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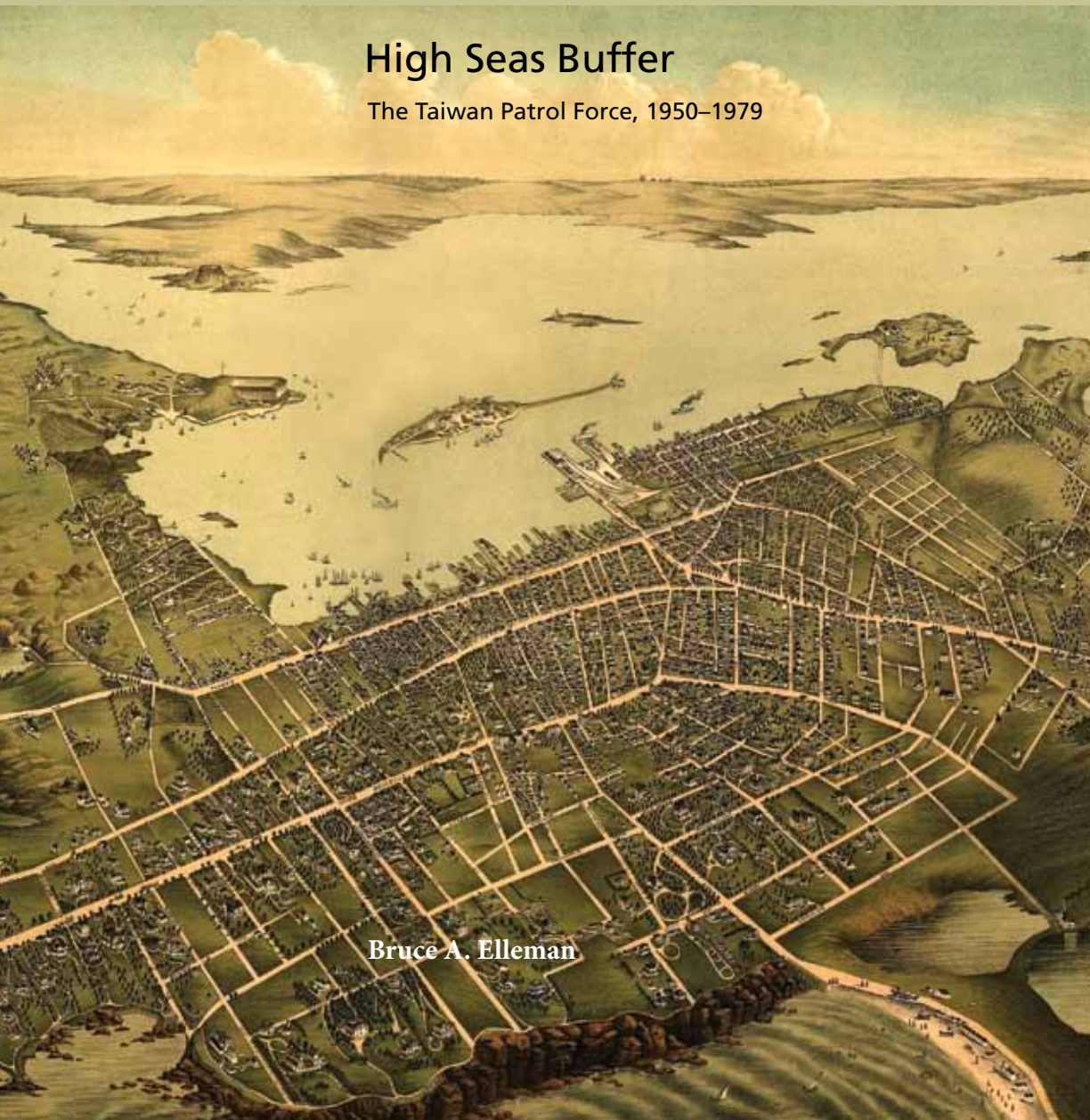
High Seas Buffer

The Taiwan Patrol Force, 1950–1979



Bruce A. Elleman

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

A	**AA**	antiaircraft
	ARIES	Airborne Reconnaissance Integrated Electronic System
	ASW	antisubmarine warfare
C	**CA**	heavy cruiser
	CCK	Ching Chuan Kang (Air Base, Taiwan)
	CHINCOM	China Committee
	CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
	CIC	combat information center
	CinCPac	Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command
	CinCPacFlt	Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet
	CL	light cruiser
	CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
	CO	commanding officer
	COCOM	Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls
	CommOff	communications officer
	ComNavFE	Commander, Naval Forces, Far East
	ComSeventhFlt	Commander, Seventh Fleet
	CTF	Commander, Task Force
	CTG	Commander, Task Group
	CVA	attack aircraft carrier
	CVS	antisubmarine aircraft carrier

D	**DCNO**	Deputy Chief of Naval Operations
	DD	destroyer
	DE	destroyer escort
	DER	radar picket destroyer escort
E	**ECM**	electronic countermeasures
	ELINT	electronic intelligence
	EMCON	emission control
	ESM	electronic support measures
F	**FAW**	fleet air wing
	FRUS	*Foreign Relations of the United States*
	FY	fiscal year
G	**GCA**	ground-controlled approach
	GNP	gross national product
	GPO	Government Printing Office
H	**HUK**	hunter-killer
J	**JATO**	jet-assisted takeoff
	JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
L	**LSD**	landing ship, dock
	LSM	landing ship, medium
	LST	landing ship, tank
M	**MAAG**	Military Assistance Advisory Group
	MiG	(Mikoyan-Gurevich; various Soviet fighter aircraft)
	MTB	motor torpedo boat

N	**NHHC**	Naval History and Heritage Command
	NSC	National Security Council
O	**ONI**	Office of Naval Intelligence
	OpOrder	operations order
	OpPlan	operations plan
P	**PBM**	Mariner patrol bomber [seaplane, several variants]
	PLA	People's Liberation Army
	PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
	PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
	PRC	People's Republic of China
R	**R&D**	research and development
	R&R	rest and recreation
	RCN	Republic of China Navy
	ROC	Republic of China
	ROE	rules of engagement
S	**SAR**	search and rescue
	SIGINT	signals intelligence
	SLOC	sea line of communication
	SRBM	short-range ballistic missile
T	**TF**	task force
	TG	task group
	TNA/UK	The National Archives–United Kingdom
U	**UN**	United Nations
	USN	U.S. Navy

	USNS	United States Naval Ship
	USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
V	**VFW**	Veterans of Foreign Wars
	VP	patrol squadron/maritime patrol aviation
W	**WEI**	Western Enterprises, Incorporated
X	**XO**	executive officer

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All originally classified documents (American and British) had been previously declassified in accordance with standard procedures in their respective countries; all were consulted in unclassified government archives. The opinions expressed in this monograph are the author's alone, and do not reflect those of the U.S. government or the U.S. Naval War College.

In particular, I want to thank John B. Hattendorf, Edward J. Marolda, and Sarah C. M. Paine for reading and commenting on the entire manuscript. All mistakes, however, remain mine and mine alone.

Foreword

The U.S. Navy has had a long tradition of operating in East Asian waters. The first American warship to appear in those waters was the thirty-six-gun frigate USS *Congress* in late 1819, which called at Canton while providing protection to American merchant ships. In 1830, USS *Vincennes,* the first American warship to circumnavigate the globe, passed through the China seas and called at Macao. Two years later, in November 1832, the arrival of the sloop of war USS *Peacock* marked the beginning of a nearly constant presence of American warships in the Far East and the early beginnings of an American naval squadron cruising regularly to protect American shipping and business interests in the region.[1] A dozen years later, in 1844, USS *Brandywine* brought the American envoy Caleb Cushing to Macao to negotiate the first treaty of peace, amity, and commerce between China and the United States, signed at the nearby village of Wanghai. Commodore James Biddle returned to China in the ship of the line USS *Columbus* in January 1846 to return America's formal ratification of that treaty.[2]

Among the officers in *Columbus* during this voyage was Midshipman Stephen B. Luce, who thus became the first in the long line of officers and faculty members at the Naval War College—the institution Luce founded nearly forty years later—to have had some direct experience of China. From that beginning, the College's body of expertise in and understanding of China, and of American experience in China, has grown exponentially. For over a century and a quarter, Naval War College students and faculty have had an interest in the subject. In the first part of the twentieth century, officers associated with the Naval War College served in—and even commanded—the Asiatic Fleet, the Yangtze Patrol, the Sino-American Cooperative Organization, and U.S. Naval Group China. Evidence of some of the College's past interests and connections in these areas may still be found and used in its archives and in its historical document and museum collections.[3]

Between 1950 and 1979, during the Cold War, much of the U.S. Navy's relationship with China centered around the Taiwan Patrol Force, whose duties included patrolling the international waters off mainland China's Fujian Province, which separates the mainland from the island of Taiwan. Based on Taiwan at Keelung in the north and at Kaohsiung in the south, U.S. Seventh Fleet sailors who were assigned to those patrol duties—mainly in destroyers and destroyer escorts—found on the island the only direct relationship available to them to interact with China and Chinese culture. Mainland China remained distant and obscure, sensed only by the distinctive smell of the land that many a sailor commented on in approaching the Chinese coast, even before it

became distantly visible from the deck. American sailors in those years could get closer only during the occasional port visit to the British crown colony of Hong Kong, where they could take an opportunity to go to the far side of Hong Kong's New Territories to peer across the closed border into the People's Republic of China and to try to imagine what the mainland was really like.

In this volume, Bruce Elleman, research professor in the Maritime History Department at the Naval War College, applies his expertise as one of the College's specialists in Chinese language and history to provide a pioneering history of American naval experience in the Taiwan Patrol. His focus reflects the Naval War College's interests in the policy, strategy, and operational levels and is designed to provide a historical complement to other work on current issues being done at the Naval War College—in the China Maritime Studies Institute and in other departments.

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Notes

1. Robert Erwin Johnson, *Far China Station: The U.S. Navy in Asian Waters, 1800–1898* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1979), pp. 3–4, 26.
2. David. F. Long, *Sailor-Diplomat: A Biography of Commodore James Biddle, 1783–1848* (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 185–207.
3. See Bruce A. Elleman, comp., *Naval Historical Collection Documents Relating to East Asia* (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College, 2011).

Introduction

Following its defeat on the mainland in 1949, the Nationalist government retreated to Taiwan. Although the Nationalist navy was comparatively large, to many it seemed almost certain that the People's Republic of China (PRC) would attack and take Taiwan, perhaps as early as summer 1950. The Korean War began on 25 June 1950, however, and the possibility of a PRC invasion of Taiwan was countered when on 27 June President Harry S. Truman ordered the Seventh Fleet to "neutralize" the Taiwan Strait. Mao Zedong at first postponed and eventually canceled altogether his planned invasion of Taiwan.

The U.S. Navy's Taiwan Patrol Force operation lasted from summer 1950 until at least 1979, arguably even sporadically after that date. Lasting twenty-nine years, the Taiwan Patrol Force was one of the longest naval operations in modern history. It was also one of the most successful, since—as the most obvious symbol of American power—it ensured that friction over the Taiwan Strait did not escalate into a full-blown war. In fact, the Taiwan Patrol Force did its job so well that virtually nothing has been written about it.[1] U.S. Navy ships acted both as a buffer between the two antagonists and as a trip wire in case of aggression. The force fulfilled the latter function twice in the 1950s—during the first (1954–55) and second (1958) Taiwan Strait crises—and a third time in the next decade (1962), at which point additional U.S. Navy vessels were called in to assist.

Even after the Taiwan Patrol Force was terminated in 1979 it continued in spirit, as shown by a fourth Taiwan Strait crisis. During the PRC missile tests of 1995–96 two U.S. aircraft carriers were deployed to the area, and in 2001, during the ten days of negotiations over the EP-3 incident of 1 April, a carrier was almost sent. As recently as 2009, when maritime tensions between an American survey ship and Chinese vessels threatened to escalate into a larger conflict, a U.S. Navy destroyer was sent to the scene. Thus, the patrolling functions that began in 1950 have continued largely unchanged to this day, as U.S. Navy vessels act to influence China's military, economic, and political relations with its maritime neighbors.

As the following study will show, on 4 August 1950, Adm. Arthur Dewey Struble formally established Task Group (TG) 77.3 as the "Formosa Patrol." Later, on 24 August 1950, the surface component of the "Formosa Strait Force" was restructured as Task Force (TF) 72, and later still as TG 72.1.[2] On 7 March 1953, the "Formosa Patrol Force" fell under the operational control of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet. The Formosa Patrol Force was renamed again during late 1955 as the "Taiwan Patrol Surface Force," during 1958 as the "United States Taiwan Straits Patrol," and on 1 November 1959 as the "Taiwan Patrol Force."[3] For the sake of simplicity, this work will use the final official name, Taiwan Patrol Force, throughout.

