Director, MND Foreign Affairs Office (Director, GSD Foreign Affairs Office; Director, CMC Foreign Affairs Office)	Corps Leader
Audit Office (审计署)	Corps Leader	RADM Guo Chunfu (郭春富)	Director, CMC Auditing and Finance Department	Corps Leader?
Agency for Offices Administration (机关事务管理总)	Corps Leader	MG Liu Zhiming (刘志明)	Deputy Chief of Staff, Shenyang MR	Corps Leader

### The Four Services and Strategic Support Force

Table 3 provides a list of the four services—PLAA, PLAN, PLAAF, and PLARF—and the PLASSF (MOD, January 1). The table includes the current organization name, the name of the person who has been assigned as the leader, as well as that person’s previous position and grade. Based on each person’s previous grade, it is assumed that they are still filling a billet of the same grade.

The PLAA now has an official headquarters at the same level as the PLAN, PLAAF, and PLARF. Previously, the four General Departments served as the Army Headquarters and the Joint Headquarters for all the PLA. Second, the PLASAF, which was previously an independent [Army] branch treated as a service, is now a full service equal to the PLAA, PLAN, and PLAAF. Third, the PLASSF does not appear to be a “service.” It is a “force,” a status similar to that of the former PLASAF. The key is the Chinese terms: Second Artillery Force and the Strategic Support Force are “*budui*” (部队), which the PLA translates as “force,” while the PLAA, PLAN, PLAAF, and PLARF use the term “*jun*” (军) and “*junzhong*” (军种), which means “service.” The Chinese use of the term “leading organ” for the PLAA, PLAN, PLAAF, and PLARF is because the PLA does not have an official term for “headquarters.”

**Table 3: PLA Services and Strategic Support Force**

Organization	Organization Assessed Grade	Leader	Leader’s Previous Position	Leader’s Previous Grade
Army Leading Organ (aka PLA Army) (陆军领导机关)	Theater Leader	GEN Li Zuocheng (李作成)	Commander, Chengdu MR	MR Leader
PLA Navy (海军)	Theater Leader	ADM Wu Shengli (吴胜利)	Commander, PLA Navy	CMC Member
PLA Air Force (空军)	Theater Leader	GEN Ma Xiaotian (马晓天)	Commander, Air Force	CMC Member

PLA Rocket Force (火箭军)	Theater Leader	GEN Wei Fenghe (魏凤和)	Commander, PLA Second Artillery Force	CMC Member
PLA Strategic Support Force (战略保障部队)	Theater Leader	LTG Gao Jin (高津)	Commandant, Academy of Military Science	MR Leader

## Theater Commands

The new theater command organizational structure is one more step in the consolidation and evolution of Military Regions that began with 13 MRs in 1955 and then reduced them to 11 MRs (1970) and 7 MRs (1985). [9] After extensive speculation, on February 1, CMC Chairman Xi Jinping presided over the inauguration ceremony formally establishing the five new “theater commands” or “zhanqu” (战区), replacing the previous seven Military Regions. Table 4 shows the five new theater commands in protocol order along with the new commanders’ and political commissars’ names and rank, as well as their previous position and grade. Of note, four of the five commanders came from an MR that was not part of the new theater command, while four of the five PCs came from the same MR that formed the base for the new theater commands.

**Table 4: PLA Theater Commands**

Organization	Organization Grade	Commander	Commander’s Previous Position/Grade	Political Commissar	PC’s Previous Position/ Grade
Eastern Theater Command (东部战区)	Theater Leader (正大军区级)	GEN Liu Yuejun (刘粤军)	Commander, Lanzhou MR/ MR Leader	GEN Zheng Weiping (郑卫平)	PC, Nanjing MR/MR Leader
Southern Theater Command (南部战区)	Theater Leader (正大军区级)	GEN Wang Jiaocheng (王教成)	Commander, Shenyang MR/ MR Leader	GEN Wei Liang (魏亮)	PC, Guangzhou MR/MR Leader
Western Theater Command (西部战区)	Theater Leader (正大军区级)	GEN Zhao Zongji (赵宗岐)	Commander, Jinan MR/ MR Leader	LTG Zhu Fuxi (朱福熙)	PC, Chengdu MR/MR Leader
Northern Theater Command (北部战区)	Theater Leader (正大军区级)	GEN Song Puxuan (宋普选)	Commander, Beijing MR/ MR Leader	GEN Chu Yimin (褚益民)	PC, Shenyang MR/MR Leader
Central Theater Command (中部战区)	Theater Leader (正大军区级)	LTG Han Weiguo (韩卫国)	Deputy Commander, Beijing MR/ MR Deputy Leader	GEN Yin Fanlong (殷方龙)	Deputy Director, GPD/MR Leader

