RE-SHAPING PACIFIC STRATEGY

An AOL Defense Series by Robbin Laird, Ed Timperlake and Lt. General (Retired) Deptula

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Military Sealift Command: A Flexible Key to The Asia Strategy

By Robbin Laird

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This is the first in a series of commentaries defense consultant and author Robbin Laird, a member of the AOL Defense Board of Contributors, is penning about how the U.S. can and should shape its forces to perform the Asia strategy pivot. As a key part of that, he'll be looking closely at what he calls "several neglected aspects of a sustainable power projection force for the 21st century." The Editor.

The U.S. can afford to build a 21st century power projection force able to provide a lynchpin for Asian security. But it won't be able to if we don't take advantage of new concepts of operation, new technologies and new approaches.

A key element for deploying a forward presence force is sustainability. There is probably no subject less discussed in the strategic debates than logistics and sustainment. As a version of the old adage goes: "Amateurs discuss strategy; professionals think logistics."

This could not be truer when it comes to the Military Sealift Command.

The Military Sealift Command is not the most visible element of the Navy-Marine Corps team, unless you are at sea and need them.

Whether that support comes from underway replenishment, from ships at sea or air assets, the more than 100 MSC ships are the lifeblood of our fleet.

In an era of tight budgets and challenges to ship numbers, the ships of MSC are part of the solution for enhanced fleet performance. Indeed, the recent landing of a V-22 Osprey on a T-AKE MSC ship during Bold Alligator 2012 was an eye opener of how the roles of these ships can change.

All this is indicative of a shift from well-organized carrier battle groups to a more dispersed presence force. The dispersed fleet is occurring through LCS deployments, the evolution of the Amphibious Ready Group-Marine Expeditionary Group or Expeditionary Strike Group.

Indeed, the demand upon the fleet has gone up significantly over time. In a recent interview, Admiral Buzby, the Commander of the MSC underscored that from its humble origins in 1949 (as the Military Sea Transportation Service) the demand has gone up significantly over time.

There are a number of notable aspects of MSC as the U.S. builds its fleet out into the future for the long distances of the Pacific.

First, the crews of the MSC are civilians. Indeed, they are among the hardest working civilians in the U.S. government or in the private sector, for that matter. They are at sea an average of nine months of each year.

The personnel costs of these civilian mariners are substantially less than if they wore uniforms.

Second, the command has a very flexible contracting system, which allows it to achieve cost effective results and breathtaking acquisition outcomes in short periods of time.

A very impressive example illustrates this. When the Secretary of Defense decided he needed to develop and deploy a sea base to support countermine operations in the Gulf and focused on putting the USS Ponce back to sea, the Navy turned to MSC to get the job done. They did it in about 90 days. The RFP was published in mid-January 2012 and by mid-April 2012 the ship was being readied for deployment. That's 90 days.

An ongoing example is the new supply ship – the T-AKE. These can be built in 12 months or less at a cost of $450 million. The last ones are being built, but to this analyst buying more of these ships to build a more diverse, forward-deployed fleet make a great deal of sense.

T-AKEs carry fuel, ammunition, and supplies and can support a contingent of military forces afloat.

As the U.S. shapes its con-ops for forward deployment, there are real opportunities to pair this ship with other combat or security vessels to create appropriate deployment packages.

For example, Adm. Buzby discussed a potential pairing of a USCG National Security Cutter with a T-AKE ship.

"The [Coast Guard's] National Security Cutters have an embarked helicopter, some firepower and some good command-and-control. Pair them up with a T-AKE, and you can have presence and staying power for a regional security mission....."

In other words, the MSC is an integral part of what the Navy-Marine Corps team can do, especially in the difficult and vast domain of the Pacific.

Three potential lessons, which could be learned moving forward, thinking about the future, can come from considering MSC and its role.

First, the MSC has very useful flight decks that can work with Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard flight elements. These decks function as lily pads for the fleet and provide a significant part of the sustainable presence punch essential to maritime forces, whether for military or security missions.

Second, the Secretary of the Navy is a keen proponent of environmental security. His commitment could be demonstrated by getting the MSC fleet out of single hull tankers and into more environmentally secure -- and safer -- double hull tankers as quickly as possible.

In today's commercial environment, operating a single hull tanker would be difficult since insurance companies often will not cover them. But, is as too often the case, we ask our forces to operate in ways that we would not accept in our personal or commercial lives.

There is a plan to do this over time. But I think the time is now.

Third, the MSC and the logistics infrastructure it embodies reminds one that low cost is in the eye of the beholder. We are told that we should acquire the LCS in large part because of its initial operational capability (IOC) cost.

But LCS represents the classic approach of focusing on a platform without looking profoundly at the context of operational and sustainment approaches. The LCS ships are so small that they possess VERY limited organic support.

This means that the already challenged Military Sealift Command will have to be able to support the "surging" LCS fleet and if the fleet is disaggregated this will put significant stress on an already challenged fleet.

In short, the MSC provides a key element for sustained forward deployment. And folding this into the discussion about what is needed for the Asian pivot is part of what professionals need to do.

Defending the Littorals: A Key Challenge For U.S. Pacific Strategy

By Robbin Laird

Published: August 14, 2012

Coast Guard

The Pacific is vast. While some may bridle and note the obvious nature of this, this simple fact is often either not understood and not reflected upon when strategists consider the region's nature. This is not the Mediterranean; this is not the Indian Ocean; this is not even the Atlantic.

The Pacific is nothing like its name –"Pacificum" or peaceful in Latin. It is a violent and expansive ocean. Rounding the tip of South America. Ferdinand Magellan, in perhaps one of the more

significant "name branding" mistakes in history pronounced the body of water he saw as peaceful.

The Pacific covers more than one-third of the earth's surface, approximately 165 million square kilometers (roughly 65 million square miles). It extends about 15,000 kilometers (9,600 miles).

A famous World War II typhoon makes that startling point. Historians have debated the number of USN Ships sunk by Japanese Kamikaze attacks during the war. Their counts vary from a low of 34 to a high of 47. A single typhoon on December 18, 1944 capsized three destroyers -- the USS Spence, USS Hull and the USS Monaghan, with more than 700 sailors lost. On top of that, 146 carrier aircraft were damaged and struck from the rolls because of damage.

To give one a sense of how to look at the Pacific challenges facing the United States, which has been a Pacific power at least from the time of "owning" the Philippines at the end of the 19th century, we need to turn the globe.

From an American perspective, the Pacific begins in the Alaska and Arctic and arcs down through Australia. Our fiftieth state – Hawaii – sits smack dab in the middle.

From Seattle to San Diego, many key US cities lie in the Pacific Basin. And the economic impact of the Asian relationship is evident everywhere in the region. The impact of maritime trade is central. And these cities and their ports are part of the conveyer belt of goods transferred from Asia to the United States and beyond.

Also underscored are the trade routes for the conveyer belt, which follow the Great Circle Route from the Asian ports south of Alaska and then down the West Coast of the United States.

The defense of these littorals is a major task and challenge. It encompasses looking at the Pacific east of Hawaii and examining the scope and nature of littoral operations. Maritime trade and commerce is a big part of the picture, but one must recognize that such trade and commerce largely comes via the Great Circle Route from Asia, then south of Alaska and then to America's West Coast ports.

Defense of the littorals requires working safety and security of maritime trade and commerce, managing environmental threats and the management of the fisheries and building a sound and safe security system end-to-end from Asia to the United States. This means that the Ports must be safe from the intrusion of terrorist threats or asymmetric actions by potential adversaries in the Asian region.

Safety, security and defense of the littorals lie at the center of a sound Pacific strategy. U.S. ships and aircraft operating out of the United States need to be free of threats –- the Pacific ports are especially challenged and ballistic missile threats originating from the Pacific can threaten even CONUS-based aircraft.

The Coast Guard plays a special joint agency role in providing for our littoral defense. In that role it is a Title X or defense agency in the United States, not simply a homeland security agency.

If you can not protect the entry points into the United States, the nation will clearly not have an effective foundation for a defense and security strategy in the Pacific.

Threats are embedded in the normal operations of the maritime trade system; managing these threats is a foundation element for the defense of the United States in the Pacific.

As Vice Admiral Manson Brown, the recently departed Coat Guard Pacific commander, underscored in an interview last year:

"Many people believe that we need to be a coastal coast guard, focused on the ports, waterways, and coastal environment.

"But the reality is that because our national interests extend well beyond our shore, whether it's our vessels, or our mariners, or our possessions and our territories, we need to have presence well beyond our shores to influence good outcomes.

"As the Pacific Area Commander, I'm also the USCG Pacific Fleet Commander. That's a powerful synergy. I'm responsible for the close-in game, and I'm responsible for the away game. Now the away game has some tangible authorities and capabilities, such as fisheries enforcement and search and rescue presence," he said.

