



Tanks, fighting vehicles, and troops of Japanese Ground, Sea, and Air Self-Defense Forces march in front of viewing stands 23 October 2016 during the Armed Forces Day military parade at the Ground Self-Defense Forces Asaka training ground north of Tokyo. (Photo by Natsuki Sakai, AFLO via Alamy Live News)

# The Impact of Base Politics on Long-Range Precision Fires

## A Closer Look at Japan

Maj. Richard M. Pazdzierski, U.S. Army

*It was crystal clear to me that the future and, indeed, the very existence of America, were irrevocably entwined with Asia and its island outposts.*

—Gen. Douglas MacArthur

**A**fter withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) in August 2019, the Trump administration believed it was better postured to close the “missile gap” with the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which rapidly modernized its ground-launched missile program over the past two decades. The Department of Defense (DOD) estimates the PRC now has more than 1,250 ground-launched ballistic missiles and ground-launched cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers.<sup>1</sup> The United States, on the other hand, does not currently field any conventional ground-launched ballistic missiles or ground-launched cruise missiles in order to abide by the Senate-approved INF Treaty since 1987—a treaty that applied to the United States and Russia but not the PRC. U.S. defense circles are looking for ways to reestablish escalation dominance in the Western Pacific through long-range precision fires (LRPF), including new missile technology with ranges previously banned by the INF Treaty.

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Among the U.S. Armed Forces, the Army took a leading role in researching and developing new capabilities for militarily competing with the PRC by way of the fires warfighting function. Army leadership announced LRPF as the Army’s top modernization priority in October 2017. The LRPF cross-functional team (CFT) later confirmed that a new portfolio of strategic, midrange,

and short-range fires capabilities would begin fielding by 2023.<sup>2</sup> In addition to ground-based launcher and missile technology, the CFT is also analyzing the corresponding doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and policy solutions of the LRPF program when conducting capability-based assessments. Mission command and targeting solutions, for example, will also be essential for integrating sensor data into an efficient decision-making system and enable the Army’s future LRPF units to operate as part of a joint force.

While defense analysts continue to debate over the optimization of LRPF technology and doctrine, especially in the great-power competition with Russia, some of the unanswerable questions relate to the deployment of LRPF capabilities to the western Pacific. Compared to Europe, the maritime domain makes up a much larger proportion of the Indo-Pacific’s area of operations and complicates the battlefield calculus for the Army. Even if the Army is on a glidepath to develop successful new LRPF technology, questions remain as to where in Asia the United States will deploy such capabilities and whether LRPF platforms should be permanently based or expeditionary. Japan emerged as a leading candidate site for new U.S. LRPF capabilities due to the nation’s geostrategic position vis-à-vis China. However, the Japanese government has yet to indicate its willingness to accept a post-INF, U.S. missile posture on Japanese territory. While the Army’s materiel and doctrinal modernization efforts for LRPF are in full swing, Japan’s post-INF policy debate has just begun.

Both before and after the United States withdrew from the INF Treaty, numerous foreign policy and security commentators pointed out the potential diplomatic challenges associated with building up the United States’ ground-based missile forces in the western Pacific.<sup>3</sup> Analyzing Japan’s defense modernization efforts over the past decade will better forecast its political will for supporting the deployment of U.S. strike capabilities. Japan’s domestic base politics impacted the security aspects of the U.S.-Japan alliance for many decades, particularly the operational efficiency of Japan-based U.S. forces and Japan’s own Self-Defense Force (SDF). Japan’s political culture surrounding military bases and exercises will likely have a significant impact on the Army’s ability to train, fight, and win with long-range precision strike capabilities intended to deploy to Japan.