Notes

1. One exception is a report by Edward J. Marolda, "Invasion Patrol: The Seventh Fleet in Chinese Waters," in *A New Equation: Chinese Intervention into the Korean War. Proceedings of the Colloquium on Contemporary History* (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1991), available separately at www.history.navy.mil/. Some materials appeared earlier in Edward J. Marolda, "The U.S. Navy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945–1952" (PhD diss., George Washington Univ., 1990).
2. UK Consulate, Tamsui, to Foreign Office, 18 February 1958, FO 371/133522, The National Archives–United Kingdom [hereafter TNA/UK].
3. In 1953, the Royal Navy referred to its force protecting British shipping with the PRC as the "Formosa Straits Patrol," which could be easily confused with "Formosa Strait Force" or "Formosa Patrol Force." By November 1955, "Formosa" had been switched to "Taiwan," to refer to the Republic of China on Taiwan. "MDA Programs for the National Government of the Republic of China," Strategic Plans Division, box 266, Naval History and Heritage Command [hereafter NHHC] Archives, Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER ONE

The Two Chinas, the Offshore Islands, and the Korean War

This Newport Paper examines the U.S. Navy's most robust buffer patrol in its two-centuries-plus history, as well as one of the longest naval operations of any type in world history—the Taiwan Patrol Force. From 1950 through 1979, and arguably until the mid-1990s and sporadically even to the present day, the U.S. Navy (USN) has sent ships to patrol the Taiwan Strait, separating the People's Republic of China from the Republic of China (ROC), on Taiwan. Given the Cold War context from 1950 to 1979, a conflict in the Taiwan Strait might easily have spread to include the Soviet Union (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or USSR) and the United States.

The most important goal of this operation was to ensure that neither side attacked across the Taiwan Strait. While it is often assumed that the U.S. government's focus was on the PRC alone, in fact there was equally valid reason for concern that the Nationalists might invade across the Taiwan Strait and so spark a new world war; this operation, therefore, was—at least initially—also intended to operate as a neutral buffer separating the two sides.

Another important function of the Taiwan Patrol Force beginning in late 1950 was to help enforce a trade embargo on strategic goods against the PRC. On 23 December 1950, the secretary of commerce announced that "effective immediately no vessel or aircraft registered under the laws of the United States shall enter Chinese Communist Port or any other place under control of Chinese Communists." In effect, "No cargoes [would] be transported to such ports."[1] This American embargo was aimed exclusively at the PRC. In line with this decision, USN vessels often cooperated with ships from the Nationalist navy in enforcing the strategic embargo. Finally, when not engaged in patrol duties, USN personnel participated in the training of the Nationalist navy and in morale-building exercises on Taiwan.

To set the stage for this study, this chapter will examine the creation of the "two Chinas" conflict, the strategic importance of the Taiwan Strait and the offshore islands, the

beginning of the Korean War, and the contribution of these factors to the establishment of the Taiwan Patrol Force.

The Two Chinas

The division of China into a Taiwan-based Republic of China and the mainland-based People's Republic of China was a direct outcome of World War II and the Chinese civil war. During World War II, the U.S. government encouraged the Nationalists and Communists to form a coalition government. In December 1945, President Harry S. Truman even appointed Gen. George C. Marshall as a special envoy to China to negotiate a cease-fire between them. Truman also urged the peaceful reunification of China under the auspices of a joint Political Consultative Conference.

After Japan's surrender, the internationally recognized government of China was under the control of the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek. By late 1945 the United States had equipped thirty-nine Nationalist army divisions, and in August 1946 the U.S. government sold the Nationalists approximately $900 million worth of war surplus for a mere $175 million. This war surplus included ships, trucks, airplanes, and communications equipment. The Nationalists had both an air force and a navy, while the Communists had neither.

Communist forces were concentrated in North China and in Manchuria. When Soviet troops began to withdraw in mid-March 1946, the Communists quickly filled the political vacuum. By May 1946, they controlled the northern two-thirds of Manchuria. Meanwhile, growing economic problems in the Nationalist-controlled areas began to erode Chiang's political legitimacy. Inflation quickly spiraled out of control: between September 1945 and February 1947 wholesale prices in Shanghai alone increased thirtyfold. Inflation destroyed many small businesses and hindered China's economic recovery.

By early 1947, the Marshall mission had ended in failure. On 29 January 1947, the United States notified Chiang Kai-shek's government in Nanjing that it would stop its efforts to halt the civil war. As Nationalist rule imploded, the Communists orchestrated an increasingly effective campaign to rally popular support. For example, on 4 May 1946 they announced a land redistribution program, and during the summer of 1947 they held a National Land Conference to draft a land-reform law confiscating landlord property.

Over time, massive defections weakened the Nationalist army. By contrast, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) experienced enormous growth, from an estimated half-million in mid-1945 to 1.3 million in mid-1946, two million in mid-1947, 2.8 million by mid-1948, and four million by early 1949.[2] During September 1947 the Communists were able to shift to the offensive, pushing the retreating Nationalist troops into a small

triangle bounded by the cities of Jinzhou, Changchun, and Mukden. By summer 1948, the PLA had cleared most Nationalist troops from Manchuria.

Following their victory in the northeast, Communist forces spread southward into China proper. During the Huaihai campaign—the largest battle of the civil war, involving well over a million combatants—Communist forces moved into Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces. On 15 December 1948, after sixty-three days of fighting, the Communists took Xuzhou, opening the road south to the Yangtze River and Nanjing.[3] However, although they had lost northern China, the Nationalists retained their traditional power base in the south. Many foreign commentators assumed that China would now be divided into a North and South, with the Yangtze River serving as the new boundary. On 25 February 1949, however, the Nationalist flagship, *Chongqing,* mutinied, becoming another symbol of the waning of the Nationalist mandate to rule. By the end of April 1949, much of the rest of the Nationalist fleet guarding the Yangtze River had also defected.[4] On 20 April 1949, Communist forces crossed the Yangtze River, overrunning Nanjing three days later. Thereafter, the PLA quickly consolidated control over all of mainland China, taking Shanghai and Wuhan in May, Xi'an and Changsha in August, Guangzhou in October, and the Nationalist wartime capital of Chongqing in November 1949.

The PLA's rapid advance forced the remaining Nationalist units to retreat to Taiwan if they were to continue their anti-Communist struggle. Relocating his government to Taipei, Chiang Kai-shek claimed that the ROC remained the legitimate government of all of China. Meanwhile, in late September 1949, Mao Zedong assembled a new Political Consultative Conference, which elected him chairman of the central government and once again made Beijing the capital. On 1 October 1949, Mao officially proclaimed the creation of the People's Republic of China.

If the Nationalists had been forced to retreat, they had not been defeated. Instead, Chiang shifted from a land-based offensive to a naval one, supporting a blockade strategy against the PRC. The Nationalist navy was comparatively large, but it was mainly for the defense of Taiwan. To conduct their blockade against the PRC, the Nationalists worked with a number of autonomous guerrilla movements on offshore islands not far from China's coast. Later, the USN provided military assistance—especially aircraft—that made air patrols of the blockade possible. The Nationalist blockade was to last from 1949 through 1958.

The Nationalist Blockade Strategy

The Nationalists still had a large navy. As World War II was ending, Congress had passed Public Law 512, providing for the transfer of as many as 271 surplus naval vessels to China.[5] The United States eventually donated to China approximately 130 ships

of various classes, including six 1,300-ton destroyer escorts (DEs), plus a number of tank landing ships (LSTs) and medium landing ships (LSMs).[6] Britain also gave China nine small ships, as well as a light cruiser, HMS *Aurora,* which was renamed *Chongqing* and made the flagship.[7] Finally, China was supposed to acquire a quarter of the thirty destroyers and sixty-seven escort vessels confiscated from Japan at the end of the war.[8] According to one estimate, an additional forty demilitarized Japanese warships were given to China.[9] Taken together, the Nationalists controlled a total of 824 naval vessels of various types, including a handful of modern ships, like *Chongqing,* and numerous small patrol boats.

By 1947 the Nationalist navy had grown to almost forty thousand men. By 31 October 1948 it had reached 40,859; this figure included 2,452 line officers, 5,221 staff corps officers, and 389 marine officers, for a total of 8,062 officers. The remainder were enlisted personnel (19,252 regular navy, 3,554 marines) and 9,991 noncombatants.[10] Chinese students who trained in England during the war brought back a corvette, *Petunia,* and later groups returned with a destroyer escort and eight torpedo boats. In November 1946 six hundred Chinese went to England, where two hundred were trained to bring back two submarines and the rest to man *Chongqing.* As for the United States, a thousand Chinese arrived in Miami during the spring of 1945 to undergo training. Later, forty-nine officers were enrolled at Swarthmore College, Philadelphia, to study naval science; of these twenty-five were subsequently sent to the U.S. Naval Academy, at Annapolis, Maryland, and twenty-four went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge, for advanced training.[11]

In 1947, with their navy both equipped and manned, the Nationalists attempted to halt Soviet shipments to the Communists in Manchuria via Port Arthur (now Lüshun) and Dalian, by imposing a naval blockade.[12] Because Manchuria's ports were already closed to most foreign shippers, the blockade of Lüshun and Dalian elicited no complaint from the foreign powers. Beginning on 18 June 1949, however, the Nationalists announced that any Chinese port not under their control would be closed to trade as of midnight on 25 June. The majority of China's territorial waters would be denied to foreign vessels, from a point just north of the Min River to the mouth of the Liao River. In practical terms, this included China's coastline from just north of Taiwan all the way to a point roughly opposite Beijing. Major Chinese ports to be closed included Qinhuangdao, Tianjin, Shanghai, Ningbo, and Wenzhou.

A July 1949 report by the Intelligence Division of the Admiralty in the United Kingdom was optimistic about the prospects that the blockade could be sustained. Comparing the Communists' thirty warships to the Nationalists' thirty-two and analyzing capacities for refueling and rearmament, this study concluded that retaining the Miao Islands in the north allowed the Nationalists to blockade most of the

ports on the Bo Hai Gulf and provided them with 50 percent coverage of Qingdao.[13] However, other British reports warned that while the Nationalists could effectively close the major ports, they could not control junk traffic.[14] But Commander in Chief, Far Eastern Squadron Afloat reported on 18 July 1949 that the blockade was indeed effective and was delaying the Communists and, he argued, might help bring about a political solution to China's problems. Therefore, he was "strongly averse in present circumstances to breaking the blockade which [the] Nationalists appear to be operating very reasonably."[15]

There was American backing for the Nationalist blockade. For example, during July 1949 the American minister to China, John Leighton Stuart, supported it as contributing to an American "let them stew in their own juices" strategy toward a communist-run China. This was based on his belief that the Marxist-Leninist ideology was inappropriate for China. The best possible policy, he believed, would be to allow the Soviets to "demonstrate, if they could, that they were able to give a communist China the assistance she will need." Once Beijing realized that Moscow could not finance China's development alone, "China would have to turn to us again and we might then be able to come back on terms which would suit us."[16]

As the Nationalists retreated from their northern bases, the focus of the naval blockade necessarily moved farther and farther southward. For example, a British map (map 1) shows that the blockade cut access to the Yangtze River during 1949–50. For the U.S. government, the fear of a complete Communist victory eventually outweighed other considerations. On 24 December 1949, Washington warned American shipowners that their operating licenses could be revoked if they attempted to run the Shanghai blockade.[17] According to one American assessment, the Nationalist navy's approximately eighty oceangoing vessels could maintain a reasonably effective blockade of China's major ports from Shanghai southward to Fujian Province.[18]

In addition to enforcing the blockade, during 1949 the Nationalist navy helped transport Chiang Kai-shek's government-in-exile to Taiwan. The Nationalist retreat to Taiwan was a major maritime undertaking, during which the Nationalist navy and other ships pressed into service carried approximately two million civilians and soldiers to Taiwan.[19] More importantly, the Nationalist navy helped fortify and protect a large number of offshore islands, which were to be the first barriers in the defense of Taiwan from an expected PRC invasion. These military and political developments left the two competing Chinas facing each other across the Taiwan Strait, which made this roughly eighty-mile-wide stretch of water strategically important.

MAP 1

Nationalist Blockade of the Yangtze River

The Strategic Importance of the Taiwan Strait

The division of China was not as striking as the fact that the dividing line was the Taiwan Strait rather than the Yangtze River. China's split in itself largely fit within the framework of the Cold War, in which Germany was divided into a communist East and democratic West, and both Korea and Vietnam were split into a communist North and a nominally democratic South. Whereas, however, the halves of these other divided states were somewhat similar in territory and population, the Nationalist island stronghold was dwarfed by the enormous territory and population of the PRC. To many outside observers it seemed that the PRC could overwhelm Taiwan at will. But the maritime security provided by the strait could not be overlooked. In fact, the much smaller English Channel, only twenty-one miles wide at its narrowest point, had proved itself to be a solid wall against Napoleon, imperial Germany, and the Nazis. The Taiwan Strait proved to be an equally important barrier protecting the Nationalists from attack.

There were historical reasons why the Nationalists retreated to Taiwan. During the seventeenth century, Zheng Chenggong (Cheng Ch'eng-kung), known in the West as Koxinga, had made Taiwan his base when attempting to defeat invading Manchus from North China. Koxinga used a number of small offshore islands—including Quemoy (Jinmen) Island—as stepping-stones to cross the Taiwan Strait. In 1661, he based his forces on the Pescadores (Penghu Islands) to conduct naval operations to expel the Dutch colonizers from Taiwan.[20] In 1683, Qing forces also used various offshore islands to defeat Ming loyalists and retake Taiwan.