At the heart of a strategic rethink in building a U.S. Pacific maritime security strategy is coming to terms with the differences between these two domains, the security and military. The security domain is based on multiple-sum actions; military activity is by its very nature rooted in unilateral action. If one starts with the military side of the equation and then defines the characteristics of a maritime security equation the formula is skewed towards unilateral action against multiple-sum activity.

But there is another aspect of change as well. Increasingly, the United States is rethinking its overall defense policy. A shift is underway toward preparing its forces for global operations for conventional engagement in flexible conditions.

Conventional engagement is built on a sliding scale from insertion of forces to achieve political effect to the use of high intensity sledgehammer capabilities. Policymakers and specialists alike increasingly question the utility of high-tech, high-intensity warfare capabilities for most conventional engagement missions.

In parallel to the relationship between those two domains is the relationship between the Coast Guard and the Navy, rooted in a sliding scale on levels of violence. This needs to be replaced by a new look, which emphasizes the intersection between security operations and conventional engagement, with high-intensity capabilities as an escalatory tool.

To protect the littorals of the United States is a foundational element for Pacific defense, and allows the U.S. to focus on multiple sum outcomes to enhance defense and security, but at the same time it lays a solid foundation for moving deeper into the Pacific for military or extended security operations when needed.

A reflection of such an approach is the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum. Again one must remember the central place the Great Circle Route plays in trans-Pacific shipping and the immensity of the Pacific. Given these conditions, the Coast Guard has participated in a collaborative security effort in the North Pacific designed to enhance littoral protection of the United States.

Among the key participants are the Canadians, Russians, the Japanese, the South Koreans and the Chinese.

Admiral Day, an active participant in the forum during his tenure, notes that members have participated in numerous exercises and several joint operations.

But for the United States to play a more effective role in defending its own littorals and to be more effective in the kind of multi-national collaboration which building Pacific security and providing a solid foundation for littoral defense, a key element are presence assets.

"And it's presence, in a competitive sense, because if we are not there, someone else will be there, whether it's the illegal fishers or whether it's Chinese influence in the region," said Vice Adm. Manson Brown. "We need to be very concerned about the balance of power in the neighborhood.

If you look at some of the other players that are operating in the neighborhood there is clearly an active power game going on. To keep the US presence relevant, the Coast Guard's National Security Cutters are a core asset.

The inability to fund these and the putting in limbo of the smaller cutters, the so-called OPCs, or Offshore Patrol Cutters, underscores a central question: without effective littoral presence (for U.S. shores) how does one do security and defense in the Pacific?

The size and immensity of the Pacific means you operate with what you have; you do not have shore infrastructure easily at hand to support a ship. Ships need to be big enough to have onboard provisions and fuel, as well as aviation assets to operate over time and distance.

In short, providing for littoral defense and security on the shores of the United States requires a reaffirmation of the Coast Guard's Title X role and ending the logjam of funding support for the cutter fleet and the service's aviation assets which enable that fleet to have range and reach.

In his next piece Laird will examine Alaska and the Arctic, with a focus on Alaska as a key strategic asset for U.S. Pacific operations.

Obama Pacific Pivot Turns On Alaska

By Robbin Laird
Published: October 5, 2012

This is the third in a series of commentaries defense consultant and author Robbin Laird, a member of the AOL Defense Board of Contributors, is penning about how the U.S. can and should shape its forces to perform the Asia strategy pivot. As a key part of that, he'll be looking closely at what he calls "several neglected aspects of a sustainable power projection force for the 21st century." Think Alaska, for this one. The Editor.

At the center of the U.S. contribution to Pacific defense is the ability to provide strategic depth for our allies. Much of this depends on the contribution of Alaska.

As retired Lt. Gen. Charles Heflebower, former 7th Air Force Commander, put it in a recent interview: *The ability to surge in force is crucial. When I was there (in South Korea), I calculated that if we could remain viable through the first 20 days of combat, forces could be surged to the area and turn the tide.*

In this sense, Alaska is a crucial asset to any American Pacific strategy.

People don't realize how strategic Alaska is until you really look at a map and recognize its central role in terms of getting forces into the region.

Alaska is the home of the 11th Air Force, headquartered at Elmendorf Air Force Base. It hosts the joint exercise Northern Edge every two years to provide the kind of joint and coalition operation necessary to surge force.

A key coalition exercise to provide for some of the same capability is Red Flag, held in part at Eielson Air Force Base in Anchorage. The base was a frontline base until 2007 but was downgraded and now primarily supports Red Flag. (This kind of downgrade might well have to be re-thought as the U.S. shapes a 21st century Pacific strategy.)

At Fort Greely, the 49th Missile Defense Battalion operates the Ground Based Missile Defense Command under the Command of Northcom. The operational control and execution is provided by the US Army.

But the GBMD faces an uncertain future but the need is clear, notably if Alaska is to play its crucial role in providing strategic depth for a surge of forces. Such defense is a key element of the kind of 21st century attack and defense enterprise necessary for the projection of power in the Pacific.

Alaska would be important simply as a key foundation for providing strategic depth for U.S. and allied forces in the Pacific. The relationship with Canada is also crucial.

And Canada's importance will go up dramatically over time as the Arctic and its resources become ever more within reach. It is difficult to underestimate the impact of the resources in the Arctic on the global community, and notably upon the Arctic Five - as the members of the Arctic Council, Denmark, Norway, Canada, Russia and the US are known -- who currently control in principle 80 percent of known Arctic resources inside the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones.

The U.S. is the least active or focused member of the group. It is at best a "reluctant" Arctic power. This reluctance needs to end, and resources and commitments made to build out U.S. presence and leadership in the region.

The Russians are clearly the most active in the region, and the Arctic forms a key element of Putin's energy strategy.

As Richard Weitz has argued: *In the current situation, the Russians and Canadians are committing resources ahead of the other three. Denmark and Norway are next and the US is dead last in committing resources to the Arctic mission.*

Not only are there political challenges to gaining access to Arctic fuel reserves, but the geography of the region must also be taken into account. These reserves lack functioning gas fields and pipelines, and require hundreds of billions of dollars in investments. Even then, many of these areas may not be accessible until the ice cap shrinks further. Russia has responded to these challenges by announcing a number of costly programs to explore and develop East Siberian oil and gas fields and to build a network of oil and gas pipelines towards the 2020-2030 timeframe, despite their costing many tens of billions of dollars.

The Kremlin appears to see the Arctic as a necessary part of Russia's future security in the realms of energy and geopolitics. Putin has advocated aggressive expansion of the Arctic, citing the "urgent" need to secure Russian "strategic, economic, scientific and defense interests" there.

The low priority the United States pays to the Arctic is best symbolized by our continuing inability to commit to building a new icebreaker. As retired Coast Guard Rear Adm. Jeffrey Garrett, one of the nation's leading experts on the Arctic, has underscored:

"The icebreaker fleet represents the main surface presence that the U.S. can exert in what is essentially a maritime domain in the Arctic Ocean. An area that is becoming much more accessible to a whole range of human activities. And it's clearly brought Arctic Alaska, the U.S. piece of the Arctic into a new concern for the Coast Guard, particularly in terms of exercising its statutory responsibilities there. It is obviously important as well for protecting broader national interests, such as presence, sovereignty, and even support of defense operations.

"The Icebreakers are clearly very expensive ships compared to others. But really, the perspective should be what is the cost of not having an Icebreaker? If you have a major contingency in the Arctic, whether it's security related, oil spill related, or something like that, even search-and-rescue, or tourism ships getting in trouble, you have no way of responding. And the cost of not being able to respond to those things may be very high.

"The Icebreaker is an insurance policy against future contingencies in a rapidly transforming Arctic."

To put this in perspective, the U.S. currently only has one operational icebreaker, a medium icebreaker called the USCGC Healy, built in 1996.

But it is not just about icebreakers. You cannot have a Pacific strategy if you do not manage the challenges reaching from the Arctic to Australia. If the U.S. intends to have a 21st century Pacific strategy, it needs to start with Arctic presence and commitment.

We have policy papers, studies and presentations. What we don't have is a credible roll out of capability. Strategy without capability or a plan for crafting capability is vaporware. The Arctic is clearly an area in which presence assets, both surface and airborne, need to be networked to provide for maritime safety, security and search and rescue capabilities.

The other members of the Arctic Council are not waiting around for U.S. leadership. Perhaps this is another case of leading from behind.

Russia reportedly plans to deploy two army brigades in the north to defend its interests in the Arctic regions.

"The location will be determined, as well as weapons, numbers and infrastructure for the brigades," Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov said, according to Russian news agencies. "They could be put in Murmansk, Archangelsk or another place."