At a press conference following the official announcement of the theater commands, the MND spokesman used the term “theater leader” (正大军区级) to identify the grade level of the new theater commands, which is the same term used for grade of the former MR leaders ([www.81.cn](http://www.81.cn), February 1). This arrangement suggests that Han Weiguo, shown as a LTG in the photograph of



the establishment ceremony, likely will be promoted in rank and grade, even though he only received his second star in July 2015 and has been one of the Beijing MR deputy commanders.

The various announcements have not yet included specific details on the organizational structure of the new theater commands. Also, to date, there has been no official announcement as to what provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities the theater commands will include, or where the headquarters are located. At least four different maps have been published in the unofficial Chinese and Western media showing different sets of boundaries for the new theaters ([Tieba](#), January 15; [nddtv.com](#), January 29; [cjdbby.net](#); [Sina Blogs](#), January 27; [Phoenix](#), February 1).

Prior to the establishment of the theater commands, activities taking place clearly indicated the change was imminent. For example, in mid-January, *PLA Daily* announced that all seven MR newspapers had ceased operations ([China Daily](#), January 22). It is not clear whether the new theater commands will have their own newspapers or not. The websites for the former MRs were also shut down; however, they have been replaced by new theater websites (db.81.cn; nb.81.cn; xb.81.cn; b.81.cn, and zb.81.cn). Also, the Hong Kong-based *Wenweipo* published photographs of ceremonies transferring units from the Chengdu, Nanjing, and Lanzhou MRs, but did not specify where the units were now assigned ([Weiwenpo](#), January 18). It is likely that similar ceremonies were held in the other military regions. Associated with the dissolution of the Military Regions, “transitional work offices” (善后办公室) were established to manage holdover personnel and property issues ([Chinamil.com](#), February 2).

## **Unanswered Questions**

Many unknowns concerning the reorganization remain. The following questions identify topics for further examination as the reforms unfold in the coming months and years.

### The CMC:

Will the CMC departments/commissions/offices and theater headquarters become true “joint” organizations with a balanced mix among members from each of the four services plus the PLASSF?

### The MND:

Has the role of MND been changed? Previously, the MND was not in the chain of command from the CMC to MRs to units. The latest official announcements do not insert the MND into the operational or administrative chain of command. In September 2015, a three-part series of articles laid out a very aggressive reorganization that basically took all non-combat and combat-support organizations and placed them under MND; however, it does not appear that this has occurred ([gwy.yjbys.com](#), September 2, 2015; [gwy.yjbys.com](#); [gwy.yjbys.com](#)). Will there be any significant changes to the role of the MND in the new structure?

### Personnel Cuts:

Although one of the first announcements Xi made about the reorganization concerned a 300,000-man downsizing, to date, no specifics have officially been announced other than the abolition of the performing arts troupe in the Nanjing MR ([MOD](#), January 22). How will the remaining 2 million personnel be balanced among the services? Even if all 300,000 cuts were made only to the Army, it would still amount to some 63 percent of the 2 million-man force. Therefore, the other services would need to receive additional billets to better balance the force. This has done in the past by reassigning entire units from one service to another.

How will the PLA's 2 million personnel be divided among officers, uniformed civil cadre, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and conscripts/volunteers? In 2003, the PLA implemented a 200,000-man downsizing, of which 85 percent were officers, including over 200 one-star generals and admirals. In addition, about 70 junior officer specialty billets were turned over to NCOs. To date, thousands of NCOs have now filled those billets; however, they are still called "acting" (代理) leaders.

Will the local headquarters system of provincial Military Districts, Military Sub-districts, and Peoples Armed Force Departments be altered?

#### Operational Units:

What operational units will be disbanded? A review of internet sources since January 1, 2016 indicates that all 18 group armies remain operational. Will there be any change to the organization and subordination of the PLAN's three fleets? Currently, all three fleets are reported operational. [10] There has been no official reporting on any changes in PLAAF units ([MOD](#), February 2).