The Taiwan Strait is inherently an important strategic zone, since it lies along the primary north–south sea-lane in East Asia. Japanese, Korean, and northern and central Chinese produce and luxury goods must transit this strait to reach Southeast Asia, just as goods and raw materials flowing from south to north must travel through it. The Taiwan Strait has long been a choke point, therefore, and a country that dominates both sides can close it to international shipping. Such an action would force commercial vessels to take the longer and more exposed route to the east of Taiwan.

Taiwan itself has been fought over many times, including in the seventeenth century by Ming loyalists, the Dutch, and Qing forces; in the eighteenth century, when the Manchus put down a local rebellion; and during the Sino-French War of the 1880s. As a result of the first Sino-Japanese War, China ceded Taiwan to Japan in perpetuity in the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki. Japan maintained control over Taiwan for fifty years, until its surrender in 1945, at which point—according to the terms of the Cairo and Potsdam agreements—Taiwan was returned to China, specifically to the internationally recognized government of Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party (Kuomintang).

Chiang and his advisers officially moved the government to Taiwan on 8 December 1949, the eighth anniversary (Tokyo time) of Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.[21]

In a larger context, Taiwan is part of a chain of islands running from the Aleutians through Hokkaido to the Japanese main islands, and then on through Okinawa and Taiwan to the Philippines. These islands would play an important role in any north–south invasion. Communist control over Taiwan could put both Japan and the Philippines at risk. U.S. Navy planners during World War II, for example, were keenly aware that Japan's successful invasion of the Philippines had been launched from Taiwan. If Taiwan fell to the Chinese Communists, it was now assumed, the PLA could use it as a base from which to invade other islands in the chain, as well as to interfere with international shipping.

For these reasons, keeping Taiwan out of communist hands was vital.[22] In 1955, Australian prime minister Robert Menzies put it succinctly: "From the point of view of Australia and, indeed, Malaya, it would be fatal to have an enemy installed in the island chain so that by a process of island hopping Indonesia might be reached and Malaya and Australia to that extent exposed to serious damage either in the rear or on the flank."[23] A year later, Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu of Japan told the U.S. ambassador that "Japan would consider the fall of Taiwan to the Communists as a threat to its interests and therefore supports the U.S. policy of preventing such an eventuality."[24] Finally, in 1958 British foreign secretary Selwyn Lloyd reaffirmed that the United Kingdom and United States shared the views that there was a "Communist menace in the Far East" and that the "containing line" had to be drawn so as to include Japan, South Korea, Okinawa, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Vietnam, and Malaya.[25]

Due mainly to the strategic location of Taiwan, therefore, it was not in the interest of the United States or its allies to see it fall to communism. It was this geographic divide between continental China and Taiwan that precipitated the "two Chinas" problem and that has allowed this political division to continue down to the present time. But it was the Nationalist domination of a large number of offshore islands, some of them right off the PRC's coast, not Taiwan proper, that would be at the heart of two Taiwan Strait crises during the 1950s and one in the early 1960s.

PRC Plans to Use Offshore Islands to Invade Taiwan

Before the U.S. government provided ships and aircraft to help enforce it, the Nationalist blockade was mainly a paper one, as far as naval forces were concerned. Although Taiwan's share of the former Chinese navy was large, these ships were needed to defend the island's security rather than to support the blockade.

During the summer and fall of 1949, Nationalist forces fiercely defended the offshore islands, from which the blockade was at the outset primarily sustained. The Nationalists initially kept one regiment of marines on the Miao Islands, north of Shandong Peninsula, to blockade the Bo Hai Gulf and the northern ports, while they fortified Zhoushan and the Saddle Islands to blockade the Yangtze River. Meanwhile, the Dachens, Matsu (Mazu), Jinmen, and the Penghu Islands near Taiwan; Lema and Wan Shan Islands near Guangzhou; and Hainan Island, fifteen miles off China's southern coast, blockaded about two-thirds of China's coastline. But it was Nationalist-allied guerrillas on many of these islands who, at first, largely enforced the naval blockade against the PRC. These groups earned their living by preying on passing ships. As the U.S. Navy's Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) reported, the Nationalists did not try very hard to suppress these activities, since it would "undoubtedly lose them the guerrilla support in the coastal islands."[26]

The tide began to change during the fall of 1949. In October, a Communist attack on the Nationalist-held base on Jinmen Island was bitterly opposed by Nationalist troops, and the PLA failed to take the island. However, the southern city of Guangzhou soon fell to Communist forces, and the loss of a number of strategic islands in the north effectively narrowed the blockade to central and southern China. As early as October 1949, Adm. Sa Zhengbing, a former commander of the Chinese navy during the Qing dynasty, concluded that the blockade would probably not last long.[27] Communist forces, in spite of naval and air inferiority, overwhelmed the Nationalist base on Hainan Island during February–May 1950, the Zhoushan Archipelago in May 1950, and Tatan Island that July.

By the summer of 1950, therefore, the Nationalists had lost their crucial island bases in the Bo Hai Gulf, off the mouth of the Yangtze River, and on Hainan Island. These losses cut the blockade area by over half. Traditionally, offshore islands in the strait had acted as forward bases to support invasions of Taiwan. Thus, continued Nationalist control of them was considered critical to deterring the Communists from launching an invasion.

By spring 1950, the Communist forces seemed to be preparing to invade. The PLA began to concentrate thousands of junks in the port cities along the Taiwan Strait, apparently in preparation for a massive amphibious invasion.[28] According to one USN estimate, the Communists could assemble seven thousand ships and two hundred aircraft to transport two hundred thousand troops across the strait.[29] This development made continued Nationalist control over a number of strategic offshore islands even more important. After a 1954 visit to Taiwan, a former commander of the Seventh Fleet, Adm. Charles M. Cooke, Jr., drew a map highlighting Taiwan's "critical sea areas" (map 2).

The key to the PLA's success in Hainan had been a fleet of small boats crossing the Qiongzhou Strait, mainly at night. PRC forces, once ashore, overwhelmed the

MAP 2
Taiwan's "Critical Sea Areas"

Nationalist air and surface units and the relatively small island garrisons. As one USN report concluded, "The tremendous losses in men and boats sustained by the Communists attested to their stubborn determination to remove this threat to their security and their economy."[30] The PLA was successful in taking Hainan Island in large part because it was only fifteen miles from the Chinese mainland; its tactics there would be of little use against Taiwan, six times farther out.[31] In fact, an invasion of Taiwan would require a major naval effort on the PRC's part, including the gathering of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of ships and the training of tens of thousands of troops.

To foil such an attempt, as well as to sustain the blockade, the Nationalists especially depended on large island bases of Jinmen and Mazu, right off the coast of Fujian Province, and the Penghu Islands, halfway between the mainland and Taiwan (map 3).

MAP 3
Nationalist-Controlled Offshore Islands

The Nationalists' naval dominance in the Taiwan Strait gave them the capability to carry out an offensive policy, including capturing cargoes destined for Chinese ports, mounting raids against the mainland, and procuring intelligence. According to one ONI report, the Nationalist interception of Communist armed junks led to "numerous junk battles."[32]

There were over twenty-five offshore islands in all, however, and control of them was to remain extremely contentious throughout the 1950s. On 30 July 1953, a USN report, "Security of the Offshore Islands Presently Held by the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China," divided twenty of these into three categories. In Category I were four offshore islands off Fuzhou/Foochow (including Mazu/Matsu) and four islands off Xiamen/Amoy (including Jinmen/Quemoy), which could be used to counter a Communist invasion of Taiwan. Retaining these eight islands was militarily desirable. Category II included two islands in the Dachen group that were not crucial for defending Taiwan and the Penghu/Pescadores Islands. Category III included ten smaller offshore islands, which defended the ten islands in Categories I and II.[33]

As for the other offshore islands under Nationalist domination, USN planners considered them simply not worth the effort necessary to defend them against a determined

PLA attack. Still, as one USN report was quick to point out, none of the offshore islands could be called essential to the defense of Taiwan and the Penghus in the sense of being "absolutely necessary" militarily. Their importance to the Nationalists was mainly psychological, aside from the usefulness in "pre-invasion operations, commando raiding, intelligence gathering, maritime resistance development, sabotage, escape and evasion."[34]

After the PLA retook the northernmost and southernmost offshore islands held by the Nationalists during spring 1950, it stopped. To take the remaining Nationalist-controlled islands would have required more advanced naval technology, such as amphibious landing craft, that was beyond the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in the early 1950s. The Communist army and naval forces would have to retake remaining offshore islands with massive force or bypass them entirely and strike directly for Taiwan. Preparations for such an invasion would be hard to hide, especially from air reconnaissance.

Given this historical background and Taiwan's strategic importance to both sides in the evolving Cold War, China's southeastern coastline was especially tense during the early 1950s. Both Communist and Nationalist forces fiercely defended their positions on numerous offshore islands, in the hopes of changing the strategic balance. As Secretary of State John Foster Dulles pointed out, "for the United States, the offshore islands were of no intrinsic importance except in the context of an attack on Formosa," but they could be used as "stepping stones for such an attack."[35] Losing additional islands to the Communists might also undermine Nationalist morale, plus open up the Truman and Eisenhower administrations to accusations of retreating before aggression. It was for these reasons that the U.S. government felt obliged to support Chiang Kai-shek's efforts to retain a number of offshore islands.

Conclusions

By spring 1950 the two Chinas faced each other across the Taiwan Strait. To many it appeared that the PLA was planning to replicate its success in Hainan by organizing a mass attack against Taiwan. Due to the Truman administration's disillusionment with Chiang Kai-shek and his exiled Nationalist government, it seemed highly unlikely that the United States would risk a wider war with the USSR by intervening openly on the side of Taiwan. Meanwhile, Great Britain's official recognition of the PRC government on 6 January 1950 precluded British intervention. If a spring or summer cross-strait attack had gone forward then, Taiwan might have become part of the PRC during 1950.

Any possibility of a PRC attack against Taiwan was effectively countered, however, by the beginning of the Korean War on 25 June 1950. Two days later, on the 27th, President

Truman ordered the Seventh Fleet to neutralize the Taiwan Strait. The very next day, the destroyer USS *Brush* (DD 745) pulled into Keelung, Taiwan. This was the first U.S. Navy ship to visit Taiwan since Truman had adopted a "hands-off" policy in January 1950.[36] One day later the aircraft carrier USS *Valley Forge* (CV 45), escorted by two destroyer divisions, two submarines, and several logistic ships, steamed past Taiwan in a show of force.[37]

The United Nations (UN) immediately condemned North Korea's attack, and UN forces began to flow into South Korea. Suddenly, Taiwan's continued existence became both militarily and politically important, since the war in Korea could spread at any time to Taiwan. Should the PRC succeed in taking Taiwan, it could cut off a major sea line of communication (SLOC) bringing UN troops and supplies to the Korean theater. To help prevent this, a USN contingent was sent to Taiwan, initially operated out of Keelung, later also from Kaohsiung. Due to the U.S. military intervention and the presence of USN ships, airplanes, and submarines to neutralize the Taiwan Strait, the planned PRC invasion of Taiwan was postponed to the following year; eventually it was canceled altogether. The Taiwan Patrol Force would be instrumental in keeping the peace in East Asia during the next three decades of the Cold War.[38]

Notes

1. U.S. Secretary of Commerce, "U.S. Special Warning Number 19," FO 371/92272, 23 December 1950, TNA/UK.
2. See Bruce A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine, *Modern China: Continuity and Change, 1644 to the Present* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2010), pp. 343–44.
3. See Bruce A. Elleman, "Huai-Hai," in *The Seventy Great Battles of All Time,* ed. Jeremy Black (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), pp. 279–81.
4. See Bruce A. Elleman, "The *Chongqing* Mutiny and the Chinese Civil War, 1949," in *Naval Mutinies of the Twentieth Century: An International Perspective,* ed. Bruce A. Elleman and Christopher M. Bell (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 232–45.
5. "The Chinese Navy, Past and Present," *ONI Review* (January 1947), pp. 21–29.
6. "The Chinese Nationalist Navy," *ONI Review* (January 1955), pp. 29–34.
7. "Chinese Navy, Past and Present," pp. 21–29.
8. "Intelligence Briefs: Japan," *ONI Review* (October 1946), p. 47.
9. "Chinese Nationalist Navy," pp. 29–34.
10. "Intelligence Briefs: China," *ONI Review* (January 1949), p. 39.
11. "Chinese Navy, Past and Present," pp. 21–29.
12. See Bruce A. Elleman, "The Nationalists' Blockade of the PRC, 1949–58," in *Naval Blockades and Seapower: Strategies and Counter-strategies, 1805–2005,* ed. Bruce A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 133–44.
13. "Appreciation of the Ability of the Chinese Nationalist Navy to Effect a Blockade of Communist Territorial Waters (Secret)," Intelligence Division, Naval Staff, Admiralty, FO 371/75902, 9 July 1949, TNA/UK.
14. C.O.I.S. to the Admiralty (Secret), FO 371 75900, 2 July 1949, TNA/UK.
15. C. in C. F.E.S. Afloat to the Admiralty (Secret), FO 371/75903, 18 July 1949, TNA/UK.