The Russians understand that an Arctic strategy is at the same time a European and a Pacific strategy. And the new trade routes, which will emerge over time, will validate their approach and understanding

The other four members of the Arctic Council – Canada, Norway, Denmark and the United States – are all NATO members and have more in common than divides them. The wealth in the region will allow Canada, Norway and Denmark to shape a procurement strategy to populate their strategy.

At the heart of such procurement is the need to build an Arctic capability, which can provide for maritime safety and security and search and rescue in difficult situations. Also required is an ability to protect themselves from new threats introduced into the region such as foreign SSBNs using the water transit routes.

The four countries need air and naval assets which can operate 24/7, 365 days to deal with presence, sovereignty and safety issues. By meeting twice a year, or before any meeting of the Arctic Council, the four countries could build collaborative and convergent capabilities. There would be no compelling need to have explicit collaborative programs, but as nations buy the proper helicopters, maritime patrol aircraft, ISR aircraft, and ships, there is a clear opportunity to leverage one another's buys of equipment.

By shaping a 10-year plan for convergent procurement, common concepts of operations could be shaped by the four NATO partners without the explicit need to include NATO. The process would be very transparent and can be briefed to Russia as part of the Arctic Council process.

In short, financial assets are there to build capability. And the West needs to find ways to protect its interests in the decade ahead, and not only in the Arctic.

America, Allies, & The Arctic: NORTHCOM Commander Talks Polar Strategy

By Robbin Laird and Ed Timperlake

Published: December 14, 2012

In an exclusive interview in advance of Wednesday's new US-Canadian agreement on Artic co-operation, Gen. Charles Jacoby -- the Army four-star who leads both the US-Canadian NORAD and US Northern Command -- spoke to AOL regulars Robbin Laird and Ed Timperlake about the national security aspects of US policy at the top of the world, where global climate change is creating new opportunities for trade, for energy exploration, and for conflict. What follows is Laird and Timperlake's analysis and extensive excerpts from the interview.

For most Americans -- to the extent they even think about the Arctic -- the Far North is either an ecological preserve or a energy exploration zone, in either case with security and defense concerns distant considerations. But the Far North is changing fast, and the new reality is that managing security in the Arctic is a sine qua non for resource development, aviation, seaborne trade, and environmental protection.

Climate change is creating a new Arctic environment and with it a new strategic situation. New transportation routes, new resources, new security challenges, and new defense dynamics are

inevitable -- and very little of this is at America's discretion. Global dynamics, indeed globalization itself, is pushing the Arctic onto the center stage. The US really faces one of two choices: ignore the Arctic and fail to protect its interests, or shape an effective approach that rolls out resources appropriately over time and in concert with allies.

The opening of the Arctic changes the global dynamic in three main ways:

First, new transportation routes already are opening up and over time, direct routes between the Atlantic and the Pacific will be possible. The Northern Sea Route along the arctic coast of Russia eventually will reduce a maritime journey between East Asia and Western Europe from 21,000 km using the Suez Canal to 12,800 km, cutting transit time by 10-15 days. Northern Europe in particular will take on an increasingly important role as it becomes connected with the Pacific in a new way.

Second, Russia in Asia and Russia in Europe become connected, upending the naval balance in the Pacific. With the Northern Sea Route, Moscow's Pacific fleet can easily reinforce those in the Atlantic and vice versa, overcoming the two-front problem that has bedeviled Russian strategy as far back as its devastating defeat in the Tsushima Straits back in 1905. Russia will be able to shape a strategic reality at the top of the world and leverage that position for power projection southward.

Third, there are significant resources at stake: oil, gas and rare earth minerals, to name a few. The Arctic Five -- Russia, the US, Canada, Norway and Denmark -- are the major claimants to the known resources. But others are eagerly involved in staking claims to what is not claimed and pouching on what is.

Most ominiously, an increasingly assertive China has clearly marked the Arctic as a domain of strategic significance by their land grab for rare earth minerals in Greenland, their building of new icebreakers, and their focus on the strategic impact of the new transportation routes for commercial and military purposes. Much as the recent Chinese e-passports lay claim to resources in the South China Sea and India, their activities in the Arctic are clear indications of intent.

For Gen. Jacoby, the key to success is having a clear idea about the way ahead and investing in key capabilities. In addition, working closely with allies, above all the Canadians, is crucial to Arctic security that is both effective and cost-effective.

First, he said, we need to identify what we're missing that is needed to meet the requirements for Arctic security and defense.

"Earlier this year, [U.S. Coast Guard Commandant] Admiral Papp and I identified four key capability gaps in the Arctic. Those are communications, domain awareness, infrastructure and presence," Jacoby told me. "We need to focus our investments in enhancing capabilities in each of those areas over time."

Second, because of the difficulty building up infrastructure in the region, there is a need to have a coordinated inter-governmental approach, including the state of Alaska, to build out infrastructure over time.

"The Arctic is a challenging environment in which to work and for which to plan. A key element is to shape a flexible, agile and responsive approach with our mission partners. Instead of having separate bases and facilitates in the region, we are looking to have a consolidated approach," Jacoby went on.

"We simply cannot afford to have unnecessarily redundant facilities in the Arctic region. The different stakeholders need to work together to share in building these capabilities. We need an inclusive approach to this challenge, and in this case, an opportunity as well," the general said. "We are using our exercise programs to explore those capabilities gaps and look for high-payoff investments that we can make. We are working with our components, especially the Navy and Air Force, to help build to those capabilities. And because we are taking an allied and whole-of-government approach, capabilities can be leveraged not just from the services, but from other agencies, from the commercial sector, or from allies like Canada."

"One of the things we're doing as part of our Arctic campaign plan is we're forming an Arctic board with the University of Alaska at Fairbanks to bring together all of the stakeholders to talk about this," Jacoby said.

Third, the infrastructure required will need a mix of land-based, sea-based, and even space-based assets.

"A key element is to shape forward operating bases in Alaska and the Arctic. There are going to be several stakeholders in the area. We need to be willing and looking at ways to share amongst all stakeholders. Shore-based facilities might need to be complemented with offshore facilities," Jacoby said. "[But] even in the warm season -- in fact, especially in the warm season -- hardened ships, whether they're icebreakers or hardened Arctic-capable ships, are going to be required to do our most basic missions of safety, security and defense. You won ƒt be able to do it completely from shore-based facilities."

In space, Jacoby went on, "for example, we will need better satellite coverage of the region. But it doesn't have to be a DoD satellite, or even an American satellite."

Working with partners is crucial across the public-private divide as well. Commercial partners need both economic growth and environmental security, and the firms involved in both will need new capabilities to do their jobs -- capabilities which can be shared with the US military and security agencies. "There are investments that all the stakeholders can make, whether they are the U.S. government, Canada, the State of Alaska, or commercial enterprises," Jacoby said.

Gen. Jacoby emphasized that we have time to prepare wisely, not time to dither foolishly. "Three or four NORAD commanders from now, the Secretary of Defense or the Canadian Minister of Defense is going to ask, who is coming back and forth through the Bering Straits, what are they

doing in the Arctic, what are their capabilities, and does that represent a threat?" Jacoby asked. "We can wait and surge capabilities to respond and spend enormous amounts of money in a crisis, or we can try to shape the capabilities we need over time to be prepared to answer those questions."

Why The Pacific Strategy Requires A Western Hemisphere Energy Policy

By Robbin Laird

Published: January 3, 2013

Energy security is a key element of national security. The missing piece of America's energy security policy, in turn, is the glaring absence of a strategy to coordinate and secure the enormous energy resources of the Western hemisphere.

Today, America is over-dependent on the increasingly volatile Middle East, China is increasingly aggressive in its quest for energy sources worldwide, and Russia is exploiting its energy reserves not just economically but as an instrument of global power. Clearly it's important to reduce demand through various domestic means and to increase supply from alternative sources. But for now and even the mid-term future, it is more realistic to generating energy now

and in the mid-term via an effective national energy policy which relies on the Western Hemisphere.

In earlier analyses for AOL Defense, I focused on the need to defend the American littorals, on the defense of Alaska, and on Arctic engagement. These are key elements in allowing the US to move a realistic energy independence policy rooted in the Western Hemisphere.

Three Pacific states are critical in this effort: Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Unfortunately, politics in Washington have made such an energy nexus very difficult to forge. An effective Pacific strategy requires greater capability for these Western Hemisphere Pacific powers to tie their energy producing and transportation systems together.

The first key element is the evolution of Canadian policy in terms of energy and Arctic development. A central element of such a policy is the re-working of its pipeline systems. One pipeline is designed to ship product from a British Columbia port to Asian customers (the Northern Gateway pipeline). The second is designed to move product from Canada into the United States through Montana and South Dakota.