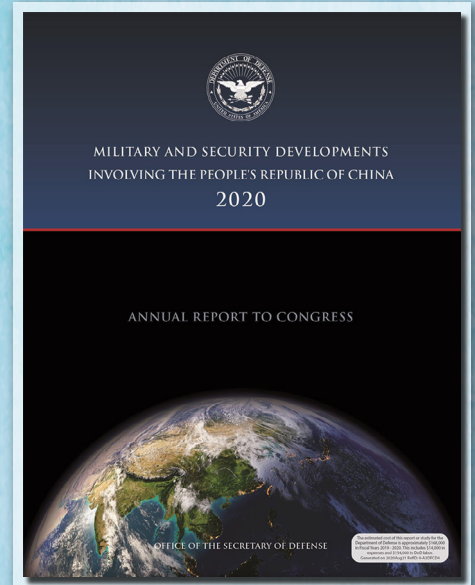


## Strategic Context

Since the end of the Cold War, the PRC gradually modernized its military through a strategy aimed at improving antiaccess/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Chinese strategists refer to these capabilities as part of the PRC's "counter-intervention operations."<sup>4</sup> The superiority of the U.S. Navy dominated the seas since World War II and convinced Chinese defense planners to pursue an offset strategy that underscored high-technology warfare to counter existing U.S. strengths. The People's Liberation Army's (PLA) operational- and tactical-level objectives are now contingent on offensive capabilities designed to gain the military initiative and prevent opposing forces from entering the western Pacific battlespace. As a separate branch of the Chinese military, the PLA Rocket Force took control of China's strategic missiles in 2016 and assumed the PLA's primary responsibilities for nuclear deterrence and precision conventional strikes that are core components of China's A2/AD strategy.

The PLA's A2/AD capabilities did not evolve overnight. The U.S. military's operational myopia in the Middle East preoccupied much of the U.S. defense establishment with counterinsurgency operations instead of a conventional, near-peer threat. It was not until 2006 that the DOD's *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* pointed to China as having the "greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States."<sup>5</sup> By the time the United States withdrew from the INF Treaty over a decade later, the PRC already boasted an array of formidable A2/AD capabilities including shore-based antiship missiles, unmanned aircraft, surface-to-air missiles, and long-range sensors. In the land domain, the proliferation of the PRC's ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles shifted the western Pacific's security environment and altered the deterrence calculus facing the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Among the most stressing scenarios analyzed by U.S. military planners involves the PLA launching a missile strike campaign to coerce Taiwan into submitting to the PRC's political demands. In this scenario, the PLA would neutralize Taiwan's command-and-control network through an arsenal of land, ship, and aircraft-launched missiles while simultaneously threatening U.S. and allied forces to deter their entry into the conflict. The PRC positioned its LRPF to hold U.S. and allied ports, airfields, facilities, and personnel in key terrain of the Indo-Pacific region at risk, and the DOD recognizes that the PRC's current supremacy in ground-launched missiles



## United States Strategic Assessment of the People's Republic of China

For those readers interested in learning more about the 2020 U.S. Department of Defense's assessment of the threats posed by strategic competition with China, your attention is invited to the *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020*. This publication provides a summary of policy concerns and overview of key global initiatives guided by implementation of the *National Security Strategy* as it specifically applies to the People's Republic of China. To view this document, visit <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.



significantly threatens allied forces stationed in Japan during such a scenario.<sup>6</sup> The PLA could engage targets in Japan to achieve air and maritime superiority during a localized conflict involving Taiwan.

Since potential enemies geographically surround the PRC, it seeks to avoid a long-duration conflict by accomplishing a quick, decisive transformation of its territorial claims. The greatest challenge for U.S. forces is building up combat power and rapidly counterattacking against PLA forces deploying from China's mainland. U.S. forces located outside of the western Pacific must traverse the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean to defend its allies and partners, and such long distances come along the associated problem sets of logistics and timeliness. When considering China's technological asymmetry in ground-launched missiles and U.S. challenges in moving combat power rapidly into the region, the PRC now has more confidence in its own conventional and nuclear deterrence as it seeks to protect its national interests.

## What the U.S. Army Is Doing

In response to China's missile force improvements, the DOD is pursuing counterforce capabilities that can find, destroy, or disable the PRC's integrated A2/AD network. The INF Treaty's termination opened

new conventional deterrence options for consideration, and thus LRPF remains the Army's priority modernization effort. The PLA depends on strategic depth for its offensive assets' survivability, so allied long-range precision strike capabilities are necessary to offset the continental-based systems behind China's A2/AD network. Long-range strikes against actual transporter erector launchers are nearly impossible due to the launchers' mobility and concealability. Still, the Army's LRPF capabilities can instead aim to neutralize the PLA's command-and-control nodes, airfields, ports, air defense, and other stationary, war-supporting targets on mainland China. The Army's LRPF CFT is brainstorming solutions within an overall joint concept to attack the entire kill chain that enables the PLA's A2/AD network.

From a technological standpoint, the Army made notable progress in its LRPF program since emerging





as a modernization priority in 2017. In December 2020, the Extended Range Cannon Artillery system successfully hit a target seventy kilometers away during testing.<sup>7</sup> The LRPF CFT expects to field the precision strike missile (PrSM) as a replacement for the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) in fiscal year 2023,

strategic range programs like the Strategic Long-Range Cannon are very ambitious and may never materialize as a program of record, but ground-based fires will endure as the Army's main modernization effort for improving power projection in both Europe and the Indo-Pacific.