16. British Consulate-General, Canton, to Political Adviser, Hong Kong (Confidential), FO 371/75810–175815, 25 July 1949, TNA/UK.
17. "The Illegal Blockade," *China Weekly Review,* 31 December 1949.
18. "Study on the Problems Involved in Military Aid to China," in U.S. State Dept., *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter *FRUS*], vol. 9, *1949* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office [hereafter GPO], 1974), p. 563.
19. "Communists Take Over China," *Facts and Details,* factsanddetails.com/.
20. Yang Zhiben [杨志本], ed., *China Navy Encyclopedia* [中国海军百科全书] (Beijing: Sea Tide Press [海潮出版社], 1998), vol. 2, pp. 1912–14.
21. While 7 December 1941 is remembered in the United States, it was already 8 December in Japan, across the international date line. This timing emphasized to Western audiences that the Nationalists' struggle against communism was a continuation of their alliance with the United States during the Pacific War. Tacit acknowledgment of this occurred on 8 December 1950, a year later, when the United States adopted a full strategic embargo of the PRC.
22. Fraser, P. S. Slessor, and W. J. Slim, "Meeting of Prime Ministers: The Strategic Importance of Formosa; Memorandum by the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff (Top Secret)," PREM 8/1408, 6 January 1951, TNA/UK.
23. "Formosa and Off-shore Islands, Note by the Prime Minister of Australia (Secret)," Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, PREM 11/867, 8 February 1955, TNA/UK.
24. John Foster Dulles Papers, 2 December 1956, 94413, reel 212/213, Princeton Univ., Princeton, N.J., [hereafter cited as Dulles Papers, by date, number, reel].
25. Selwyn Lloyd to John Foster Dulles (Top Secret), CAB 21/3272, 11 September 1958, TNA/UK.
26. "The Southeast China Coast Today," *ONI Review* (February 1953), pp. 51–60.
27. "Central People's Government Formed: KMT Seizes US Ships," *China Weekly Review,* 8 October 1949.
28. He Di, "The Last Campaign to Unify China," in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949,* ed. Mark A. Ryan, David M. Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), pp. 73–90.
29. Edward J. Marolda, "Hostilities along the China Coast during the Korean War," in *New Interpretations in Naval History,* ed. Robert W. Love, Jr. et al. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2001), p. 352.
30. "Southeast China Coast Today," pp. 51–60.
31. David Muller, *China as a Maritime Power* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1983), p. 16.
32. "Southeast China Coast Today," pp. 51–60.
33. Adm. Robert B. Carney, "Security of the Offshore Islands Presently Held by the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China," memorandum to Joint Chiefs of Staff (Top Secret), 30 July 1953, appendix, Strategic Plans Division, box 289, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
34. Ibid.
35. UK Embassy, Washington, telegram to Foreign Office (Secret), PREM 11/867, 9 February 1955, TNA/UK.
36. Edward J. Marolda, "The U.S. Navy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945–1952" (PhD diss., George Washington Univ., Washington, D.C., 1990), p. 156.
37. Edward J. Marolda, "Invasion Patrol: The Seventh Fleet in Chinese Waters," in *A New Equation: Chinese Intervention into the Korean War—Proceedings of the Colloquium on Contemporary History* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1991), available at www.history.navy.mil/.
38. George W. Anderson, Jr., *Reminiscences of Admiral George W. Anderson, Jr., U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1983), vol. 1, p. 5.

CHAPTER TWO

The U.S. Seventh Fleet and the Creation of the Taiwan Patrol Force

The Taiwan Patrol Force was created immediately on the outbreak of the Korean War, when it was thought the PRC might use the chaos and confusion surrounding that conflict to stage an invasion of Taiwan. Whereas in late 1949 and early 1950 Washington's backing for the Nationalists on Taiwan had waned, the Nationalists now immediately gained active U.S. Navy support. In particular, the arrival of the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait increased Taiwan's security from attack. By contrast, the PRC condemned the "neutralization" policy as aggressive and demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Seventh Fleet.[1]

From 1950 through the 1960s and thereafter until the late 1970s, the USN maintained a nearly continuous patrol of ships and aircraft between the PRC and the Nationalists on Taiwan. This buffer was mainly intended to prevent the Communists from invading across the Taiwan Strait; from 1950 to 1953, however, the Taiwan Patrol Force also prevented the Nationalists from launching an invasion of mainland China, which might have triggered a new world war. But this did not mean the Nationalist blockade of the PRC ended in 1950. In fact, the U.S. Navy actively assisted the Nationalists in trying to prevent the movement of specific goods into the PRC. This policy was largely in line with a U.S.-sponsored strategic-goods embargo, adopted in January 1950, which restricted a large number of goods, divided into Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM) I, II, and III categories. This embargo lasted in varying degrees of intensity for twenty-one years, through June 1971.

The number of USN ships in the Taiwan Strait at any one time could be quite small. While published maps illustrating the patrol's activities usually placed a silhouette of an aircraft carrier in the strait, in reality the Taiwan Patrol Force normally comprised one or two smaller USN ships—such as, beginning in late July 1950, the light cruiser USS *Juneau* (CL 119) and in early August 1950 the destroyer *Maddox* (DD 731). But the

Taiwan Patrol Force was a trip wire; if these ships were attacked, they could call in larger and more powerful forces, including aircraft carriers, to assist.[2]

Establishing the Taiwan Patrol Force

The U.S. government's policy on Taiwan was extremely controversial during early 1950. Some American groups had written off Chiang Kai-shek's regime completely, while others, including the U.S. Navy, advocated continued support. In January Truman stated that the United States did not intend to use its armed forces to interfere in the present situation between the PRC and Taiwan.[3] His statement implied that the nation would not intervene if the PRC invaded the island. All of this changed when North Korea attacked South Korea on 25 June 1950. Even before this crucial event, however, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, then Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers occupying Japan, had sent Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson a memorandum arguing that Taiwan should not be allowed to fall to the PRC but should instead be fully protected by the United States.[4] The Truman administration backed MacArthur's proposal, but the manner in which it did so quickly became a point of friction between MacArthur and Truman.

On 27 June Truman accepted MacArthur's reasoning and ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent Communist attacks on Taiwan, as well as to stop all Nationalist attacks on the Chinese mainland. For this reason, the move was referred to as a "neutralization" plan.[5] According to the terms of a USN operation order dated October 1950, units of the U.S. Seventh Fleet had been stationed in the Taiwan Strait since June to "prevent an invasion of Formosa Straits area to prevent an invasion of Formosa." But during this early period the United States was determined to stop any Nationalist invasion of the mainland, so the U.S. Navy was also responsible for making sure that Taiwan and the Penghu Islands were not used by the Nationalists as a base for operations against the PRC.[6]

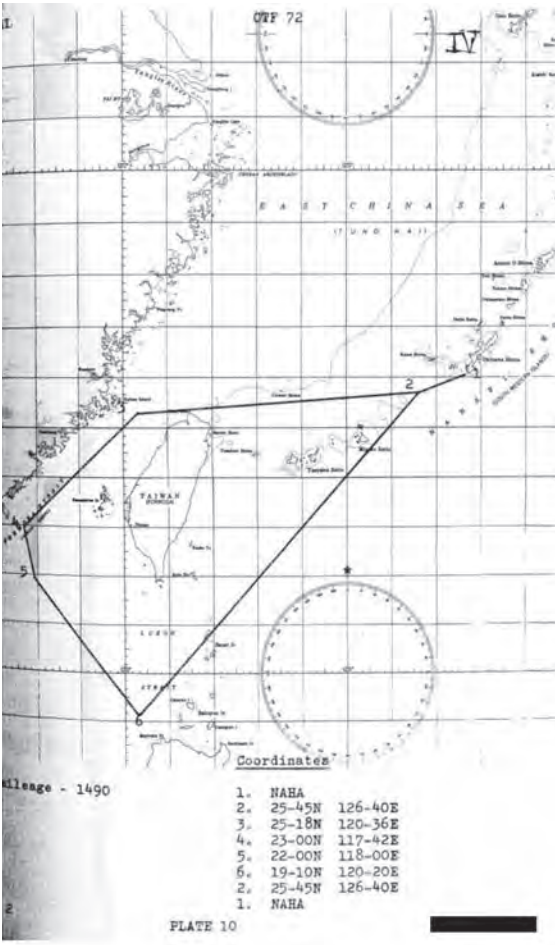
When he ordered the neutralization of the Taiwan Strait, Truman explained that the occupation of Taiwan by Communist forces would be a direct threat to the security of the western Pacific, as well as to U.S. forces performing their lawful functions in that area. He declared, "The determination of the future status of Formosa must await the restoration of security in the Pacific, a peace settlement with Japan, or consideration by the United Nations."[7] In other words, it was the American intention to put the political problem of Taiwan "on ice."[8]

MacArthur decided it was imperative to visit Taiwan in person to assess the risk of a PRC invasion. He was accompanied by Vice Adm. Arthur Dewey Struble, commander of the Seventh Fleet, as well as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Far East. Two days of meetings with Chiang Kai-shek began on 31 July 1950. During MacArthur's visit to

Taiwan, the world press speculated on supposed secret agreements being reached between the U.S. government and Chiang Kai-shek. Fearful that the newspaper reports were true, on 4 August Truman wrote to MacArthur to remind him that "no one other than the President as Commander-in-Chief has the authority to order or authorize preventive action against concentrations on the mainland. The most vital national interest requires that no action of ours precipitate general war or give excuse to others to do so." MacArthur's reassuring reply on 7 August 1950 explained that he had only directed sweeps (map 4) of the Taiwan Strait by the Seventh Fleet, reconnaissance flights over coastal China, and familiarization flights to locate possible refueling airstrips on Taiwan.[9]

MAP 4

Typical Air Reconnaissance Mission over the Taiwan Strait



Notwithstanding, a visit was rapidly arranged by Averell Harriman, special assistant to the president, to see MacArthur in Japan. On his return Harriman too reassured Truman that MacArthur had not overstepped his authority in his trip to Taiwan. However, the Communist nations were quick to pick up on this supposed rift between MacArthur and Truman and to accuse the United States of wanting to occupy Taiwan militarily. During August 1950, the PRC even demanded that the UN Security Council order the withdrawal of all American armed forces from Taiwan. The PRC foreign minister, Zhou Enlai, announced a new policy to "liberate from the tentacles of the United States aggressors Taiwan and all other territories belonging to China."[10]

MacArthur, though having pledged his loyalty to Truman, added fuel to this propaganda fire by releasing an advance copy of his planned speech to the Fifty-First National Encampment of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in Chicago. In it MacArthur referred to Taiwan as part of the island chain that, reaching from the Aleutians to the Marianas, provided a protective shield from attack from the Asian mainland; conversely, in the hands of a hostile power Taiwan could act as an unsinkable aircraft carrier, sending forth aircraft, as well as ships and submarines, to interdict the major sea-lanes in the western Pacific. MacArthur's speech concluded, "Submarine blockade by the enemy with all its destructive ramifications would thereby become a virtual certainty."[11]

When Truman became aware of this VFW speech, he ordered its withdrawal. MacArthur protested that these remarks were purely his personal opinions but did as ordered. Nonetheless, unauthorized excerpts were released by Reuters on 28 August, and a full copy found its way into the pages of the *U.S. News & World Report* on 1 September 1950. Andrei Vyshinsky, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations, used it to accuse the United States of fortifying Taiwan militarily: "None other than General MacArthur recently informed, with cynical candor, the whole world about the decision of the ruling circles of the United States of America at all costs to turn Taiwan into an American base in the Far East."[12]

It was in this highly charged political climate that the first full-time USN patrol ships arrived on the scene. Clearly, the Taiwan Patrol Force's origins were neither secret nor unnoticed by the world at large. It is important to reemphasize, however, that at this point it was the U.S. Navy's job to neutralize the threat from *both* sides of the Taiwan Strait, so as to ensure that neither side could attack the other and thereby ignite a new global war. Early organizational problems reflected the largely ad hoc nature of the Taiwan Patrol Force's creation.

Organization of the Taiwan Patrol Force

The Taiwan Patrol Force, as noted, was a direct response to the outbreak of the Korean War. Almost immediately, USN vessels under the command of Commander, Seventh Fleet began to visit Taiwan, both individually and in groups. The patrol as first constituted included Fleet Air Wing 1 (supported by Fleet Air Wing 6 based in Japan) and an average of four destroyers in or near the Taiwan Strait at any one time. With these limited assets the Taiwan Patrol Force covered the area from the East China Sea through the strait down to the South China Sea.[13] Beginning on 28 July 1950, *Juneau* was assigned to the force, and two submarines, USS *Catfish* (SS 339) and USS *Pickerel* (SS 524), sortied from Yokosuka, Japan, and began ten-day patrols of the strait.