The current pipeline is to be extended deeper into the United States – the Keystone Pipeline XL – but doing so has been blocked by U.S. policies. And President Obama simply postponed the decision on whether or not does this until sometime this year, in spite of the obvious turmoil in the Middle East. The Keystone Pipeline System is a system to transport synthetic crude oil and diluted bitumen ("dilbit") from the Athabasca oil sands region in northeastern Alberta, Canada to multiple destinations in the United States, which include refineries in Illinois, the Cushing oil distribution hub in Oklahoma, and proposed connections to refineries along the Gulf Coast of Texas. It consists of the operational "Keystone Pipeline" and "Keystone-Cushing Extension," and two proposed pipeline expansion segments, referred to as Keystone XL Pipeline and the Gulf Coast Project. After the Keystone XL pipeline segments are completed, American crude oil would enter the XL pipelines at Baker, Montana and Cushing, Oklahoma.

The second key element is US policy in Alaska and the Arctic.

The U.S. is dragging its feet on Alaskan oil and gas development, and the current pipeline is not operating at anywhere near full capacity. And, of course, the foot-dragging on Arctic drilling, which clearly could be connected to this pipeline, raises questions about the ability of the pipeline to provide a surge of support to the American economy in a crisis. (Click here for a look at the capacity issue for the pipeline).

The security and defense of these areas – in both Canada and the United States – will be of increasing importance to NORTHCOM.

There are significant resources at stake: oil, gas and rare earth minerals, to name a few. The Arctic Five -- Russia, the US, Canada, Norway and Denmark -- are the major claimants to the known resources. But others are eagerly involved in staking claims to what is not claimed and pouching on what is.

Most ominously, an increasingly assertive China has clearly marked the Arctic as a domain of strategic significance by their land grab for rare earth minerals in Greenland, their building of new icebreakers, and their focus on the strategic impact of the new transportation routes for commercial and military purposes. Much as the recent Chinese e-passports lay claim to resources in the South China Sea and India, their activities in the Arctic are clear indications of intent.

In our recent interview with the NORTHCOM/NORAD Commander Gen. Charles Jacoby, the General underscored the importance of shaping an effective Arctic strategy, notably with Canada.

"Three or four NORAD commanders from now, the Secretary of Defense or the Canadian Minister of Defense is going to ask, who is coming back and forth through the Bering Straits, what are they doing in the Arctic, what are their capabilities, and does that represent a threat?" Jacoby asked. "We can wait and surge capabilities to respond and spend enormous amounts of money in a crisis, or we can try to shape the capabilities we need over time to be prepared to answer those questions."

The third key element of a Western Hemisphere energy policy is the role of Mexico after the return of the PRI to power as a result of the 2012 elections. The PRI is crafting a different energy policy, one that emphasizes exploitation of resources and enhancement of the Mexican economy from a resurgence of an energy sector.

The new President, Enrique Peña Nieto, declared that "Pemex (the Mexican state owned energy company) needs to benefit from associating with the private sector in order to make its production more dynamic and increase its profitability and transparency. We need to attract national and international private capital with regard to Exploration and Production where we can undertake more risk than is currently allowed. With regard to Refining, we also need to allow private investment. The formula for success consists in achieving a political consensus to achieve the 'optimum mix' between governmental action and private action within Pemex."

Reform will be difficult in Mexico, but the new government clearly wishes to move in a new direction and augment the capabilities of Mexico overall in the energy sector.

Will renewed Mexican activism be folded into comprehensive U.S. leadership of a Western Hemisphere policy in which safety, security and defense are blended into an effective policy? Will the defense of the littorals and the role of American ports and refineries be included in an effective Pacific policy?

Assuming the U.S. could sort out an effective working relationship with Canada and Mexico on common infrastructure – pipelines, ports, refineries, etc. – and an effective way to provide security for the infrastructure, a key foundation would be laid for "fueling" forces for a Pacific Strategy.

And by working through a transparent and even handed relationship among the three, the United States would be in a position to use those foundational capabilities to work with others in shaping a more comprehensive and inclusive Western Hemisphere energy policy. For example, an effective Western Hemisphere energy policy can be extended southward to non-Pacific states as well, notably Brazil.

Brazil is a key energy power in the world today, and one which does not mind drilling for oil offshore. Its government is deeply concerned with the safety and security of offshore drilling, and the US efforts in coping with the oil spill in the Gulf, rather than being hidden behind political embarrassment, could be wrapped into an effective set of national tools for influence and solid foundation for global cooperation.

Although we hear much about securing the global commons from the Administration, apparently it does not embrace a Western Hemisphere energy policy. It is about time it did.

Crafting A Pacific Attack & Defense Enterprise: The Strategic Quadrangle

By Robbin Laird

Published: January 4, 2013

Battle of Manila Bay, 1 May 1898. Colored print after a painting by J.G. Tyler. U.S. Naval History & Heritage Command.

The pivot to the Pacific started more than a century ago. The United States first became a Pacific power in 1898, the year the US first annexed Hawaii and then gained Guam and the Philippines (as well as Puerto Rico) from Spain after a "short, victorious war."
The United States is at a turning point as it contemplates the way ahead for its defense and security policy in the Pacific. With the decline of the physical number of platforms and assets, our ability to project dominant power out from the West Coast of the United States and Hawaii is increasingly in question.

The simple, inescapable reality imposed by the sheer size of the Pacific Ocean is that the continental United States is many miles from the Western Pacific. In previous articles for AOL Defense, I have looked at the US and the Pacific seen from a perspective east of Hawaii, but now turning to Hawaii and further west, where the challenge is to shape a credible presence and projection of power in the region for the 21st century.

If the projection of power is seen to be about pushing platforms and capabilities out from the continental United States (CONUS), Alaska and Hawaii, we face significant challenges dealing with the growth of Chinese power and the needs for interoperability and support to empower both our allies and the United States operating in the region.

But if a different approach is shaped, one which rests increasingly on a plug-in strategy, the challenge is manageable. US allies are shaping new defense and security capabilities for the 21st century, investing resources into the re-crafting of their capabilities going forward. How can these efforts be combined more effectively going forward so that both the allies and the US end up collectively with significantly expanded but cost-effective capabilities?

Evolving Capabilities and New Approaches

The evolution of 21st century weapon technology is breaking down the barriers between offensive and defensive systems. Is missile defense about providing defense or is it about enabling global reach, for offense or defense? Likewise, the new 5th generation aircraft have been largely not understood because they are inherently multi-mission systems, which can be used for forward defense or forward offensive operations.

Indeed, an inherent characteristic of many new systems is that they are really about presence and putting a grid over an operational area, and therefore they can be used to support strike or defense within an integrated approach. In the 20th Century, surge was built upon the notion of signaling. One would put in a particular combat capability – a Carrier Battle Group, Amphibious Ready Group, or Air Expeditionary Wing – to put down your marker and to warn a potential adversary that you were there and ready to be taken seriously. If one needed to, additional forces would be sent in to escalate and build up force. With the new multi-mission systems – 5th generation aircraft and Aegis for example – the key is presence and integration able to support strike or defense in a single operational presence capability. Now the adversary can not be certain that you are simply putting down a marker.

This is what former Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne calls the attack and defense enterprise. The strategic thrust of integrating modern systems is to create an a grid that can operate in an area as a seamless whole, able to strike or defend simultaneously. This is enabled by the evolution of C5ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Combat Systems, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance), and it is why Wynne has underscored for more than a decade that fifth generation aircraft are not merely replacements for existing tactical systems but a whole new approach to integrating defense and offense. When one can add the strike and defensive systems of other players, notably missiles and sensors aboard surface ships like Aegis, then one can create the reality of what Ed Timperlake, a former fighter pilot, has described as the F-35 being able to consider Aegis as his wingman.

By shaping a C5ISR system inextricably intertwined with platforms and assets, which can honeycomb an area of operation, an attack and defense enterprise can operate to deter aggressors and adversaries or to conduct successful military operations. Inherent in such an enterprise is scalability and reach-back. By deploying the C5ISR honeycomb, the shooters in the enterprise can reach back to each other to enable the entire grid of operation, for either defense or offense.

US allies in the Western Pacific already possess Aegis systems and will most likely add F-35s to their operational inventory, if the United States can have the imagination to shape an integrated attack and defense enterprise with those allies, significant capabilities for defense can be made available to both allies and the United States at the same time. For the allies, their own capabilities would be individually augmented, but the foundation would also be created for de facto and explicit integration of those assets across the Western Pacific. By being able to plug into the F-35 and Aegis enabled honeycomb, the United States could provide force augmentation and surge capability to those allies and at the same time enable forward deployments which the United States would not own or operate.