#### The Strategic Support Force:

To what headquarters (or CMC) is the PLASSF subordinate? What units comprise the PLASSF? What are the specific missions of the PLASSF? How many personnel are in the PLASSF? The reporting that the PLASSF will include responsibility for space-related activities as well as cyber/electronic warfare-related activities raises the likelihood that former GAD launch and monitoring bases and GSD Third Department Technical Reconnaissance Bureaus will be re-subordinated to the PLASSF, but this remain to be confirmed. Additionally, will any other operational units that previously were directly subordinate to the various General Departments be reassigned to the CMC functional departments, such as other intelligence, electronic warfare, political warfare, and logistics units?

#### Militia and the Reserves:

In addition to reductions in the militia, will PLA reserve units undergo change? Some active duty units equipped with older weapons could be transferred to either the reserves or militia.

#### Education:

What is the status of the Academy of Military Science, National Defense University, and National University of Defense Technology? Will they continue to be directly under the oversight of the

CMC? What changes will occur in the PLA system of educational academies and schools? Will the number of new students be reduced because of the 300,000-person reduction? Will new academies be formed or former academies transformed into new entities based on changes in personnel and force structure? For example, will more NCO schools or more command academies be established?

Will PLA-wide guidance be issued establishing education and experience requirements for officers to be considered qualified as joint officers?

#### The People's Armed Police (PAP):

Will there be any changes to the CMC and State Council/Ministry of Public Security's dual command of the People's Armed Police? If so, this will require a change to the National Defense Law. Will the size and composition of the PAP remain the same?

#### **Conclusion**

As can be seen thus far, the PLA is in the early stages of an extensive and complex reorganization, the objective of which is to enhance CMC Chairman Xi Jinping's goal for "...conducting military reform and building a strong military... on the road of building a strong military with Chinese characteristics" (MOD, January 12). The amount of available information is limited, as the reorganization is being implemented in a deliberate step-by-step manner and details revealed piecemeal; the "unknowns" far exceed the "knowns." The changes are likely to continue through the 19th Party Congress in 2017 with full implementation possibly as far away as 2020—previously identified as the intermediate milestone year in the modernization process with the final goal of completion by the middle of the century. Part 2 of this report moves deeper in to the area of speculation and will discuss the options and ramifications of reforming the grade and rank system along with the prospects for reform of the CMC itself.

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## Notes

1. See Kevin Pollpeter and Kenneth W. Allen, eds, *The PLA as Organization v2.0*, p. 34, found at <http://www.pla-org.com/downloads/>.
2. See U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC) hearings on January 21, 2016 found at [www.uscc.gov/Hearings/hearing-developments-chinas-military-force-projection-and-expeditionary-capabilities](http://www.uscc.gov/Hearings/hearing-developments-chinas-military-force-projection-and-expeditionary-capabilities).
3. For the PLA's official definition see: *Military Terminology of the Chinese People's Liberation Army* (中国人民解放军军语), Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, September 2011, p. 77; The 2012 and 2015 Defense White Papers both referred to *zhanqu* simply as "theater"; an article in the official Chinese news agency Xinhua, by contrast, translated *zhanqu* as "battle zone" ([Xinhua](http://www.xinhua.com), November 26, 2015). Most recently, The PLA's English website used the term "Theater Command" ([Chinamil.com](http://chinamil.com), February 2).
4. This system of dual responsibilities is similar to, but not exactly the same, as the U.S. military's division of responsibilities between combatant commands and the services.
5. This order breaks from the previous precedence that reflected the sequence in which the various regions were brought under control from the Kuomintang.
6. Qin's previous grade was MR Deputy Leader; Liao's was Corps Leader.
7. Pollpeter and Allen, p. 19.
8. Pollpeter and Allen, pp. 10-15.
9. Pollpeter and Allen, p. 54.
10. Evidence of the status of the respective fleets can be found below:  
East Sea Fleet: [http://navy.81.cn/content/2016-01/19/content\\_6862367.htm](http://navy.81.cn/content/2016-01/19/content_6862367.htm); North Sea Fleet: [http://navy.81.cn/content/2016-01/26/content\\_6868961.htm](http://navy.81.cn/content/2016-01/26/content_6868961.htm); South Sea Fleet: [http://navy.81.cn/content/2016-01/26/content\\_6868928.htm](http://navy.81.cn/content/2016-01/26/content_6868928.htm).