On 4 August 1950, the Seventh Fleet established Task Group 77.3 as the "Formosa Patrol." But on 24 August, it was renamed the "Formosa Strait Force" and redesignated

Task Force 72; later the surface component became TG 72.1. Rear Adm. Thomas Binford was the first commander of this force, using the heavy cruiser USS *Saint Paul* (CA 73) as his flagship. The USN ships initially worked out of Keelung, on the northern tip of Taiwan, later also out of Kaohsiung, on the southwestern corner of the island. A normal patrol might last five to six days, followed by an evening in port. Gunnery departments would stand "port and starboard" watches (i.e., half their personnel on watch), manning one five-inch gun and one twin three-inch gun at all times. Often, due to concern about being attacked, a ship's operations department would stand twenty-four-hour duty, with officers bedding down on cots at their duty stations.[14]

The experiences of USS *Fletcher* (DD 445) on the Taiwan Patrol Force were fairly representative. Beginning in late April 1952, *Fletcher* arrived at its patrol area in the Taiwan Strait, meeting *O'Bannon* (DD 450) at sea and transferring supplies. After steaming independently, it pulled alongside USS *Carpenter* (DDE 825) to transfer light freight and mail; two days later, *Carpenter* came alongside to transfer mail to *Fletcher.* After another day of patrolling, the ship departed the area and proceeded to Kaohsiung, where it moored alongside USS *Platte* (AO 24) to refuel.[15]

Generally a tender or repair ship was anchored in the harbor, and the destroyers would "tie up" alongside. Otherwise the ships moored at a buoy. Depending on weather conditions, the latter could, on occasion, be dangerous:

> The weather, together with the harbor layouts, often made mooring or getting underway an adventure. In Keelung we had to do a Mediterranean moor, with a line from the stern to a buoy, and port and starboard anchors set on either side of the bow. We once had an American diesel submarine, which had been unsuccessful in finding an alongside berth in Keelung, request permission to tie up alongside us. I gave permission, without taking into account that a submarine's widest point is several feet below water, making it impossible to get large fenders, which float, to serve as buffers between the two ships. The weather was causing both ships to bounce around, and I spent the night in dread of the submarine poking a hole in our side. We survived, but at the cost of some dents in our side. Destroyers and Destroyer Escorts are called "Tincans" for good reason. The entrance to Kaohsiung harbor is tight, and we had to moor to buoys or alongside USN destroyers already tied up to the buoys. With the frequent strong beam winds that prevailed it often took all of our available power to handle a safe entrance or exit.[16]

Readiness was paramount, since tension in the Taiwan Strait could run high. The hours were long, and crews had to work at peak efficiency. During actual patrols, the crew would take any chance opportunity for food and sleep:

> I remember going to the mess deck for supper and being served eggs and getting extremely mad at the cooks for serving such an evening meal. I was informed by them that it was 0700 [7 AM] and that as a result breakfast was being served and not supper. In [the] Combat Information Center (CIC) we lived by Greenwich time and seldom went out on deck. Actual time would became meaningless for Operations Department during the patrol.[17]

If four destroyers were assigned, the ships could rotate five days on patrol and five days in port. However, equipment failures or other duties often made this impossible. For

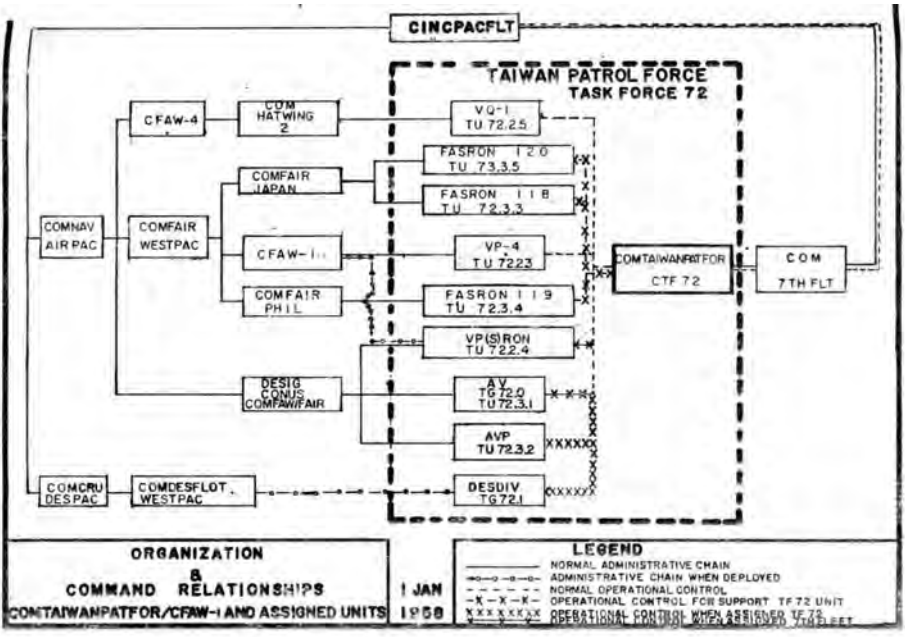
example, during one patrol USS *Cowell* (DD 547) became nonoperational due to an engine problem and USS *Cushing* (DD 797) was away from the Taiwan Strait for some other essential duty, while USS *Pritchett* (DD 561), now the flagship, was away most of the time visiting Subic Bay or Hong Kong. Out of the four destroyers, therefore, only "Denny J"—USS *Dennis J. Buckley* (DDR 808)—was available

> to plow up and down the Strait. . . . [I]t carried the most junior ship Captain of all the Seventh Fleet destroyers, which meant it was logical for *Denny J* to bear the brunt of the patrol work. It did not mean we did not grumble. When *Denny J* would then return to Kaohsiung at the end of a patrol we would top off our fuel tanks and take on stores. If we were lucky one of the [duty] sections would get liberty until 2300 [11 PM]. Then it was back to sea.[18]

During most of the 1950s, the Taiwan Patrol Force usually consisted of four destroyers, with an embarked division commander, in the rank of captain, assigned as Commander, Task Group (CTG) 72.1 (figure 1). During the 1960s, as the Vietnam War heated up, the destroyers, with their five-inch guns, were required there for shore bombardment duties. As a result, the smaller, 1,700-ton, 150-man radar picket destroyer escorts (DERs) were assigned to the patrol, mainly because the DER's three-inch guns were poorly suited for shore bombardment. The command structure was retained unchanged, however.[19]

FIGURE 1

Taiwan Patrol Force Organizational Matrix (read right to left)



By the mid-to-late 1960s, the destroyers would often split their time between Taiwan and Vietnam, breaking midway in Hong Kong for rest and recreation (R&R). Off Vietnam they participated in the MARKET TIME interdiction program, which was intended to stop troops and supplies from flowing by sea from North to South Vietnam. During 1966–67, U.S. and South Vietnamese patrol boats inspected or boarded over seven hundred thousand vessels.[20] USN destroyers would patrol the strait for five days, a week, or as long as ten days, at which point they would return to Keelung or Kaohsiung for supplies and then go out again for another patrol. During slack periods, two DERs rather than four destroyers would be assigned. The usual operating pattern for two ships was one at sea for a week, while the other was on call in either Kaohsiung or Keelung; turnovers were normally conducted at sea.

As these descriptions suggest, duty in the Taiwan Patrol Force was normally fairly dull. Few Navy personnel remember these tours as particularly easy or enjoyable. But it was considered an essential operation, keeping tensions in the Taiwan Strait from escalating into war. These broad responsibilities were made more difficult by China's maritime geography and by extreme weather conditions.

Geography and Weather in the Taiwan Strait

The difficult geography, harsh weather, and unpredictable sea states that the ships of the Taiwan Patrol Force had to deal with on a normal patrol produced operating conditions that were usually poor and all too often horrific. Darkness, rough weather, and heavy seas could make a patrol a true nightmare. As one veteran of the patrol later humorously recalled, "The Straits were rougher than a [corn] cob."[21]

China's southeastern coastline is conducive to maritime activities. Steep mountains run mainly southeastward to the sea before disappearing under the water to form a myriad of bays and coves. Off China's shores are thousands of islands. Zhejiang Province alone has over 1,800 islands off its coast, while Fujian Province has almost six hundred and Guangdong Province approximately 550, making between the three provinces a total of three thousand islands—three-quarters of all the islands along China's entire coastline. Many are too small to support settlement, while others, such as the sixty-square-mile Jinmen, had over sixty thousand people living there in the 1950s (today closer to eighty-five thousand), while the Mazu Islands have about ten thousand inhabitants.

The weather off Taiwan can only be described as variable and extreme. The water north of Taiwan is usually quite cold, chilled by the icy Oyashio Current from the Sea of Okhotsk. In contrast, the waters in the South China Sea tend to be balmy. Two ocean currents from the islands of Micronesia split after hitting the Philippines into two branches, one that enters the South China Sea and the other that flows northward and splits into the Tsushima and Kuroshio Currents. Seasonal monsoons tend to move

northeast in winter and to the southwest in summer; the northeast monsoon is more powerful. Winds are at their strongest during the five months from October through February. The weaker and more variable southwest monsoon usually lasts from June to August.

Superimposed on the monsoon are frequent storms. Ocean hurricanes are known as "typhoons" in Asia. These usually originate in the Pacific Ocean east of the Philippines, drive westward and northwestward over Luzon, and hit Taiwan from the southeast. To be at sea during typhoons can be very dangerous, and fully two-thirds of China's typhoon shelters are located along the southeastern coast, along the coast of Taiwan, or in the Penghu Islands. Typhoons usually occur intermittently from June to October but are most violent in July and August, when winds can reach 145 miles an hour. The general seaward tendency of the winds favors outbound voyages from China and so have traditionally encouraged maritime voyages from the continent to Taiwan. However, the unexpected arrival of typhoons—known in Japan as "kamikaze winds"—has acted as a strong deterrent to naval invasions, as shown by the destruction of not one but two Mongol fleets attacking Japan during the thirteenth century.

Although averaging a hundred miles across, the Taiwan Strait is three times wider in the south than the north. Storms tend to enter from the south and move northward, becoming more and more constricted as the strait narrows. One USN document referred to the Taiwan Strait as a "giant venturi," in which fluid is forced to increase in velocity passing through a constriction.[22] During one storm, a U.S. warship making eight knots ahead through the water was found actually to be moving at one knot astern with respect to the sea bottom. The ship was rolling so violently that it took on "green" water—that is, not simply spray—down the after stack.[23]

These conditions made patrolling the Taiwan Strait grueling and at times absolutely dangerous. The swells were particularly bad at either end of the north–south run, when the ship needed to turn around and head back in the opposite direction. According to one account:

> The seas were high and fast, and we would need to use full rudder along with driving the screws hard in opposite directions to make the turn as quickly as possible. When we got stuck in the trough [parallel to the swells] the rolls the ship took were steep, up to 40 and sometimes 50 degrees at times. Also, the pitching when heading into the seas was incredible. You could feel the ship pass over a 30 foot swell and then you would need to brace yourself for the crash as the ship buried its nose into the next wave.[24]

Another sailor remembers the ship taking a sixty-degree roll, which threw him completely out of his bunk and injured his ribs when he hit a night-light across the passageway.[25]

According to James Barber, captain of USS *Hissem* (DE 400), during one patrol in late 1968 the weather was particularly memorable:

> During the winter the Taiwan Strait can be some very rough water. Several times the weather was severe enough that we were restricted to little more than survival, making minimum speed both upwind and downwind. The characteristics of the DER engineering plant dictated that our minimum speed was the idling speed of a diesel, which under normal circumstances gave us about seven knots through the water. During the rough weather we would actually make something like three knots going into the wind, and eleven knots going down wind. Thus we were spending about a quarter of the time on the somewhat more comfortable downwind leg and the rest of the time slamming into head seas on the upwind leg. The steep seas made reversing course an adventure, since if we got caught in the trough of the waves we could be in serious trouble. I made it a practice to come to the bridge for every reversal. We would watch for a temporary slackening, then come about with full speed and full rudder. When the weather was like this about all we could do was hang on. I had broken a finger playing touch football during one of our in-port periods, and the doctor had fitted me with a large and clumsy cast that made it impossible to use that hand to hang on to railings while moving about the ship. After just a few hours at sea in heavy weather it became evident that my inability to hang on because of the cast risked life and limb, and I ordered our hospital corpsman to remove the cast. One mental picture I retain is of a supertanker plowing into the seas with spray coming over her bridge, but with the ship looking like an island and hardly being moved by the waves, at the same time we were being beaten up in three dimensions by the same seas. That made the difference between 200,000 tons and 1,500 tons abundantly clear.[26]

Because the patrol ships were so small, it was common for sailors to fall overboard and never be seen again.[27] Not only U.S. warships were affected by these conditions; in 1968, *Hissem* assisted a damaged Chinese trawler (photo 1).

Photo 1
Crew of *Hissem* assisting a damaged Chinese fishing boat.

Serving meals during bad weather could be especially problematic. As one former supply officer recalled, "The seas were so rough that on many occasions we used one bowl and a spoon with meals[:] . . . hang on to the table and bowl with one hand, eat with the other."[28] The wardroom table could be especially hazardous in heavy weather. It was considered a severe breach of etiquette to allow one's meal to end

up in someone else's lap;[29] to make sure the bowls did not slide off the smooth table, stewards would place wet hand towels under the bowls.[30]

Due to the treacherous nature of the Taiwan Strait, four rules were eventually published to assist new vessels assigned to the force:

1. When heading upwind, keep the ship's head close enough to dead into the seas to keep the ship level, generally a course within 20 degrees of the seas and wind.
2. Always go slow upwind, making only steerage way if necessary.
3. When heading downwind adjust the ship's course and speed to keep the seas from coming aboard the fantail and to keep the roll moderate. Generally for a destroyer, a course within 40° of dead before the sea and speeds of 15 knots or more are effective.
4. Turn with full rudder and assist with the engines. As much as ahead full on the outboard engine and back two thirds on the inboard engine may be necessary.