In effect, what could be established from the United States perspective is a plug in approach rather than a push approach to projecting power. The allies are always forward deployed; the United States does not to attempt to replicate what those allies need to do in their own defense. But what the United States can offer is strategic depth to those allies. At the same time if interoperability and interactive sustainability are recognized as a strategic objective of the first order, then the United States can shape a more realistic approach than one which now rests on trying to proliferate power projection platforms, when neither the money nor the numbers are there.

Now let us apply this approach to a strike and defense enterprise to some fundamental geopolitical realities. As things stand now, the core for the US effort from Hawaii outward is to enable a central strategic triangle, one that reaches from Hawaii to Guam and to Japan. This triangle is at the heart of America's ability to project power into the Western Pacific. With a 20th century approach, one which is platform-centric and rooted in step by step augmentation of force, each point of the triangle needs to be garrisoned with significant numbers of platforms which can be pushed forward. To be clear, having capability in this triangle is a key element of what the United States can bring to the party for Pacific operations, and it remains fundamental. But

with a new approach to an attack and defense enterprise, one would use this capability differently from simply providing for push forward and sequential escalation dominance.

Rather than focusing simply on the image of projecting power forward, what is crucial to an successful Pacific strategy is enabling a strategic quadrangle in the Western Pacific, anchored on Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Singapore. This will not be simple. Competition, even mutual suspicion, among US allies in the Western Pacific is historically deep-rooted; as a former 7th USAF commander underscored, "history still matters in impeding allied cooperation." But in spite of these challenges and impediments, enabling the quadrangle to do a better job of defending itself and shaping interoperability across separate nations has to become a central strategic American goal.

This will require significant cultural change for the United States. Rather than thinking of allies after we think about our own strategy, we need to reverse the logic. Without enabled allies in the Western Pacific, the United States will simply not be able to execute an effective Pacific strategy. Full stop. We are not about to have a 600-ship navy, and putting Littoral Combat Ships into Singapore is a metaphor for the problem, not the solution.

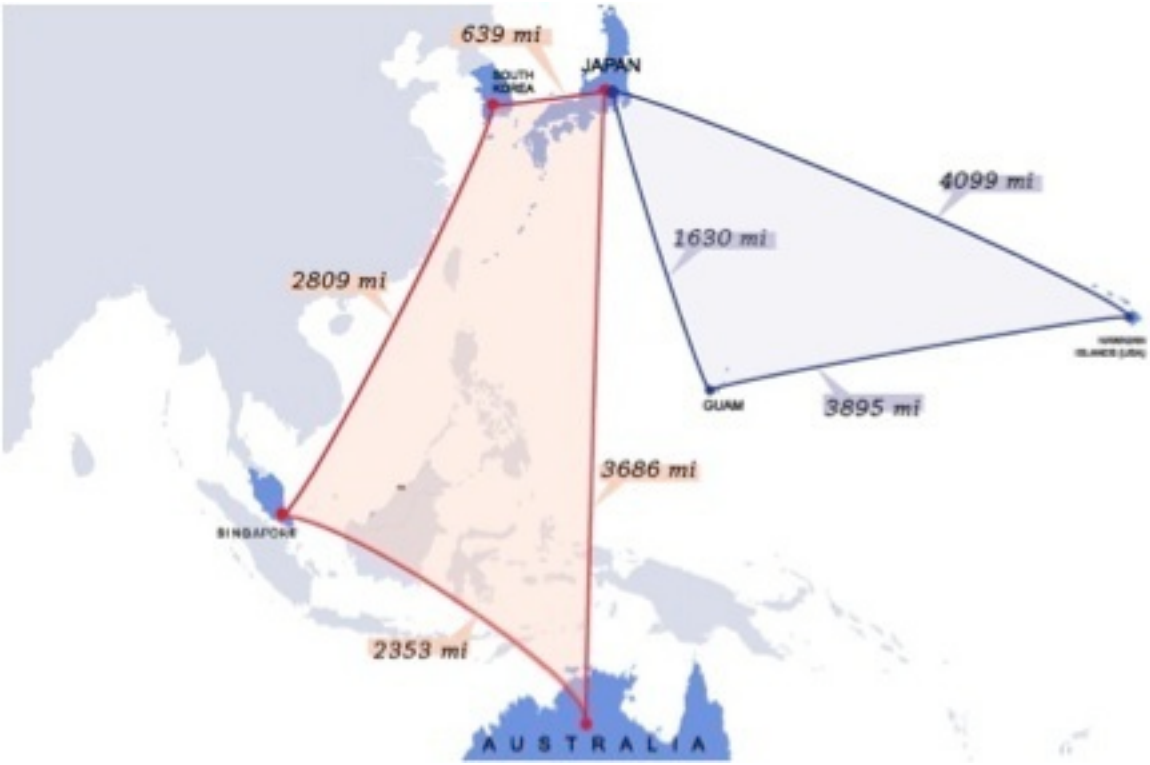

Figure 1 Intersecting and Converging Capabilities: A Strategic Triangle with a Strategic Quadrangle. Credit: AOL Defense

The quadrangle can be populated by systems which form a C5ISR grid, in turn supporting a honeycomb of deployed forces. The population of the area with various sensors – aboard new tankers, fighter aircraft, air battle managers, UAVs, ships, and submarines – creates the pre-

condition for shaping a powerful grid of intersecting capabilities. Indeed, an attack and defense enterprise in the Western Pacific can be shaped which the United States can easily plug into, if indeed we prioritize interoperability and mutually leveraging one another's capabilities.

This will require culture change, and not only by the Asian powers. The United States will have to recognize other nations' capabilities as part of the overall enterprise, and not as separate national forces with no real relevance except for exercises or ritualistic partnership statements. We are at a Ben Franklin moment: We either all hang separately or we hang together.

And there are clearly changes afoot among our allies, which enable a collaborative attack and defense enterprise to be shaped over the next decades. All are likely F-35 buyers; Aegis is a core reality in the region; and the key players are all shaping new C5ISR capabilities. There is money being invested, but the challenge will be to ensure that we are shaping a collaborative strike and defense enterprise, not stovepiped platform centric national capabilities.

Among the changes afoot in the region is a new working relationship between Japan and South Korea. Although the old historical memories are a barrier, clearly the threats in the region are driving Japan and South Korea to a much closer relationship. Aegis and F-35 are among the likely glues for such collaborative con-ops. When one remembers that the F-35 is not simply a strike aircraft, but a premier C5ISR asset highly integratable with Aegis, a significant practical foundation will be there for collaboration, whether you have a treaty relationship or not.

Australia is a leader in the region in adding new sea and air capabilities, which can enhance the ability of the region to defend itself. Not highly noticed in the United States but significant nonetheless are the new radars aboard the core frigates in the Australian Navy. Recently in the RIMPAC 2012 exercise, the Aussies showcased this new radar, which allows for the Navy to operate in heavy sea states but able to identify threats at a distance.

To cite the Australian Associated Press:

"The navy says the new multi-phased array radar system has been installed on the Anzac-class frigate HMAS Perth, and identifies, tracks and guides missiles to several targets at the same time.

"The Minister for Defence Materiel, Jason Clare, has inspected the radar on HMAS Perth during exercises off the West Australian coast and says the latest weapon in the navy's arsenal means Australia's Anzac frigates will be a lot more capable.

"He said it was also a great Australian success story, because the technology was developed in Australia by CEA Technologies.

"Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Ray Griggs said HMAS Perth had just returned from testing the system in Hawaii with tremendous results, showing the new system can defend the ship from modern cruise missile attack, enhancing the Anzac-class frigates' capabilities significantly."

And Australia is adding several new air capabilities – E-737 Wedgetail aircraft, UAVs, F-35s and related systems – that call out for integration across the C5ISR enterprise. And such integration will provide a solid anchor for a regional defense as well.

New Balance Between Strike and Presence

We need to rethink AirSea battle. The original AirSea Battle construct, as well as teams to work the problem, were put together prior to the President articulating a pivot to the Pacific strategy.

But are the two the same thing or is the first a subset of the second? The answer to this is crucial in setting not only operational objectives and agendas, but shaping procurement choices going forward for the decade to come.

If China and North Korea are the foci, then re-enforcing precision strike enterprise is the priority. The objective is to have as many forces which can be deployed forward to strike Chinese or North Korean assets in time of war. Precision strike coming by air, ground, and sea forces would be the means to strike as many aim points as possible to create escalation dominance and to win the "air-sea battle." If this is the approach then more traditional approaches will be prioritized and funded, such as the Carrier Battle Group, air expeditionary strike groups, and new systems like long range bombers which can load up on capabilities to deliver large strike packages are prioritized.

But what if the air sea battle really is about shaping a presence force with significant reach back to support a different kind of force structure and set of objectives?