“Instead of competing with the Navy or Air Force, the Army's long-range strike capabilities mean to complement the joint force, as ground-launched missiles offer several benefits over air- or sea-launched systems.”

with ATACMS currently the Army's longest-range surface-to-surface missile at three hundred kilometers.<sup>8</sup> The PrSM will extend the Army's midrange missile range to five hundred kilometers and fire from the same launchers as the ATACMS. Within the midrange portfolio, the Army is also pursuing ground-launched antiship missiles to restore the Army's ship-killing capabilities that it once had prior to World War II. The Army successfully fired a Naval Strike Missile at a decommissioned ship from a Palletized Load System truck during the Rim of Pacific 2018 exercise.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the PrSM or the Extended Range Cannon Artillery system, the antiship program has no exact fielding date as the LRPF CFT continues to improve the antiship missile's moving target capability.

In addition to new midrange surface-to-surface fires, the LRPF CFT is also advancing its long-range strike portfolio to hit targets at strategic ranges. The Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon will enter service as a prototype battery of four launchers in 2023, and this new system employs rocket-powered, boost-glide missiles that soldiers would fire from Army trucks.<sup>10</sup> Another LRPF project receiving significant attention is the Army's Strategic Long-Range Cannon, which seeks to fire rocket-boosted projectiles at ranges over 1,500 kilometers.<sup>11</sup> The LRPF CFT acknowledges that

Instead of competing with the Navy or Air Force, the Army's long-range strike capabilities mean to complement the joint force, as ground-launched missiles offer several benefits over air- or sea-launched systems. Ground-launched platforms are much cheaper than missile-equipped destroyers, submarines, or aircraft. Ground-based launchers are also road-mobile and concealable and can serve as a more difficult target for opposing forces when compared to aircraft or ships. Army platforms could also be colocated near a stockpile of war-ready missiles and support longer-duration fire missions. The U.S. Navy lacks the capability to reload the vertical launch systems on its vessels, and this limits the number of land-attack missiles American ships can carry over water as these vessels must also carry antiship missiles and surface-to-air missiles (SAM) for self-defense.<sup>12</sup> U.S. aircraft face similar limitations in terms of payload, and reloading aircraft at airbases is more time-consuming than reloading a transporter erector launcher.

Perhaps the biggest advantage of the western Pacific's A2/AD fight is that ground launchers can be forward deployed as part of a pre-positioned LRPF network to avoid longer deployment times. Ground-based launchers forward deployed under a “fight tonight” readiness posture would do more to deter

**Previous page:** The U.S. Army conducts developmental testing of multiple facets of the Extended Range Cannon Artillery project 18 November 2018 at Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona. From artillery shells to the longer cannon tube and larger firing chamber for the improved howitzer, the ammunition plant at Yuma Proving Ground has been instrumental in building multiple experimental formulations, shapes, and configurations for new propelling charges to accommodate improved projectiles. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Katherine Cottingham, U.S. Marines)

China from executing a surprise salvo attack than a strike force needing to deploy from Guam or Hawaii. If ground launcher units must deploy into the western Pacific from outside the first island chain, they would face the same threats that currently confront U.S. ships and aircraft operating in the Pacific's maritime and air domains.

From a strategic standpoint, forward-positioning ground-launched fires on allied territory offer other indirect ways of deterring China's ambitions to conduct a surprise attack. Forward-deployed LRPF capabilities could increase a U.S. ally's confidence that America stands ready against Chinese coercion while raising the standard for an ally's contribution to collective defense. As pointed out by Takahashi Sugio and Eric Sayers, ground-launched systems that put the PRC's interior at risk would divert the PRC's attention away from offensive capabilities and force greater Chinese investment into missile defense.<sup>13</sup> Forward-deployed U.S. missiles could instigate an expensive arms race and pressure the PRC to deliberate an arms control regime, similar to how the Army's Pershing II deployments to Europe swayed the Soviet Union into INF Treaty negotiations during the 1980s.<sup>14</sup>

Ground-launched cruise missiles and ballistic missiles have the potential to restore the United States' escalation dominance in the western Pacific but only if such capabilities can be deployed to the locations that facilitate shorter deployment times, concealment, and the targeting of the PRC's rear-area forces with a high-level of accuracy. A former U.S. secretary of defense and other top DOD officials suggested Japan as an optimal deployment site for the Indo-Pacific's future LRPF units, but diplomatic efforts will be necessary to ensure such a strategy is politically feasible.<sup>15</sup> To forecast how Japan's government and public will react to the Army's emerging technology discussed above, it is important to understand the politics surrounding Japan's own defense efforts to counter China's A2/AD bubble over the past decade, especially the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force's (GSDF) "Southwestern Wall."