New ships to the patrol were warned that "the speed and destructiveness of these relatively low seas is a surprise to officers accustomed to the long period waves of open, deep water." During peacetime, ships were ordered to avoid heavy weather or seek shelter, since there was no justification for "loss or damage to a ship by heavy weather" if the mission was not urgent.[31]

To this day, U.S. naval personnel who participated in the Taiwan Patrol Force remember it with no great fondness. If nothing else, everyone who carried out a patrol mission in the Taiwan Strait agreed, it provided excellent training, since the weather conditions there were some of the worst in their naval experience. This was particularly the case for station ships, which were responsible for refueling and resupply at sea.

Refueling, Replenishment, and Making the Rounds

To maximize time on the patrol, much of the refueling and replenishment occurred not in port but under way. Often this took place in high seas or poor weather conditions. Because of the unpredictable weather, replenishment at sea was particularly difficult, and it was not unusual for men to be injured by heavy seas crashing through the well deck of the replenishment ship.[32] Station ships would remain at sea in one particular area, often for a week to ten days at a time. They conducted numerous activities, including delivering mail, replacement parts, and passengers.

Duty for supply ships assigned to the Taiwan Patrol Force usually lasted about a month. After arriving in late April 1951, for example, *Manatee* (AO 58) returned to Sasebo on 20 May 1951. After resupply, it spent most of June on "line duty," going up to combat areas for fueling at sea. On 23 June 1952, *Manatee* arrived in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, to relieve another oiler as station vessel. Its duties included underway fueling of various ships in the Taiwan Patrol Force as well as providing movies, food, provisions, mail cargo,

aviation gasoline, and passengers for the patrol vessels. A typical at-sea refueling might transfer over sixty thousand gallons.[33]

Durng 1957, after a week of almost continuous fueling at sea under extremely adverse conditions, *Manatee* returned to port to replenish, only to leave two days later for another rendezvous, this time to transfer supplies to twelve destroyers, two carriers, and a cruiser. The weather conditions this time were even worse; fifteen-foot waves made station keeping almost impossible. Bad weather followed the ship. Returning to Sasebo on 28 June, it ran into dense fog. Throughout all of these ups and downs the ship continued operations in a normal way. Navy Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) officials reported that the commanding officer of *Manatee* was even told by local Taiwanese officials that his had been the best liked and most efficient station ship they had ever worked with.[34]

Once in port the crew might be granted R&R, but ship's officers often had to work just as hard as they did at sea. For example, it was necessary to open, organize, and read the voluminous piles of orders and instructions received from Washington. Often the USN documents seemed overly detailed and even, on occasion, contradictory:

> My friend the CommOff [communications officer] paid a visit to wherever keylists and related communications pubs were issued. Then he opened the canvas bag and examined its contents. It primarily contained OpPlans [operations plans] and OpOrders [operations orders], and other directives. They were from CinCPacFlt [Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet], ComSeventhFlt [Commander, Seventh Fleet], Commander Formosa Strait Patrol, and the destroyer squadron commander to which the ship would be attached while there. And *none* of them were up to date. Most were accompanied by changes and corrections. He locked up the coding materials for a later time, and carried all the contents of the canvas bag to the wardroom, the only place with a large table at which to work. And, on the way, he informed the Ops Officer [operations officer]. Then he sat down at the wardroom table and began making the many changes to the OpPlans, OpOrders, etc.
>
> The Ops boss notified the CO [commanding officer] and XO [executive officer] and, about an hour later, when the CommOff had completed the corrections and page checks to a number of the documents (he said he did them in descending order of command, i.e., starting with CinCPacFlt), Ops, the XO and the CO sat down and began reading and trying to absorb their new orders. This went on all afternoon. The CommOff was exhausted by all the work. The 3 seniors were not only tired of all the reading, but also annoyed and frustrated to find that not all of the directives were in consonance with each other. It was getting very hard to know what was expected of them in the many operational situations they might encounter. And the ship was about to take part in a very sensitive Patrol.[35]

One reason there were so many instructions was that so many different USN vessels were assigned to the patrol. After about two years, most of the West Coast destroyers had served their time on the Taiwan Patrol Force, so it was decided to introduce more East Coast ships. Unlike their normal deployments, where they were assigned as part of a squadron, individual East Coast ships could be detailed to the Taiwan Patrol Force. A destroyer heading to Taiwan would sail from, generally, Newport or Norfolk, cruise

down the East Coast, transit through the Panama Canal, and then set out across the Pacific.

During the Korean War, many USN ships based in the Atlantic were sent to East Asia with little or no warning. USS *Keppler* (DD 765) was in Destroyer Escort Division 61, with *Fred T. Berry* (DD 858), *McCaffery* (DD 860), *Norris* (DD 589), and the light cruiser USS *Worcester* (CL 144), *Berry* being the division leader. As one crew member in *Keppler* would recall,

> After a bad weekend in Newport, R.I., several of us were transferred from the *Harwood* [DD 861] to the *Keppler* on Monday after the Korean War started. We went to Norfolk where we joined up with several other ships and left a few days [later] for the Far East. After going through the Suez Canal, etc., our next shore leave was in Colombo, Ceylon. The local paper printed a picture of two of the destroyers and an article protesting about us being there en route to Korea. In addition to helping transport the Marines to Inchon [we] then went to Keelung, Formosa, for a few months. Two of the Destroyers would go out for about a Week of patrolling the Formosa Strait and then change off with the other two Destroyers.[36]

To speed up transits, especially during an emergency, ships crossing the Pacific were often met off Hawaii by oilers to transfer enough fuel to reach Taiwan. *Gearing*-class destroyers, with extra fuel bunkers, could stay at sea longer before they needed to refuel. Of course, the crew was unhappy to be deprived of Pearl Harbor liberty, but the worry was that any day the PRC might attack across the Taiwan Strait. So these ships often never entered port until they pulled into Keelung or Kaohsiung.

As tensions went up and down in East Asia, additional USN ships either deployed to the Taiwan Strait or were ordered back home. During emergencies, sailors on leave might be left behind; replenishment vessels would later bring them back to their ships. On 17 June 1957, for example, *Regulus* (AF 57) transferred eleven men who had been absent on 13 June when the oiler *Manatee* got under way.[37] During the 1950s, the need to maintain a constant patrol in the Taiwan Strait impacted almost every ship in the U.S. Navy.

Conclusions

Spurred on by war on the Korean Peninsula, the USN's patrols of the Taiwan Strait were intended to prevent the Chinese Communists from invading Taiwan. Moreover, as part of their neutralization function, they also discouraged the Nationalists from mounting a major attack on the Chinese mainland. The goal was to limit the possible spread of the Korean conflict farther to the south, which might then escalate into a world war between the United States and the USSR.

A typical patrol in the Taiwan Strait might begin in waters just south of Japan; a ship would pass the Penghu Islands and then cruise by southern Taiwan. Meanwhile, other ships were usually patrolling in the opposite direction, heading north. By the mid-1950s, rising tensions between the PRC and Taiwan meant that the Taiwan Patrol Force

operated substantially farther to the north. In 1955, for example, during the first Taiwan Strait crisis, USS *Wiltsie* (DD 716) found itself within twelve nautical miles of Shanghai, right off the mouth of the Yangtze River.

The seas in the Taiwan Strait were rough, and storms were common. As one veteran recounted, a sailor who arrived in the Taiwan Strait with seasickness was cured by the end of the patrol.[38] Since the primary goal was to deter invasion from either side, the patrols often had the appearance of steaming up and down aimlessly.[39] However, success was measured by what did *not* happen—no news was good news. To ensure that a cross-strait conflict did not occur, the Taiwan Patrol Force had to take into account a number of special strategic problems impacting the Taiwan Strait, including—most importantly—the possible use of nuclear weapons.

Notes

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3. "Statement by the President," 5 January 1950, PREM 8/1408, TNA/UK.
4. James F. Schnabel, "The Relief of MacArthur," in *Policy and Direction: The First Year,* U.S. Army in the Korea War, CMH Pub 20-1 (Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1999), www.history.army.mil/.
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23. Bogart, "Christmas in the Formosa Straits."
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CHAPTER THREE

Special Strategic Concerns in the Taiwan Strait

To most outside observers, the forces facing each other across the Taiwan Strait during the early 1950s may have seemed unevenly matched, in favor of the United States and its allies. However, in warfare between forces of radically different technological capabilities—often referred to as asymmetric warfare—the advantages are not all on one side. In Korea, for example, low-tech mass armies successfully fought modern armies with higher-technology weaponry. During the early 1950s, the U.S. Navy was particularly concerned that its large, seagoing ships might encounter unexpected problems fighting the less heavily armed but more numerous and highly mobile junk fleets that were at the disposal of Communist China.

One disparaging term used in the Korean conflict was "primitivism," applied to Communist tactics based on mass mobilization. Primitivism also affected the Taiwan Strait theater. Beginning in early 1951, intelligence reports of Chinese troop and junk concentrations in mainland ports indicated the possibility of an invasion. In line with the seasonal monsoons, the best time to invade would be in early spring, when relatively good weather was the norm. A likely PRC invasion fleet, it was thought, would be a heterogeneous armada, probably including a few oceangoing vessels, accompanied by a larger number of river steamers and perhaps a few conventional landing craft, but in addition, "motorized junks and sailing junks will be employed by the thousands."[1]

To make sure that China could not invade Taiwan, the U.S. Navy began a series of exercises to oppose hypothetical mass fleets composed not of modern ships but of traditional junks. Other important missions included constant reconnaissance by air and sea throughout the Taiwan Strait region to make sure that any PLA-organized concentration of junks would be discovered early on. Once the PRC acquired submarines from the USSR, these too became a focus of concern. Finally, the possible use of atomic weapons was considered, in particular against an approaching surface and subsurface invasion force. Numerous sea and air exercises were just one of the USN responses to the special strategic concerns of the Taiwan Strait.

Preparing for a PRC Invasion

During early 1950, U.S. naval intelligence warned of advanced preparations by the Chinese Communists for an amphibious attack across the Taiwan Strait, appropriately labeled Operation TAIWAN. Walter McConaughy, the U.S. consul general at Shanghai, even reported that the liberation of Taiwan was being trumpeted publicly by Beijing as the nation's paramount mission, one on which the PRC was staking its reputation and all the resources of the new regime. By late spring 1950 it was reported that approximately five thousand vessels—including freighters, motorized junks, sampans, and refloated ships that had been sunk in the Yangtze River during World War II—had been gathered and that thirty thousand fishermen and other sailors had been drafted to man the ships during their crossings.[2]

Due to the Korean War and the creation of the Taiwan Patrol Force, the cross-strait invasion never took place. In the meantime, the USN battle plan for Taiwan put a priority on attacking enemy aircraft, submarines, and steamships first, and leaving junks for last.[3] Since traditional wooden junks present small targets, they would be hard to hit; having watertight compartments, they would be difficult to sink, even when holed below the waterline. Their destruction might prove excessively costly in ammunition expenditure. However, because of their flammable sails, junks would burn easily. One proposed plan to oppose a large number of junks would be to give the Nationalists napalm, which their older propeller-driven planes could drop on attacking junk fleets.[4]

By mid-February 1951, rumors of a new invasion buildup began to be reported. In response, Admiral Struble visited Taiwan to prepare an improved and expanded defense plan. Late in the month, Commander, Naval Forces, Far East (ComNavFE) studied the situation and inaugurated a series of experimental exercises to determine the optimum choice of weapons against a junk fleet. The comparatively short distance across the Taiwan Strait appeared to favor the Communist forces:

> Planners in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations estimated that a Communist junk flotilla would be able to transit the strait in one day, at a four or five-knot speed of advance. For this reason and because of the multitude of targets presented by a large fleet of junks, they believed a sizeable body of enemy troops might reach the shore of Taiwan without being intercepted. And everyone agreed that if any significant Communist forces landed on the island, the jig was up. Nationalist resistance would collapse. Morale was clearly eroded.[5]

On 24 February 1951, therefore, with the possibility of a spring Taiwan invasion in mind, Rear Adm. Lyman A. Thackrey was ordered to provide some sample junks at Yokosuka for practice purposes. Eight sixty-foot Korean junks were salvaged at Inchon and brought across in USS *Tortuga* (LSD 26). In addition, a sunken six-hundred-ton Chinese junk was located. Acquiring this ship involved great difficulties, but in time it

was refloated, beached at Wolmi Do, and embarked in *Colonial* (LSD 18) for delivery to Japan.

During March and April 1951 extensive tests on how to counter a Chinese fleet made up of numerous junks were conducted under the direction of Rear Adm. Edgar A. Cruise, commander of the Hunter-Killer (HUK) Task Group. But his report on ordnance selection was not completed until May 1951. By this time the PLA buildup in and around the Taiwan Strait had already had the effect of focusing USN resources on this region. In the end, the expected PRC junk fleet did not materialize, and there was no PRC attack against Taiwan. During the next two decades, however, the U.S. Navy continually checked, primarily by air, to see whether the PRC was once again preparing for a cross-strait invasion.