Then precision strike deployed on as many platforms as possible – old and new – is not the means to the end. Rather, a different set of ends could well drive the new approach. The key focus becomes presence forces able to operate across the spectrum of security and military operations. These forces need to be effective, agile, and scalable, with both significant interoperability within the region and reach back to surge forces operating on the fringes of the Pacific.

Assuming the approach is not primarily about striking Chinese and North Korean assets, but to constrain adversary operations in the Pacific and beyond, the tools needed are presence, partnership building and operations, and ability to put in place distributed, forward-deployed capabilities which can rapidly reach back to additional capabilities able to augment them.

The augmentation requirement can be solved a couple of ways. One is by strengthening the capabilities of allies, which as a senior OSD official put it "are always forward-deployed." This approach will be significantly enhanced as allies buy F-35s, build global sustainment hubs, and link these F-35s with other sensor, C5ISR and strike assets, such as Aegis.

The objective of US forces is then to "plug into" allied forces to provide for escalation dominance and escalatory control. It is not to push dominant forces into various regions as a first and required step. With today's Carrier Battle Group concept, we have to push a CBG forward to shape a war winning strategy at all, not simply to provide presence and escalation dominance. In effect, this provides very limited options.

Far superior is an approach built around deploying additional Navy-Marine amphibious groups. With the Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit or with the Expeditionary Strike Group, we get presence, deployment flexibility, and, with the coming of the F-35B to the ARG-MEU, a significant military asset with reach-up and reach-back capability. This is a more realistic approach and an operationally based reality

This is the fundamental choice. We can continue the 50-year legacy of building platforms and payloads for those platforms. Or we can begin a new approach which augments presence, using distributed US assets which can network with allies to establish lily pads for normal operations and lay the foundations for escalation dominance in a crisis.

Partners In The Pacific: Singapore, Australia, & Japan

By Robbin Laird

Published: January 15, 2013

Pundits tend to forget that the 21st century is not the 20th repeated. As much as the US competition with a rising China is framed as a reprise of the Cold War with the Soviets or of the Pacific war with Japan, the game has changed.

The rise of China changes the opposing player. The limits of US power projection across the Pacific changes how we can play the game. The opening of the Arctic changes the shape of the board. And America's key allies in the Pacific are not the same as those of the 20st century.

Any US-China rivalry in the Pacific really revolves around who has the most effective allied strategy, and whether or not the US delivers what allies are looking for, which is American presence, engagement, and effective capabilities to assist in deterring China and deflecting of Chinese efforts to dominate the region.

The allies are always forward-deployed. When joined with an enduring presence mission for the US projection forces, they provide a powerful foundation for scalability of US and allied forces. And with the United States providing strategic depth, reach-back to an integrated and networked force is inherently possible.

Presence, scalability, and reach-back are solid foundations for the kind of deterrence necessary in the evolving strategic environment in the Pacific.

The challenge for the US is to shape approaches and systems which can plug into what allies themselves are doing. In effect, the US needs to shape a lynchpin strategy, which gives allies the maneuver space to deal with China.

We have interviewed many leaders and analysts in the Pacific to determine what the evolving orientations below the surface are in dealing with the new Pacific dynamics, China, maritime and trade security and the Arctic, among others.

Certainly, a key point is that the Chinese are simultaneously the main trading partner and the main threat to many of our allies. Shaping a strategy that can deal with both realities is a sine qua non for success in the region, both for our allies and us.

The intersection of the defense of Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Singapore forms a quadrangle of key US allies in the region. The US is directly or indirectly involved in the defense of all four corners of the Quadrangle, and the evolution of their capabilities individually and collectively is crucial to the evolution of American capabilities and strategy in the decade ahead.

In the next piece, I will deal with South Korean defense because it is so crucial to how the US could re-shape its Pacific engagement and presence strategy. For now, I am going to deal with three key allies: Japan, Singapore and Australia.

Japan: Dynamic Defense

Earlier this year, the Japanese government released its latest Defense White Paper, their first since they announced their decision to acquire the F-35, which provides a further elucidation upon the new defense policy announced in 2010.

The Japanese announced in that year that they were shifting from a static island defense, which rested upon mobilization, to a "dynamic defense" which required more agile forces able to operate in the air and maritime regions bordering Japan.

Notably, the Japanese recognized the need for these "dynamic defense" forces to be interoperable with allies to provide for the kind of defense Japan and the allies needed in light of changing dynamics in the region.

As the White Paper puts it:

"It is necessary that Japan's future defense force acquire dynamism to proactively perform various types of operations in order to effectively fulfill the given roles of the defense force without basing on the 'Basic Defense Force Concept' that place priority on "the existence of the defense force."

"To this end, the 2010 NDPG calls for the development of "Dynamic Defense Force" that has readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability, and versatility, and is reinforced by advanced technology based on the latest trends in the levels of military technology and intelligence capabilities. The concept of this "Dynamic Defense Force" focuses on fulfilling the roles of the defense force through SDF operations."

The White Paper continues with a bluntness not typically associated with the Japanese:

"It is obvious that changes in the neighborhood require Japan to adopt such a policy. The North Koreans have built and deployed a nuclear-tipped missile force, which clearly threatens Japan. And the Chinese are shaping power projection forces to provide for an increasingly capable force able to operate in the maritime and air space affecting Japanese security."

The Chinese game in this regard is especially important to recognize. Although the Chinese leadership has made their intentions quite clear about expanding their military capabilities and regional and global reach, Western powers continue to call for increased "transparency" with regard to Chinese intentions.

"Transparency" is nice, but capabilities to counter any misperceptions by the Chinese are better. And the Japanese White Paper is clear on both. It is important to Japan to work with allies and to work with the Chinese in shaping a more effective and more stable security situation in the neighborhood.

Wishful thinking is just that -- and apparently the Japanese did not require a J-20 flying over the head of their Defense Minister to get this point. Again according to the White Paper:

"Defense capabilities are Japan's ultimate guarantee for security, expressing the will and capacity of Japan to defend against foreign invasions. In this way, the function of defense capabilities cannot be substituted by any other method. For this reason, defense capabilities are vital for en-

suring an appropriate response to various contingencies arising from the security challenges and destabilizing factors, which are diverse, complex, and intertwined."

Singapore: Shaping an IKC2 Force

Technically a US partner, rather than a formal treaty ally, Singapore is a non-aligned power with close military ties to the United States, close economic and cultural ties to China, and close political ties to both. The city-state depends on the security of maritime trade and of the global commons.

The Singaporeans have built a modern naval and air force and are investing in its further modernization. Their efforts are founded on working with Western countries and firms in shaping an effective modernization strategy. And they are seeking to ensure that the force is well integrated and networked. Their concept for doing so is called an Integrated Knowledge Command and Control Concept, which is their version of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).

This concept is well articulated on Singapore's Ministry of Defense website:

"On the ground and in the jungles, the SAF [Singapore Armed Forces] will transform into a lean, networked and lethal fighting force while staying focused on the new security challenges. It will employ new technologies, such as precision fire, advanced communications and information technology, as well as unmanned vehicles, to defeat potential adversaries. At the same time, innovative warfighting concepts in combined arms operations, urban fighting and infantry fieldcraft will be introduced in tandem to provide the SAF with the operational edge.

"Out at sea, the SAF will achieve potent three-dimensional fighting capabilities in the air, on the surface, and under the sea. Its ships will also have the command and control capability to conduct seamless operations as an integrated force with aircraft and land forces, through effective use of advanced communications and information technology, while leveraging on platform strengths. The SAF should thus be ready to meet the full spectrum of maritime threats, including small, fast-moving boats in the littorals that can otherwise pose a tremendous challenge to traditional naval forces.

"In the air, the SAF will achieve Air Dominance through the coordinated employment of fighters, unmanned air vehicles and airborne surveillance aircraft, which are integrated through real-time knowledge-based systems and networks. The networked force will have comprehensive situational awareness that gives the critical edge in air operations. The SAF will also marry advanced surveillance and strike capabilities over surface threats, including elusive targets that may be concealed under foliage or ships out on open sea.

"Finally, tying all these air, land and sea capabilities together into a synergistic whole is the concept of Integrated Knowledge-based Command and Control (IKC2). The concept gives commanders and soldiers the ability to see first, see more; understand better; decide faster; so that they can act decisively to achieve victory. This is achieved by leveraging on networks of sensors, shooters and communications to provide comprehensive awareness and self-synchronization on the battlefield. The networks also provide wells of information, which will also be translated

into relevant knowledge for superior decision-making to achieve precise effects, and effectively shape the battlefield."

Shaping as integrated a force as possible is central to Singapore to deal with a wide-range of defense and security needs. And they are doing so in the face of the rise of China.

To quote Singapore based strategic analyst, Richard Bitzinger:

"Singapore is non-aligned. But it operates closely with the United States and allies in the region. They buy Western equipment, provide a leasing arrangement for the US navy to operate in Singapore and train in several allied facilities in the region. They train for tank warfare in Australia, they train for jungle warfare in Brunei, they do infantry training in Taiwan, fighter training in the U.S. and have a working relationship for training in France.

"At the same time, they have close economic and political ties with China. A balancing act is central to Singapore's security policies in the region.

"There has been a clear shift in the past few years. Prior to this period, the main focus of military modernization for Singapore has been upon dynamics in Southeast Asia, and preparing for threats from countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Now this concern is being superseded by the perceived need to deal with the military rise of China."

But Bitzinger cautions that the pivot to the Pacific has not lived up to its requirements.

"To date, allies in the region are disappointed about what they see as the realities of more rhetoric than reality in US policy. But make no mistake. The allies in the region cannot counter China by themselves, and are looking to the United States to play a key role in this effort."

Australia: Re-shaping Defense Down Under

The Australian government has recognized the need to re-shape defense capabilities to deal with new Pacific realities. The 2009 White Paper projected a significant augmentation of Australian ability to play a significant role in Australian, regional, and global defense operations in partnership with their allies, primarily the United States.

Australia envisages new platforms to its forces, such as the just recently received fifth Airbus tanker. Australia has developed some very interesting capabilities such as a new radar system on its frigates, which combine indigenous development with working arrangements with US companies.

The HMAS Perth participated in the recent RIMPAC 2012 exercise and demonstrated its new AESA capabilities at sea in extremely high sea states. This type of commitment is a key part of shaping 21st century Australian capabilities.

Two challenges are facing the Aussies as they shape the future.

First, there are funding challenges but their funding challenge is a reluctance to spend a surplus. Such reluctance may well shape an inability of Australia to defend itself if taken to extremes.

As the well respected Australian analyst, Air Vice-Marshal (Ret.) John Blackburn, now the Chairman of the influential think tank, the Kokoda Foundation, underscored in a recent interview:

"Unfortunately, the Defense Plan has not been fully funded.

"With the scale of deferral of funding and the reductions announced in the 2012 defense budget, Australians are now spending a smaller percentage of our GDP on defense that at any time in past 20 years. Having said that, we are still spending considerable sums on defense in comparison to our regional neighbors, but not enough to implement the ambitious 2009 plan.

"But the other challenge is very relevant to what kind of leadership the US brings to the party. If the US goes down the platform centric acquisition route, we will run out of capability more rapidly than we run out of capability. An alternative approach is evident in the Aussie case – the need to build a more integrated force, perhaps along the lines envisaged by Singapore."

Blackburn added:

"You have written that no platform fights alone. That is an essential key to get through to the wider public audience and to our political leaders.

"Buying the F-35 is a crucial piece of the puzzle, but understanding that the aircraft is an enabler of the network or the honeycomb is essential to shaping the total design of our Defense Forces.

"We need to help people understand that an effective force is not the platforms by themselves, but the effectiveness of the platforms as a part of a larger networked or 'honeycombed' force. Such a force will not be just Australian or American – it will be an alliance force enable by a common grid framework ... if we design it as such."

Conclusion: Time to Get Serious about Synergy

In short, the US and its allies face a fluid situation in the Pacific. But Chinese intentions are not abstract or unknown. Their recent e-passport policy whereby they assert their claims to territory in Asia as a cost of entering the country could not be clearer.

As the well-known global analyst D.K. Matai has warned: "As China's military and economic influence has grown throughout the world, Beijing appears to have become bolder, brasher and more brazen in its claim to territories believed to be rich with oil and natural gas across the Asia-Pacific. The latest attempt to achieve just that is the watermark on China's new e-passports depicting its map, which has ended up insulting and offending most of its sovereign neighbors."

The challenge is how to deal with your leading trade partner while deterring them as your major pressure power in the region and beyond. Our allies are shaping their approaches accordingly. We need to find successful synergies with them to counter the Chinese power play.

Why Air Force Needs Lots of F-35s: General Hostage on the 'Combat Cloud'

Published January 10, 203

by Robbin Laird and Lt. General (Retired) Deptula

Technology is not enough. What's equally essential is ideas for how to use it. Wielding new weapons in the same old way is a recipe for defeat. As the US military today invests in innovative programs, none larger than the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, it must also invent innovative concepts of operation.

The Air Force's point man on global deployments is Gen. Michael Hostage, head of Langely, Va.-based Air Combat Command. Recently, two members of the AOL Defense Board of Contributors, Dr. Robbin Laird and retired Air Force Lt. Gen. David Deptula, sat down with Hostage to discuss not just the new weapons systems, but a new vision of how to use them, an emerging concept of operations that Gen. Hostage calls "the combat cloud."

Instead of focusing on individual planes, squadrons, or "strike packages" executing a particular mission, the new concept looks at all the deployed aircraft as a whole, linked together by secure wireless networks into the "combat cloud." This cloud would be enabled by "fifth generation" aircraft -- specifically F-22s and a substantial number of F-35s -- and their ability to connect electronically both to each other and to legacy aircraft. This critical connectivity would be built in to any systems added in the future, such as the proposed long-range intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) and strike aircraft.

What follows is an edited excerpt from Laird and Deptula's conversation with Gen. Hostage.

Laird & Deptula: How important are the 5th generation aircraft to shaping the "combat cloud" which you see as essential to the next phase of air combat capabilities?

Hostage: They are central to the transition. We are operating in contested airspace and need to shape a distributed air operations capability. The F-22s aggregated in appropriate numbers can

do some amazing and essential tasks, and with a significant number of F-35s, we can reshape the operational space.

The ability of the planes to work with each other over a secure distributed battlespace is the essential foundation from which the air combat cloud can be built.

And the advantage of the F-35 is the nature of the global fleet. Allied and American F-35s, whether USAF, USN, or USMC, can talk with one another and set up the distributed operational system. Such a development can allow for significant innovation in shaping the air combat cloud for distributed operations in support of the Joint Force Commander.

Laird & Deptula: Historically, the evolution of aircraft has been described in terms of change in the form factor [i.e. their visible, physical size and shape, rather than their invisible, internal electronics]. This is really changing with the F-35. What is your thinking on the impact of this change and the introduction of software-upgradeable aircraft?

Hostage: The 5th generation aircraft will enable the air combat cloud and allow me to use my legacy assets differently. Many of my 4th generation fighters can be used to extend the network of linked systems, providing reinforcing fires, and I can focus on the 5th generation assets as the core nodes shaping distributed joint capabilities.

And when we come to the evolution of "next" generation systems, the form factor could stay quite similar as we evolve the capabilities within the planes or in terms of how the flying systems can interact and operate together.

Rather than thinking of 6th generation aircraft in form factor terms, we can operate the new air combat cloud and leverage that moving forward.

Laird & Deptula: How important are numbers for the F-35 from this perspective?

Hostage: Very important. It is not a boutique aircraft. The full impact of the F-35 aircraft comes with its fleet operational capabilities for the enablement of the air combat cloud.

Another advantage of the F-35 is that is built to evolve over time as the environment evolves. Software and hardware upgradeability will allow changes over time to the fleet, not just individual aircraft.

Laird & Deptula: In other words, your focus on the air combat cloud is joined at the hip with an emphasis on shaping distributed operational capabilities. The two meet in a fundamental

reality-21st century air operations need to be re-shaped to ensure mission success in the period ahead. It is distributed; it is global; and it is about connectivity across a distributed battlespace.

Laird & Deptula: How is the legacy of the past decade in air forces operating in conjunction with ground forces in Iraq and Afghanistan to be carried forward with this approach?

Hostage: It will be important to be able to deliver situational awareness to the ground element but it cannot be done the same way as we have done it over the past decade.

For example, the preponderance of our current fleet of MQ-1s [Predators] and -9s [Reapers] that are so effective in the permissive airspace over Afghanistan and other locations in the mid-east simply may not be transferable to the vast expanses of the Pacific or in contested airspace. The right kind of RPAs [remotely piloted aircraft, aka UAVs or drones] can make a contribution, but again it will be as part of the air combat cloud which defines the role of the RPAs, not the other way around.

In contested airspace and in the operational area of the Pacific, the same means certainly could not achieve the same ends. With a 5th generation-enabled combat capability, one could put the pieces in place to deliver the operational situational awareness critical to joint forces, but this would be difficult if one does not have the 5th generation aircraft in the numbers required.

China, Korea, and the F-35: Reshaping US Forces for a Pacific Strategy

Published February 1, 2013

by Robbin Laird

If the US fails to innovate in its re-shaping of its forces in the Pacific, it cannot effectively play the crucial role which is essential to a strategy focused on our allies. Without innovation, the US cannot protect its interests in the Pacific, ranging from the Arctic to Australia, and will lose the significant economic benefits which presence and protection of our interests provide.