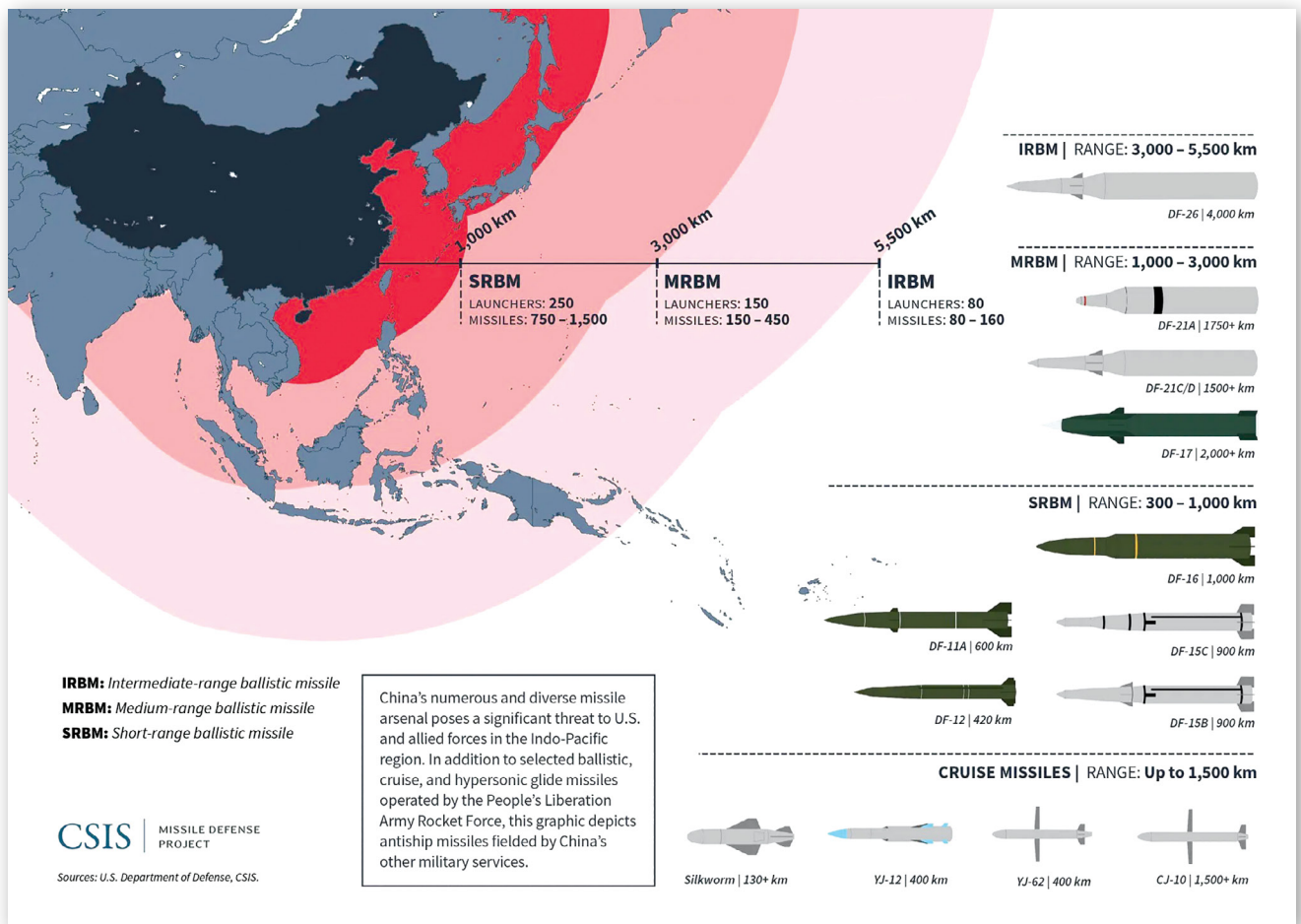
## What Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force Is Doing

By the early 2000s, Japanese defense specialists concurred that Japan's geography was a critical part of China's calculus for achieving the long-term objectives

of its A2/AD strategy.<sup>16</sup> The PLA's capacity to dominate the region's sea lanes of communication, seize PRC-claimed territories, and prevent allied forces from mounting counteroffensive operations is contingent on controlling key terrain in the first island chain and neutralizing allied combat power positioned on Japanese territory. In 2010, Japan's cabinet approved the *2010 National Defense Program Guidelines*, which stipulated how the SDF would replace its "Basic Defense Force" with a new concept called a "Dynamic Defense Force." The new concept aimed to deter threats to Japan's southwest islands by improving the SDF's surveillance, rapid deployment, and power projection capabilities.<sup>17</sup> The 2010 guidelines reordered the SDF's overall mission priorities by moving "attacks on offshore islands" up to the SDF's second overall priority behind ensuring the security of Japan's sea and air space. Both priorities reflected the longer-term view of defending Japan's southwestern islands as part of an intense, A2/AD-like conflict situation that may occur among the United States, China, and Taiwan.

To improve the GSDF's power projection and surveillance capabilities to deal with new threats, the GSDF—one of the three SDF branches—reorganized its Cold War-era force posture by reducing troops stationed in Japan's northern region of Hokkaido and augmenting the GSDF's footprint on the southwestern islands of Okinawa. The GSDF established a new coastal observation unit on Yonaguni Island in 2016, which was the first new SDF facility constructed in Okinawa since the prefecture's 1972 reversion to Japanese sovereignty. Yonaguni is the westernmost edge of Japan and is located just 110 kilometers from Taiwan. In 2019, the SDF completed the deployment of other units to the islands of Miyako-jima and Amami Oshima. These two locations host newly formed SAM batteries of the Air Self-Defense Force and antiship cruise missile batteries of the GSDF. There is another set of SAM and antiship cruise missile batteries scheduled to deploy to Ishigaki Island sometime in 2021, which is the municipality with administrative jurisdiction over the Senkaku Islands. Japan's defense strategists hoped that these new SDF camps and ground-launched fires would create a "Southwestern Wall" and close the gaps among Japan's numerous undefended straits throughout Okinawa.<sup>18</sup>

In another line of effort, the GSDF has been investing resources into new transport platforms for



(Graphic courtesy of Missile Defense Project, "Missiles of China," Missile Threat, Center for Strategic and International Studies, last modified 16 July 2020, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/china/>)

## China's Regional Missile Threat

rapidly deploying troops during a contingency. The GSDF formally established Japan's first amphibious rapid deployment brigade (ARDB) in 2018, which operates assault amphibious vehicles (AAV) based out of Camp Ainoora on Japan's southwest island of Kyushu. The GSDF also procured CH-47 JA and V-22 Osprey transport helicopters to support ground units' rapid deployment.<sup>19</sup> The ARDB's primary purpose is to dissuade China from seizing Japan's remote islands during a low-scale conflict or gray-zone scenario where PLA troops or heavily armed PRC "fishermen" embark on Japanese territory. By approving plans to acquire new equipment such as the AAV7 and Izumo-class helicopter carrier, the Government of Japan (GOJ) seemed willing to test the Japanese public's acceptance

of defense policies previously considered off-limits and "too offensively" oriented.

Although the INF Treaty did not prohibit U.S. allies from developing their own ground-launched missile systems, Japan never seriously considered acquiring such capabilities during the 1990s due to its decades-long pacifist identity, constitutional renunciation of war, and conciliatory diplomacy toward the PRC. Japan's defense planners, nonetheless, gradually came to appreciate the importance of missile defense systems and stand-off firepower like the Type-12 ASCM, Type-02 SAM, and Patriot Advanced Capability-3 systems that are currently fielded throughout Japan. Similar to the U.S. Army, the GSDF is now exploring medium-range antiship missiles, standoff hypersonic weapons, and other

improved LRPf capabilities to offset PLA advantages in the ground domain.<sup>20</sup> Japan's politicians recently began debating whether the SDF should have the capability to wage attacks against enemy bases with missile launchers.<sup>21</sup> U.S.-Japan security agreements traditionally left the SDF as the "shield" and the U.S. military as the "sword" responsible for offensive actions, but some

Camp Yonaguni did not begin operations until 2016. The seven-year deployment process was less a result of funding or construction timelines as it was due to a lengthy consensus-building process that featured Yonaguni's local government holding a referendum over whether to accept the SDF. Japan does not provide for any direct citizen participation in policy-

“ Japanese Defense Minister Kono Taro asserted that the Self-Defense Force's capability to mount a 'defensive first strike' against an enemy missile base would not violate Japan's pacifist constitution. ”

leaders in Japan argue that new missile technology blurs the line between offense and defense. In the summer of 2020, then Japanese Defense Minister Kono Taro asserted that the SDF's capability to mount a "defensive first strike" against an enemy missile base would not violate Japan's pacifist constitution.<sup>22</sup>