Air Reconnaissance Missions in the Taiwan Strait

From the very first days of the Taiwan Patrol Force, reconnaissance from the air was a vital part of the patrol mission. On 29 June 1950, Rear Adm. John M. "Peg-Leg" Hoskins, acting Commander, Seventh Fleet, sent twenty-nine fighters and attack planes from *Valley Forge* roaring through the strait to show that the U.S. Navy had arrived.[6] This was the first sign of a long-term American air reconnaissance mission over the Taiwan Strait. Throughout the duration of the Taiwan Patrol Force, numerous U.S. aircraft patrolled off the Chinese coast. This proved to be a much-needed addition to the normal Nationalist reconnaissance flights.

Beginning in late July 1950, patrol aircraft began reconnaissance missions in the Taiwan Strait. Patrol Squadron 28 (VP-28), known as the "Hawaiian Warriors," flying P4Y Privateers from Naha Air Force Base, Okinawa, initiated daily surveillance of the northern strait and along the China coast. In Korea, this unit developed new techniques to repel mass attacks, working closely with the U.S. Marine Corps to perfect night flare-dropping techniques that proved on the peninsula to be "amazingly effective against the 'human sea' tactics employed by huge masses of attacking North Korean and Chinese Communists troops."[7]

The day after VP-28 started operations, Patrol Squadron 46 (VP-46), with PBM-5 (Mariner patrol bomber) flying boats, began patrolling the strait's southern sector from a base in the Penghu Islands.[8] VP-46, the "Grey Knights," deployed twice more to the region before hostilities in Korea ended in July 1953. The Grey Knights conducted antisubmarine warfare patrols, as well as over-water search and reconnaissance.[9] VP-46 airplanes could be outfitted with a wide variety of ordnance. If they saw a junk formation heading for Taiwan, they were to drop incendiary or hundred-pound bombs from

between a thousand and 1,500 feet. Against larger ships, however, they were to descend to two hundred feet to conduct masthead-level bombing.[10]

Redeployment of seaplane Patrol Squadron 1 (VP-1), nicknamed "Fleet's Finest," from the mid-1950s onward assisted this effort.[11] VP-1 deployed to the western Pacific under the operational control of Fleet Air Wing 1 (FAW 1), designated TG 70.6. It began combat operations from Naha on 19 August 1950. The squadron's primary duty was patrolling the sea-lanes of the Taiwan Strait, looking for enemy resupply vessels.[12]

Throughout 1950 and 1951, one seaplane and one land-based squadron carried out nearly round-the-clock patrols from secure sea anchorages and land bases. Flying the patrols could be hazardous, especially in the poor weather conditions of the area. Pilots were ordered to remain outside of the PRC's self-proclaimed twelve-mile territorial limit, but to obtain more useful photographs the aviators sometimes strayed over Chinese territory. For example, during September 1952, in airspace not far from Shanghai, a pair of PRC MiG-15s fired repeatedly on a Navy patrol plane but failed to shoot it down.[13]

Other reconnaissance planes were not so lucky. On 18 January 1953, a P2V from VP-22 conducting passive electronic support measures (ESM) and electronic countermeasures (ECM) off Shantou intercepted signals from a PRC radar station near Jinmen Island. It moved in closer to try to obtain photographs of the antenna. There was often confusion as to exactly where the border was, and the plane appears to have flown too close; antiaircraft (AA) guns on the island shot it down.

In response to the P2V's distress call, coastguardsmen at Sangley Point, just southwest of Manila, in the Philippines, who had search-and-rescue (SAR) responsibility for the

Photo 2
PBMs at the seaplane ramp at Naval Station Sangley Point, Philippines.

Photo 3
Lt. Cdr. "Big John" Vukic.

area, launched a search-and-rescue PBM (photo 2). The pilot, Lt. Cdr. "Big John" Vukic—also known as "John the Greek" (photo 3), and who had made a large number of open-sea landings—elected to land alongside the men in the water to pick them up. He put the plane down successfully and picked up nine of the P2V's crew of ten, some of them injured. Unfortunately, on takeoff, when Vukic fired his jet-assisted takeoff (JATO) rockets to help the plane gain altitude, a malfunction on one side drove the aircraft into a pinwheeling crash.

About ten men of the combined crews made it into the water. Vukic himself, with two enlisted men, was in a raft that tide and current were pushing toward a Communist-held island. When the men tried to paddle away, they drew small-arms fire from the beach. The two enlisted men stopped paddling and were taken prisoner, but Vukic jumped out of the raft and started swimming. As he later explained, "My wife was due in to Sangley Point on the next dependent transport, and I was damned well going to be there to meet her."[14] Vukic's determination is best appreciated when one considers he was about six hundred miles from Sangley Point.

In the meantime, a destroyer from the Taiwan Patrol Force had been ordered to the scene. By now it was night, so a second PBM was sent to assist, carrying million-candlepower parachute flares. The pilot, Cdr. Mitchell A. Perry, later recounted,

> Communicating with the Sangley Point Naval Station Rescue Co-ordination Center, we were able to contact the navy destroyer that arrived on scene. We homed-in on the destroyer and they picked us up on their air search radar. We were now in a solid stratus overcast on the Chinese coast. The on-scene destroyer put us in a GCA [ground-controlled approach] type racetrack pattern and it was now dark. The destroyer was maneuvering in shoal waters along the rocky Chinese coast and was not too happy with their old British Admiralty charts. The on-scene-commander in the destroyer asked us to drop two parachute flares at a time, when requested, to light up the area to assist them in their navigation and to assist in locating the survivors from the two plane crews. The destroyer crew did a fine job and after several hours was able to locate Lt. Vukic, his chief flight mechanic and several crew members from the navy P2V.[15]

As the ship picked up survivors, it began to take fire from the shore. The destroyer radioed in plain language a request to "Commander, Formosa Patrol Force for permission to return fire," which was immediately granted, also in plain language.[16] Clearly the Chinese were listening; they ceased firing immediately. Three men, including Vukic, were picked up. Vukic received a Distinguished Flying Cross for his determination not to be captured. Meanwhile, the American sailors who had floated to shore were marched through the streets of Shantou as prisoners.

In hindsight, the P2V may have violated standing orders from the CinCPacFlt that all patrol aircraft should remain well off China's coastline. But it was fairly common in the early 1950s for U.S. aircraft to fly into Chinese airspace. Rumors suggested that the skipper of the VP squadron had been looking for a way to distinguish himself and his squadron and so decided to conduct a passive signals-intelligence mission. Passive ESM signals intelligence (SIGINT) missions were not encouraged in the VP squadrons. Their aircraft carried some intercept gear, but their crews had little training in its use.[17]

Over time, the reconnaissance focus shifted from seaplanes to land-based aviation. While seaplanes could land on water, which was a plus, they had more corrosion and rough-water problems than did land-based planes. Having limited funds, and on the basis of a wide range of considerations, Adm. George Anderson, then head of the Taiwan Patrol Force, determined in 1955 that it was easier to guarantee effective operations with a squadron of land planes than with seaplanes. Without a huge research-and-development (R&D) investment to improve seaplanes, which clearly was not going to happen, the U.S. Navy was up against the type's technological limits. Anderson later recalled, "It was really, in my mind, the end of the seaplane operations of the U.S. Navy."[18]

Another U.S. reconnaissance plane was shot down over Chinese territory in 1957. The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Adm. Arleigh Burke, ordered the Seventh Fleet to begin SAR just off the Chinese coast; with approval from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, USN ships searched up to the three-mile limit (under international law as it then was), ignoring China's twelve-mile claim. Although the pilot and his plane were not found, Burke kept the ships on station longer than necessary, explaining, "Let's stay there so that we rub it in just a little bit. We [will] make sure that they recognize that we're mad." As Burke observed in 1973, "Now, that's the use of power. Never again did they shoot down one of our planes."[19]

Passive signals-intelligence collection by aircraft was the wave of the future, but it was still extremely risky, especially before long-range equipment had been developed and successfully tested. Over time, special airplanes like the EA-3B Skywarriors and the EA-6B Prowlers led to the Lockheed EP-3E Airborne Reconnaissance Integrated Electronic System (ARIES). These aircraft would do a better job conducting electronic intelligence from farther out to sea. Before these new airframes were developed, however, signals-intelligence missions were also conducted by specially outfitted USN ships.

Signals-Intelligence Missions by U.S. Navy Vessels

Signals-intelligence missions were conducted regularly by U.S. Navy vessels to guarantee that the PRC could not organize a cross-strait invasion without its being discovered well in advance. Such missions were more dangerous than patrols for the ships and their

crews (though they were often considered more exciting), since the ships approached closer to the coast to test the PRC's readiness. USN surface ships helped create a whole new field of electronic surveillance technology.

Most USN vessels on the Taiwan Patrol Force were engaged in fairly simple patrol duty, steaming up and down the strait. If attacked, they would bring in the rest of the Seventh Fleet, with its aircraft carriers. However, other USN vessels, outfitted with high-tech radar and receivers, were specialized for electronic surveillance. Over time, these ships were deployed to the Taiwan Strait to carry out electronic intelligence.[20] Their missions were to give warning of any PLA troop buildup that might turn into an invasion and to gather valuable intelligence on the readiness of the PRC military forces. Signals-intelligence vessels did not conduct simple, straight-line patrols in the middle of the Taiwan Strait but had to approach much closer to the PRC so as to pick up stronger signals: "The route we would steam at sea was an oval pattern that occasionally would take the ship within three miles or less of the Red China coast. The ship was outfitted in addition to air and surface search radar with height finding radar, electronic support gear, qualified aircraft controllers."[21] Not only was this duty potentially hazardous, but it was more tedious for the crew, who had to monitor the equipment around the clock.

In the late 1950s the number of signals-intelligence missions increased. During the fall of 1959, for example, *Buckley* conducted a barrier patrol and an electronic intelligence (ELINT)–gathering mission. The CIC team searched for radar transmissions from ashore, which when detected were analyzed and plotted for future reference.[22] (Almost exactly ten years later, *Hissem* would again conduct the same type of operation.) For best reception, the ship would run close to shore to pick up radar sites. Because the Navy-issued reel-to-reel tape recorder was cumbersome, the crew members sometimes used their own Hong Kong–bought electronic equipment, including cassette recorders, which were smaller and easier to operate. Using this makeshift equipment they would produce tape after tape of radar emissions, which they identified, logged, and analyzed. Their reports were then sent on to Japan for further analysis.[23]

The ships were not just passive receptors, however, and on occasion they actively tested the PRC's response times. According to CIC officer Paul Romanski, from time to time his ship, *Hissem,* would go to emission control (EMCON) condition Alfa—that is, turn off all of its transmitting equipment. This meant the ship was no longer electronically "visible," except by direct radar illumination. Whenever this happened, the Chinese would send out aircraft to locate the destroyer;[24] the crew could get a feel for the PRC's defensive posture and readiness by measuring how long the plane took to arrive overhead. If U.S. vessels strayed too close to Chinese waters, the PRC would issue a "serious warning."[25]

Initiating Antisubmarine Warfare Exercises

The potential Communist Chinese submarine threat greatly concerned the U.S. Navy. When the PRC was founded in 1949, it did not have a well trained surface-ship navy, much less a submarine force. But on 19 June 1954 the northern fleet of the PLAN, called the North Sea Fleet, created China's first submarine corps.[26] Between 1953 and 1955 the USSR transferred to the PLAN a total of thirteen submarines, twelve large submarine chasers, and over fifty motor torpedo boats. By 1956 the ONI was warning that China's growing submarine fleet "undoubtedly constitutes its greatest offensive potential as a Far Eastern naval force."[27] This made it more difficult for American submarines to operate with the impunity that they had previously enjoyed.

Throughout the mid-1950s Moscow continued to provide crucial assistance to Beijing's submarine program.[28] By early 1958 the Royal Navy had estimated that there were twenty submarines in the PLAN and that the USSR had 112 of its own in the Pacific.[29] By 1960 the PRC's active submarine fleet had grown to twenty-five. China's submarines were mainly based at Qingdao and Shanghai, with the exception of a few training vessels far to the north at Lüshun. But Chinese submarines were observed as far south as Yulin, on Hainan Island, and so were most likely transiting the Taiwan Strait, as well as operating in waters near Taiwan.[30]

From the early 1950s onward, the United States conducted naval exercises in and near the Taiwan Strait with the intention of sending a clear signal to the PRC that it was ready to repel any invasion of Taiwan led or supported by submarines. According to USN battle-plan assumptions, any PRC invasion would be preceded by air and submarine attacks against surface ships.[31] Submarine attacks were particularly deadly, so plans directed that "unidentified submarines may be attacked and driven off by all means available in self-defense or when offensive action against our force is indicated. Continued submergence of any unidentified submarine in position to attack our force is considered to indicate offensive action."[32]

Since the rules of engagement (ROE) allowed attacks on unidentified submarines, combined antisubmarine exercises were particularly important. In the event of a real invasion there could be chaos and confusion if American and Nationalist crew members, particularly pilots and communication personnel, had not had opportunities to familiarize themselves with local conditions.[33] Later, SHARK HUNT exercises were adopted to practice antisubmarine HUK operations.