The protection of the US and its allies is valuable in and of itself. But it is inextricably intertwined with the economic viability of the United States in the Pacific and beyond. As the Commandant of the USMC, Gen. James Amos, has underscored: "From our allies' perspective, virtual presence is actual absence."

In particular, as Gen. Charles Jacoby of NORTHCOM adds: "Our presence in the Arctic is crucial to shape our future in the region. Without security and defense, there is little probability of effective commercial development or ability to protect the environment."

Persistent Presence

Presence is the bedrock of Pacific operations. Given the immensity of the Pacific, presence is also a challenge. Keeping assets back in the United States may have made sense in preparing for World War III, but it makes little sense in the realities of the evolving Pacific strategic environment.

Presence following a 20th century model is impossible. The US does not have enough assets to provide for the extensive coverage which the Pacific requires: The numbers of ships and planes alone has gone down dramatically over the past 15 years.

The challenge of persistent presence was well articulated by Lt. General Terry Robling, the highest ranking Marine in the Pacific, in an earlier interview with us:

"Distance means that I need to have assets forward deployed and operational. This means, for the USMC, an ability to train with partners and allies in what you have called the strategic quadrangle. This means an ability to have enough capable amphibious ships forward deployed to operate with those partners and allies.

"Seabasing is a key element of providing persistent presence.

"And amphibious ships are really part of a whole sea-basing capability and engagement capability. The amphibious requirement in the Pacific goes well beyond our support to South Korea. It is a key element in building partnership capacity and overcoming presence gaps and needs. This is why we need more platforms and more capable platforms of the sort we are building now.

"Many of our partners in the region do not want us to be the Uncle that visited and never returned home. They want us engaged and present but not permanently based in their countries. This means that seabasing and its augmentation is a fundamental requirement.

"When we add strategic lift aircraft, high-speed vessels, or super ferries to the ARG-MEU [Amphibious Ready Group / Marine Expeditionary Unit] lift equation, we extend our strategic reach and significantly enhance our ability to enhance partnership capacity."

Dealing with China

At the same time, the growing importance of the Arctic and the rising power of China have changed the strategic meaning of presence. In the far north, Washington's inability to commit resources to Artic presence guarantees that others will benefit from the Arctic at our expense Across the region, the Chinese are pushing out from their mainland to engage in the Pacific and to influence the key players in the region.

Constraining Chinese engagement in the Pacific is a key task facing the US and its allies. In fact, the Chinese military strategy in the Pacific is similar to the Chinese game of Go, in which players' pieces do not clash directly, as in Western chess, but compete for position to control strategic territory.

To have the upper hand with the Chinese in 21st century strategic engagement, what is crucial is a new kind of presence, linked with highly interoperable, Lego-like blocks able to work with allies, which allow for scalable forces with reachback to US capabilities in the littoral and the homeland.

Strategic Directions

The bottom line: The US force needs to be highly connected and interoperable with its allies. We are not there, not yet, but we can leverage new systems coming on line to increase dramatically our capability to get there. One should measure force development by the strategic goals one wants to reach, not simply in terms of maintaining old systems, which reflected historic strategies and engagements.

Some describe the central threat against which the US must configure its forces as something called A2D2: Anti-Access, Anti-Denial. But the challenger needs to be named: It's China. We do not need a generic strategy, strategy in a vacuum. We need a strategy to prevail against what the Chinese are doing and likely to do. And the we need to be much clearer about the threat: it is about missiles, their evolution, and the need to combine defense with offense in dealing with these evolving missile threats.

The strategy also needs to address nuclear deterrence. The North Koreans and the Chinese are clearly relying more rather than less on nuclear deterrence to pressure Asians and Americans simultaneously. Many Americans want to pretend that nukes are off the board as a strategic asset, but we have entered what Paul Bracken has called "the second nuclear age."

The Defense of South Korea

To illustrate what we could do to shape an effective strategy, I am going to look at two "cases": reworking South Korean defense and leveraging the F-35 global fleet as a strategic asset.

We are in the throes of change in our relationships with our South Korean ally and the North Korean threat as well. By 2015, we are scheduled to alter the command relationships in South Korea to put the South Koreans in a greater position to command their own forces and to shape the allied capability to deal with the North Korean threat.

From the US side, this means that there is a strategic opportunity as well to re-shape South Korean and American forces to contribute more to regional defense and to redesign forces which are currently designed more for static Sitzkreig than for dynamic defense. The Japanese have captured the right concept: allies need to enhance their dynamic defense. And for the US, such developments provide the opportunity to link to the type of forces Gen. Robling discussed earlier.

In an exclusive interview with us, the Commander of the 7th US Air Force, Lt. General Jan-Marc Jouas, underscored the nature of the challenge and the possibilities for transition.

"We need to be able to attack in depth. We also need to be able to attack at the forward edge of the battle space. We need to be operating against targets that will create not just tactical effects, but operational and strategic. We need to be operating cross domain, and by that I mean kinetic and non-kinetic effects, one reinforcing the other.

"One of our greatest advantages is our air operation center that will oversee the entire air campaign, and where I will be situated as the air component commander.

"And any deployment of F-35s to the Korean peninsula will clearly modify the template, including the Marine Corps F-35B.

"The Seventh Air Force relationship with the Marine Corps is the best I've ever seen. Their aircraft will be dedicated to the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) at some point, but before then, they will be used as part of our air campaign to the greatest effect that we can deliver.

"The F-35A, B, and C will give us greater flexibility, and greater options in terms of where and how we can operate."

This leads then to the potential strategic impact of joint deployments and developments of the F-35 throughout the region. The F-35 is a C2 (command-and-control) and IW (Information War-

fare) aircraft. But it is when the US deploys the F-35 in numbers that we will see the strategic impact of a tactical aircraft.

The discussion of the shift from 4th to 5th generation aircraft has often missed the point of what the impact of deploying a significant number of F-35s in a region as central as the Pacific could have on the U.S. and its allies. The F-35 can play the role of a linchpin in a 21st century Pacific strategy which is centered on and enabled by our allies. Indeed, the F-35 as a lynchpin to interactive allied and American capabilities intersect nicely with the overall strategy whereby the United States is the key lynchpin power in the allied coalitions of the Pacific.

The concepts of operations underlying a new approach to providing lynchpin capabilities are built around the F-35.

Presence, scalability, and reachback are solid foundations for the kind of deterrence necessary in the evolving strategic environment in the Pacific.

The F-35 as an Allied and American fleet brings several key and core capabilities to shaping a new attack/defense enterprise, one which allows the US to play a key lynchpin role and yet, at the same time puts allies in the lead to defend themselves and their own interests.

A global fleet of F-35s in the Pacific provides several significant contributions to shaping a 21st century strategy: a networked fleet, significant interoperability, multiple and diversified basing, enabling a wolfpack operational approach to leverage best value out of deployed assets, and a globally sustained fleet.

I have developed these concepts elsewhere, but will focus here simply on one key element: a globally sustained fleet.

The entire approach of the F-35 enables the sustainment of the fleet in radically different ways from the past. And it is coming at a time when economic pressures create such a need; but if new approaches are not taken money will be invested in maintaining less effective forces.

The F-35 global sustainment approach allows for a more effective and dynamic force at less cost than operating a legacy fleet. At the heart of the new model is an inherent capability to leverage logistics hubs throughout the Pacific to create a seamless system to sustain both allied and American planes.

Presence from this perspective has a whole different meaning. Hub sustainment means that the US can surge aircraft to the region and have them be supported during surge operations with-

out having to haul its sustainment assets forward with the surged aircraft, which is the requirement currently.

Building a training and sustainment infrastructure in the Pacific -- with hubs and ranges in Canada and Australia, and hubs in Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam -- provides an opportunity to re-shape how sustainment can be done in around the world.

This will bring with it a significant boost to sortie rates and hence operational capabilities.

Conclusion: We Must All Hang Together, Or...

The shaping of an effective Pacific strategy provides an opening and opportunity for the United States and its allies. If the US and its allies can find ways to shape congruent capabilities and approaches, we can meet the central challenge in the region: the expansion of China into the broader Pacific.

If we don't, we will have ignored Ben Franklin's warning at the signing of the Declaration of Independence: "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

There is clearly no guarantee that we will be effective or smart. And even if we are on the cusp of deploying new systems, there are significant obstacles to understanding what we really could do with them. The rush to the past is often more powerful than the drive to embrace change or to understand the challenge of innovation for a new century.

Note: Many of these themes will be examined in our book (by Robbin Laird, Ed Timperlake and Richard Weitz) *Rebuilding American Military Power in the Pacific: A 21st Century Strategy,* to be published by Praeger Publishers next year.