### Japan's Political Will in the A2/AD Fight

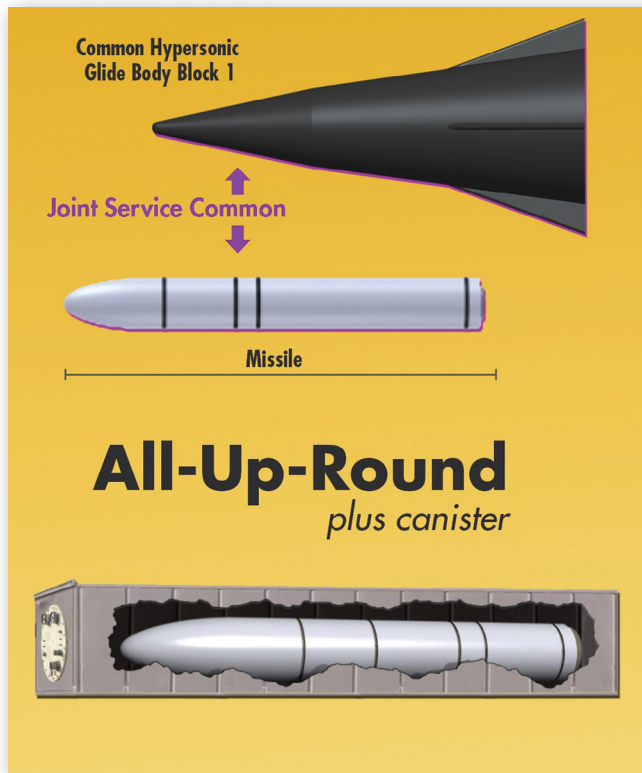
At first glance, Japan's security focus on the PLA and the shifting of resources into capabilities previously considered taboo may suggest that the timing is right for deploying the Army's LRPf platforms to Japan. Like most symbolic representations, however, the vision of Japan's defense establishment "normalizing" in the post-Cold War era overstates the case of Japan's security identity evolution and fails to understand the interface between defense strategy formulation and force management implementation. Despite the movement of pacifist parties toward the ideological center of Japan's political system since the 1990s, base construction and military personnel operating near residential areas remain very contentious issues in Japan. SDF efforts to build up Japan's "Southwestern Wall" and deploy troops to new localities faced many political obstacles as Japan's central government engaged in consensus building for the local acceptance of SDF troops.

Although defense strategists within the SDF proposed deploying a new surveillance unit to Japan's southwestern island of Yonaguni as early as 2009,

making at the national level, but its local autonomy law outlines that citizen-initiated referendums can serve as an instrument for Japan's localities to influence policy. The pro-base faction won the vote during Yonaguni's 2015 referendum, but the fact remains that Camp Yonaguni may never have happened if the referendum vote did not go the GOJ's way. Japan's central government does not exercise eminent domain in pursuit of force management strategies, and it was mainly Japan's Ministry of Defense (MOD) that drove negotiations with Yonaguni's locals. There was little involvement by Japan's elected lawmakers over the promotion of Camp Yonaguni, and the MOD's public relations campaign focused more on the GSDF base's potential for economic stimulus instead of the importance of Japan's surveillance capacity in the East China Sea.

In Miyako-jima, the MOD faced similar challenges when embarking on consensus-building efforts to gain local acceptance of new SDF camps. Unlike Camp Yonaguni, the GSDF facilities planned for Miyako-jima embodied a more kinetic force posture of missile launchers and troops designed to engage the PLA in the island's surrounding waters. Antibase factions rendered such a force posture at the central government's willingness to allow Miyako-jima to become an adversary's target during a conflict scenario.<sup>23</sup> The MOD and pro-SDF civic groups, in turn, refocused their public relations campaign on a narrative disconnected from the China threat and more focused on the potential financial advantages of

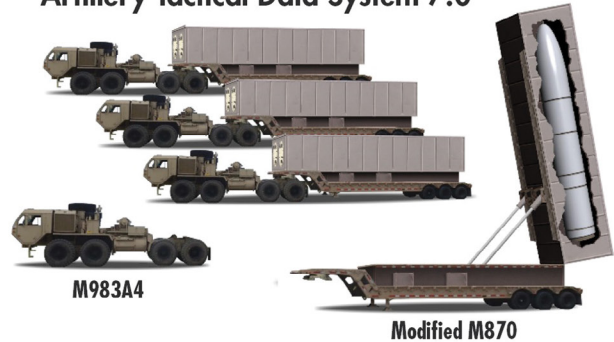




## Battery Operations Center



Block 1 integration: Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System 7.0