By the mid-1960s, combined exercises between U.S. and Nationalist ships were being regularly held, and they continued even after routine patrols were discontinued in 1969. USS *Caliente* (AO 53) conducted a training exercise on 22 June 1972, SHARK HUNT II, with ships from Taiwan. *Wiltsie* followed suit from 22 to 28 July 1973: during early

summer, the destroyers *Wiltsie, Southerland* (DD 743), and *McKean* (DD 784) sailed to Taiwan, where they participated in SHARK HUNT III with Nationalist destroyers. These U.S.-Taiwan combined exercises continued until the late 1970s. During May 1977, for example, USS *Buchanan* (DDG 14) was ordered to proceed to Kaohsiung to participate in exercise SHARK HUNT XXII.[34]

The final exercise of this series, SHARK HUNT XXVIII, took place on 6 November 1978.[35] This event proved to be one of the final combined U.S.-Taiwan surface and antisubmarine warfare exercises of any kind. With the American decision to recognize the PRC in 1979, they had to be called to a halt. But other important strategic concerns, such as the possible use of atomic weapons, continued to have an enormous influence on U.S.-ROC relations. From the early 1950s onward there was almost constant debate in Washington over whether nuclear weapons could be used in response to a PRC invasion of Taiwan.

The Nuclear Option

During the early 1950s atomic bombs were often thought of as being much like regular bombs. The use of the A-bomb was considered in Korea and later in Vietnam, during the Dien Bien Phu crisis. With regard to Taiwan, during July 1950 Truman authorized the movement of B-29 bombers to Guam. They were capable of carrying atomic bombs, and their unit in Guam was given control of nonradioactive atomic bomb components, though the nuclear core was to be provided only during an emergency. This information was leaked to the *New York Times* so as to give the PRC pause.[36]

It is still unclear whether the U.S. government would have actually used A-bombs to halt an invasion of Taiwan. In 1950, MacArthur evidently told Averell Harriman during their talks on 6–8 August that if there were an invasion attempt, Seventh Fleet ships, fighters from the Philippines and Okinawa, B-29s, and other aircraft could destroy it. It would be, he stated, a one-sided battle: "Should the Communists be so foolhardy as to make such an attempt, it would be the bloodiest victory in Far East history."[37] Although use of the A-bomb may not have been specifically discussed during these meetings, the fact that MacArthur mentioned B-29s suggests he had that in mind.

Even if MacArthur was not referring to the A-bomb in 1950, its use was certainly considered later in the decade. On 12 September 1954, during the first Taiwan Strait crisis, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) recommended consideration of nuclear weapons against China. On 10 March 1955, Secretary of State Dulles stated at a National Security Council (NSC) meeting that the United States might use nuclear weapons against China, and on 16 March Eisenhower publicly confirmed that "A-bombs can be used . . . as you would use a bullet." About ten days later, on 25 March, the CNO,

Adm. Robert B. Carney, stated that the president was planning to destroy "Red China's" military potential, which certainly implied use of the atomic bomb.[38]

If these statements were intended to reach the ears of China's leaders and influence their thinking, they succeeded. In February 1955, Mao Zedong warned the Finnish ambassador to China that "if the Americans atomic-bombed Shanghai or Peking, 'they' [meaning the Soviets] would retaliate by wiping out American cities, which would cause the replacement of the present leaders of the United States." The Finn checked with the Soviet ambassador and was assured that "if the Americans bombed the Chinese mainland, the Soviet Government would give the Chinese all possible support under the Sino-Soviet Agreement."[39] Certainly, the use of the phrase "all possible support" implied that the USSR might resort to nuclear weapons.

Due to its close proximity, Japan was particularly concerned about the retaliation that might result from an American first use of atomic weapons. A 1955 USN memorandum summarizing a longer report by the U.S. ambassador to Tokyo even warned that while the Japanese would support American efforts to defend Taiwan and the Penghu Islands, they would expect hostilities to be localized and nuclear weapons not to be used. If fighting broke out over the smaller offshore islands, including Jinmen or Mazu, the Japanese public would be far less supportive. USN involvement in such offshore-island disputes could jeopardize America's entire position in Japan, especially if "we were to employ nuclear weapons."[40]

The implied Soviet threat led the U.S. Navy to hold a special atomic-warfare exercise from 9 to 18 December 1955. Its purpose was to evaluate the readiness of the Seventh Fleet to deliver a major atomic offensive. In what was called Exercise Jack Pratt, a total of twenty destroyers, three cruisers, and four attack aircraft carriers acted as the enemy force, while the Taiwan Patrol Force was ordered to conduct air and subsurface reconnaissance in the defense of Taiwan's airfields and military installations.[41]

The exercise plan called for the "enemy" task force to move south from Okinawan waters toward the Philippines. The training operation order for the "defenders" stated that the enemy's air force would be its primary weapon. The number of jet and propeller aircraft was approximated at sixty per carrier. Some of these, it would be assumed, would be equipped to deliver atomic weapons. It was the goal of the friendly forces to search and locate the enemy task force. Once the enemy was located, aircraft carriers under CTF 72 would conduct a series of attacks in order "to simulate destruction of the enemy forces."[42]

The concept of this atomic-warfare exercise was "realism within reason." Shortcuts would be the exception, not the rule, since the goal was to obtain statistical data on the delivery of "special weapons." Of particular interest was that the exercise was designed

to include U.S. allies, and the Nationalist forces would also be conducting routine air and surface patrols. The one artificiality that was accepted, because there was no way around it, was that the commander of the Taiwan Patrol Force was embarked on the ship that controlled the Attack Force (enemy) seaplanes and so necessarily employed many of the same facilities.[43]

As Adm. Harry Felt, then Commander in Chief, Pacific Command (CinCPac), later recounted, by the end of the 1950s these exercises had made many military options available, and "at that time we had plans for use of tactical nuclear weapons."[44] Many military officers during this period did not believe that the use of tactical nuclear weapons, unlike larger A-bombs, would lead to a larger war. On 2 September 1958, Gen. Nathan F. Twining, chairman of the JCS, explained to Dulles that a seven-to-ten-kiloton airburst would have a lethal range of three or four miles but that there would be "virtually no fall out." If tensions over the Taiwan Strait got out of hand, Twining believed, it might be necessary to use tactical weapons against the PRC: "The initial attack would be only on five coast airfields (with one bomb being used per airfield)."[45]

During 1958, the U.S. Navy even began to deploy the Mark 101 nuclear depth bomb (code-named LULU), with an eleven-kiloton payload, intended to destroy deeply submerged submarines.[46] In January 1958, Vice Adm. Austin K. Doyle, Commander, U.S. Taiwan Defense Command, reported that Matador missiles had been stationed in Taiwan and were ready for action. Although Doyle refused to say whether atomic weapons had been stockpiled in Taiwan, it was public knowledge that the Matador missiles were capable of delivering nuclear payloads in the forty-to-fifty-kiloton range.[47]

Many civilian leaders in Washington were not as optimistic as their military counterparts about using atomic bombs as if they were conventional weapons. But as Dulles told Prime Minister Harold Macmillan of the United Kingdom in September 1958, "It seems that the Sino-Soviet strategy is designed to put strains upon us at many separate places and our various commitments to N.A.T.O., in Korea, to individual allies, are spreading our forces too thin for comfort—certainly unless atomic weapons are to be used."[48] Nonetheless, due to fears that first use of atomic weapons could lead to reprisals, Admiral Felt was eventually directed to draw up a plan envisioning use of conventional weapons only.[49]

Without a doubt, the U.S. nuclear policy had a direct impact on Taiwan as well. During the mid-1960s, the Nationalists began their own nuclear weapons program. According to some later declassified reports, the U.S. military stored atomic bombs in Taiwan, and these weapons were not removed until the early 1970s.[50] In 1976, under pressure from the U.S. government, Taiwan agreed to dismantle its nuclear program. Following the

1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis, President Lee Teng-hui proposed reactivating Taiwan's nuclear program, but he later backed down.

Although the nuclear aspect of American policy toward the Taiwan Strait was kept highly secret at the time, it was clear from 1950 onward that atomic weapons were available in the region should they be needed to prevent a PRC invasion of Taiwan. Over time, however, conventional weapons began to replace atomic ones. To what degree Taiwan was able to make use of American help to build its own nuclear weapons is still unclear. Certainly, this lack of clarity contributes to the continued importance of keeping tensions in the Taiwan Strait under tight control.

Conclusions

The Taiwan Patrol Force operated in a highly sensitive part of Asia. Special strategic concerns included possible attacks by the PRC on the surface, in the air, and under water, as well as use of nuclear weapons by China's Soviet ally and—after Beijing exploded its own atomic bomb in 1964—by the PRC itself. USN vessels conducting patrols had always to be aware of the PRC's intentions. As the early-warning pickets, these USN ships had to remain in continuous radio contact. Loss of contact could indicate that an attack was in progress.

The USN crews had to be on constant watch for signs of an impending PRC cross-strait attack. They were the first barrier in the defense of Taiwan.[51] James Barber probably put it best: "The patrol's primary purpose was symbolic, to indicate an intention to come to Taiwan's aid if it were threatened by mainland China. Two DERs with two three-inch guns apiece did not constitute much of a military presence, but as a symbol of commitment the Patrol undoubtedly had value."[52] Or, as another veteran of the patrols, Doug Hatfield, would wryly recall, "Chinese communists would have to go through us (Lots of Luck!) to invade Taiwan."[53]

It was fairly certain that the first USN ship to be attacked would be severely damaged, if not destroyed. As Paul Romanski, who served as CIC officer in *Hissem* during late 1968 and early 1969, later recounted, the Taiwan Patrol Force's ROE clearly stated that the ships could use their weapons only to defend themselves. This meant that the first to be attacked by Communist forces would necessarily become the proverbial "sacrificial anode."[54] Once the first USN ship was attacked, others could respond in force. Although the two sides never engaged each other in actual sea battles, U.S.-PRC tension remained high for more than two decades. Every sailor on a U.S. ship in those years knew very well that World War III might erupt from an incident in the Taiwan Strait. This situation was made even more tense by significant policy differences between the United States and United Kingdom regarding trade with the PRC.

Notes

1. ComCruDiv One, "U.S. Navy Operation Order No. 7-50," 7 October 1950 [hereafter CCD 1 Operation Order 7-50], Post-1946 Operation Plans, Task Force 72, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
2. Edward J. Marolda, "Invasion Patrol: The Seventh Fleet in Chinese Waters," in *A New Equation: Chinese Intervention into the Korean War—Proceedings of the Colloquium on Contemporary History* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1991), available at www.history.navy.mil/.
3. CCD 1 Operation Order 7-50, "Annex A: Battle Plan (Confidential)."
4. Edward J. Marolda, "The U.S. Navy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945–1952" (PhD diss., George Washington Univ., Washington, D.C., 1990), p. 193.
5. Marolda, "Invasion Patrol."
6. Ibid.
7. "VP-28 History," *U.S. Navy Patrol Squadrons,* www.vpnavy.com/.
8. Marolda, "Invasion Patrol."
9. *VP-46: History of VP-46,* www.vp46.navy.mil/.
10. Marolda, "U.S. Navy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945–1952," p. 176.
11. VP-1 later replaced seaplanes with other airframes and after 1985 was known as the "Screaming Eagles."
12. Roy A. Grossnick, "Patrol Squadron (VP) Histories: VP-1 to VP-153," in *Dictionary of American Naval Aviation Squadrons* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 19, www.history.navy.mil/avh-vol2/chap3-1.pdf.
13. Edward J. Marolda, *The Approaching Storm: Conflict in Asia, 1945–1965* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2009), p. 14.
14. "Rescue off China; Crash of CG PBM-5G 84738," Check-Six.com, www.check-six.com/.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Bob Bublitz, "To Speak of Many Things," *VQ Association News Letter Winter/Spring 2006,* www.centurum.com/.
18. George W. Anderson, Jr., *Reminiscences of Admiral George W. Anderson, Jr., U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1983), vol. 1, p. 314. In fact, seaplanes continued to be used in Vietnam during the mid-1960s but never regained their former prominence.
19. Arleigh A. Burke, *Recollections of Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1973), p. 42. Burke probably meant during his term as CNO, since during the Vietnam War a number of U.S. planes were shot down off China.
20. See Edward J. Marolda and Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict,* vol. 2, *From Military Assistance to Combat, 1959–1965* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1986).
21. Charles H. Bogart, "Christmas in the Formosa Straits," Dennis J. Buckley *and Other Navy Links,* djbuckley.com/.
22. Ibid.
23. Doug Hatfield, interview by author, 29 April 2009.
24. Paul Romanski, interview by author, 1 April 2009.
25. John B. Hattendorf, interview by author, 1 April 2011.
26. Srikanth Kondapalli, *China's Naval Power* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2001), p. 36.
27. "The Red Chinese Navy," *ONI Review Secret Supplement* [declassified] (Summer 1956), pp. 5–8.
28. James Bussert and Bruce A. Elleman, *People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) Combat Systems Technology, 1949–2010* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2011), pp. 63–65.
29. UK Consulate, Tamsui, to Foreign Office, 27 January 1958, FO 371/33522, TNA/UK.
30. "Current Trends in the Chinese Communist Navy," *ONI Review* (November 1960), pp. 476–81.
31. CCD 1 Operation Order 7-50, