

PLA Expeditionary Capabilities after Reforms

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Expeditionary Operations

- DOD Dictionary definition:
 - expeditionary force — An armed force organized to achieve a specific objective *in a foreign country*. (JP 3-0) (Emphasis added)
 - force projection — The ability to project the military instrument of national power from the United States or another theater, in response to requirements for military operations.

Expeditionary Operations

- Force can be force projected in any domain: land, sea, air, space, electromagnetic spectrum
- Definition of expeditionary force suggests *land operations* supported by air and sea power projection capabilities
- Getting there is a major element of expeditionary operations
- Foreign bases useful to sustain operations

Short History

- “Indeed, an incipient expeditionary PLA is in the making”: David Finkelstein, CNA, circa 2010
- Past examples:
 - UN Peacekeeping Operations since 1990, currently six operations, battalion or smaller
 - Combined exercises with foreign militaries, largest contingent dispatched to Vostok-2018
 - Djibouti Base to support Gulf of Aden naval escort mission

Potential PLA Expeditionary Units

- Depending on location, time, and assets available, multiple options
- PLA Navy Marine Corps – 6 Marine brigades
- PLA Air Force Airborne Corps – 6 Airborne brigades; Aviation brigades (e.g. J-10, JH-7)



Potential PLA Expeditionary Units

- PLA Army Units
 - New Light Combined Arms Brigades, Special Operations Units, Army Aviation Units
 - Amphibious brigades positioned opposite Taiwan, less likely to be used on expeditionary missions
 - May move by rail, road, or air



But Limited Assets to Get There

- 20 Il-76-series, 7 Y-20 heavy transports, 10 H-6U and 3 Il-76 tankers (USAF: 182 heavy transports, 156 tankers)
- Civilian aircraft frequently employed to transport personnel and equipment in exercises and to UN PKO missions



By Sea

- 7 Type 071 LPD (USN: 23 LPD and LSD)
- 1 Type 075 LHD (USN: 9 LHA and LHD)
- Numerous civilian roll-on/roll off ships, some built to military specification



Total Force Size Comparison (as of 06/30/19)

PLA Active Duty: Total 2,000,000	Estimated Personnel (% Active Force)	Personnel (% Active Force)	U.S. Military Active Duty: Total 1,324,073
Army	975,000 (50%/48.75%)	472,209 (35.7%)	Army
Navy (includes Marines)	250,000 (12.5%)	334,384 (25.3%)	Navy
(Marines, counted as Navy)	(40,000) (2%)	186,248 (14.1%)	Marines
Air Force (includes Airborne)	395,000 (19.75%)	331,332 (25.0%)	Air Force
Rocket Force	120,000 (6%)		
Strategic Support Force	175,000 (8.75%)		
Joint Logistics Support Force	85,000 (4.25%)		
Reserves	510,000? (old number, no recent reporting)	800,183	Reserves and National Guard
Contract Civilian Personnel	40,000? (previously 20,000 but undergoing expansion)	744,529	Civilian Personnel (Not private contractors)
PAP (includes Coast Guard)	660,000? (perhaps smaller after 2018 reform)	42,000	Coast Guard (No U.S. equivalent for the rest of PAP)
Total: Active, Reserves, Civilians, and PAP	3,210,000 (Approximately 2,550,000 without the PAP)	2,910,785	Total: Active, Reserves, and Civilians
Militia	8,000,000? (2008 number, no recent reporting)		No U.S. equivalent

Conclusions

- Number of PLA expeditionary units still relatively small compared to overall force, but growing and being trained
- Relatively small number of personnel have participated in expeditionary ops; many headquarters plan and execute missions
- PLA long-distance sea and air lift limited; will be augmented by civilian assets
- Improving strategic C4ISR enhancing capabilities
- Location of future missions will determine size and type of force and how it is deployed

PLA 2.3 million → to 2 million Active Est. 550,000 Reserves 2,850,000 Total (decreasing)	% of Total Active Force	% of Total Active Force	U.S. Military 1,304,183 Active 814,831 Reserves 742,000 Civilians 2,861,014 Total (06/30/16)
Army	68% (est.) (1,557,000)	36% (474,268)	Army
Navy	10% (235,000)	25% (330,555)	Navy
(Marines)	(.4%) (10-12,000)	14% (183,370)	Marines
Air Force	17% (398,000)	24% (315,786)	Air Force
Rocket Force	4% (est.) (100,000)		
PLA Reserves	24% (550,000 est.)	62% (814,831)	U.S. Military Reserves (total)