4 transporter erector launchers (TEL)  
2 rounds per TEL

The U.S. Army's Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office is developing a land-based, truck-launched system armed with hypersonic missiles that can travel well over 3,800 miles per hour. Extremely accurate, ultrafast, maneuverable, and survivable, hypersonic missiles can strike anywhere in the world within minutes. These weapons will provide a critical strategic weapon to counterbalance hypersonic capabilities that Chinese and Russian militaries already reportedly possess. (Graphic courtesy of the U.S. Army)

SDF presence for Miyako-jima's stagnant economy. The MOD found many local actors willing to cooperate and compromise over the SDF's deployment when negotiations involved subsidies and pledges to construct public infrastructure.<sup>24</sup>

Consensus-building efforts meant to implement force management plans often destabilize the U.S.-Japan alliance and capacity for the SDF to meet the operational objectives of centrally planned defense strategies. During Yonaguni's 2013 mayoral election, Yonaguni's antibase assembly members linked a U.S. military helicopter crash that occurred on Okinawa in August 2013 with the SDF's deployment plans to Yonaguni.<sup>25</sup> Controversies surrounding U.S. bases in Japan impact local sentiments toward a military presence in their municipality, so the MOD eventually promised Yonaguni's local government that there would be no joint U.S.-Japan military exercises on Yonaguni in exchange for local acceptance of the GSDF's coastal observation unit.

Japan's MOD faced similar challenges in ensuring the operational efficacy of a future SDF base in Miyako-jima, as opposition groups argued that the presence of missiles would violate local ordinances related to the storage of hazardous materials. Residents also voiced concerns over the future training exercises that Miyako-jima's SDF troops would conduct on the island. The MOD made several large concessions for Miyako-jima's mayor in return for a more supportive policy stance toward the SDF deployment, which included an agreement to select an alternate ammunition storage site despite the operational inefficacy of having GSDF troops separated from their missiles.<sup>26</sup> To address concerns about the base becoming "too kinetic," the MOD pledged that the ARDB would not conduct any training at Miyako-jima, and the SDF would refrain from using the island's ports as much as possible. There would also be no joint U.S.-Japan training exercises on the island, no heli-pad construction on the new base, and Camp Miyako's GSDF would conduct most of its training virtually.<sup>27</sup>

During the SDF's "Southwestern Wall" buildup over the past decade, the majority of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politicians were unwilling to devote significant political capital to promote the deployment of the SDF to new localities. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the executive leadership of conservative LDP politicians at the local levels of government did not automatically render a political

over the SDF's inability to deploy with mission-critical weapons—all suggesting that Japan's elected officials lack commitment over transforming defense strategy into actual defense force posture.

Japanese interest groups that are uneasy about worsening economic ties with the PRC exacerbate the GOJ's unwillingness to address base issues head-on. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) harshly criticized



(Graphic courtesy of the BBC)

## Disputed Territorial Claims between China and Japan

environment that welcomed SDF presence. Open disputes over base politics can damage the LDP's party label, so the majority of politicians avoid taking a particular policy stance in the hopes that MOD bureaucrats negotiate internal differences out of public view. The LDP was willing to postpone SDF deployment plans during Okinawa's contested 2014 local gubernatorial election, and there was little pushback

Japan's new military facilities in Okinawa's southwest islands and the establishment of the ARDB.<sup>28</sup> The CCP similarly voiced opposition to the United States contemplating missile deployments to the western Pacific this past year.<sup>29</sup> After witnessing South Korea succumb to the PRC's substantial economic penalties for accepting the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system in 2017, Japan's business groups (*keidanren*) would likely oppose



any defense posture that risks deteriorating Japan's relations with the PRC, especially in a post-COVID world of corporate leaders desperate for an economic recovery.

It is also important to point out that Japan's contemporary base politics issues are not confined to Okinawa, as demonstrated by the GOJ's recent cancellation of deployment plans for the ground-based Aegis Ashore missile defense systems to the Yamaguchi and Akita prefectures. Japan's Aegis Ashore deployment faced strong opposition from local governments and residents of both localities, and the MOD ultimately justified the cancellation because of "technical issues."<sup>30</sup> In another setback for the MOD, Saga's local government rejected plans to deploy the GSDF's new V-22 Ospreys to Saga Airport as part of a support package for ARDB operations. The MOD was instead forced to deploy the Ospreys to Camp Kisarazu of Chiba Prefecture, which is over one thousand kilometers away from the ARDB's home station.<sup>31</sup> In addition to being geographically separate from the Ospreys, the ARDB is also unable to find training areas for the brigade's AAV7 landing craft. Japan's locals are apprehensive toward ship-to-shore training exercises, which leaves the ARDB training irregularly at distant sites in California or the Philippines.

For U.S. forces stationed in Japan, there are too many examples of base politics impacting training and operations to expound upon in this article. Like the SDF, U.S. forces are also very constrained

in training opportunities as Japan's central and local governments impose restrictions to decrease the perceived risks and "base burden." For artillery units specifically, local municipalities often make

arrangements with the U.S. military over live-fire drills that prohibit night fire and limit the number of days U.S. forces can carry out training exercises each fiscal year.<sup>32</sup> There are also significant financial costs involved as the GOJ pays direct subsidy payments to those residents in close proximity to artillery or aircraft. Overall, the above episodes indicate that gaining Japan's public support for ground-based offensive systems, despite the threats posed by the PRC's missile forces, remains politically challenging regardless of whether new force posture involves U.S. or Japanese armed forces. Allowing future American LRPF units to make use of Japan's strategic terrain would almost certainly require the rectification



(Graphic created by author; adapted from Alexandra Sakaki, *Japan's Security Policy: A Shift in Direction Under Abe?*, German Institute for International and Security Affairs Research Paper, March 2015)

## Japan's Southwest Islands in a Regional Context

and renormalization of certain Japanese norms in the sphere of base politics.

## Implications for the Army and U.S. Strategy

From the U.S. perspective, the biggest diplomatic challenge of forward deploying a missile posture to Japan is overcoming Japanese fears of entrapment. Such fears envision an uncontrollable U.S.-PRC standoff and Japan's localities ultimately becoming targets during the PRC's A2/AD operations. The

infrastructure associated with the PLA's conventional missile force is often colocated with assets from China's nuclear force, which also implies a risk of escalation beyond conventional warhead exchanges if the allied response to China is not measured appropriately during such a scenario.<sup>33</sup> Many Japanese understandably do not want their territory to host LRPF platforms that would induce the PRC to abandon its nuclear no-first-use policy. During the Cold War, the United States faced heavy public opposition against deploying Pershing II missiles to Europe, and similar demonstrations could repeat themselves on Japanese soil if plans to deploy LRPF platforms to Japan formalize.<sup>34</sup> The United States does not specify whether its overseas systems and facilities are explicitly nonnuclear, and this strategic U.S. policy would further complicate efforts to alleviate any potential societal opposition to LRPF assets.

Japan's rejection of permanently stationed LRPF units would impact competition with the PLA at the strategic level while also imposing major constraints on the Army's ground-based fires at the operational level. Because ground-based launchers depend on mobility and concealability for optimal effectiveness, Army platforms would need permission to train throughout the Japanese countryside and scatter as necessary during times of alert. This is a tall order considering that Japan has limited amounts of terrain without population centers, particularly in the southwest islands. Ensuring the survivability of missile launchers during the initial stages of conflict also requires allied forces to have a distributed footprint, multiple decoy LRPF sites, a robust missile defense system, and the hardening of existing storage bunkers, airfields, and other key infrastructure. Expanding the military footprint and

hardening infrastructure in Japanese localities so dependent on tourism and agriculture could be politically untenable, as already revealed by the MOD's experiences in building up the SDF's "Southwestern Wall." Japan's own A2/AD network is a formal idea still fraught with legal and political implications.

The U.S. Army may need to assume that LRPF units will be expeditionary, even if the expeditionary model is not strategically or operationally optimal. Doctrinal and organizational solutions would need to identify how expeditionary ground-based fires could complement the other domains during an A2/AD fight to best deter PLA ambitions in the western Pacific. Policy solutions would need to address how U.S. capabilities, including the fires battle management systems, integrate with host-nation forces. Timeliness, again, will be invaluable for the Army to stay relevant in a fundamentally asymmetric geographic battlespace. Technological advances in long-range precision-strike capabilities can enhance conventional deterrence in a world of great-power competition, but alliance management issues and the inability for U.S. forces to operate effectively on allied territory could also have the reverse effect of emboldening the PRC. The CCP is certainly paying close attention to how the United States' post-INF missile capabilities will play out in Japan. We can all expect the CCP to be opportunistic toward any perceived weaknesses in the U.S.-Japan alliance, which is why the Army should design theater-specific and flexible solutions when pursuing its priority modernization effort. ■

*The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.*

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## Notes

**Epigraph.** Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

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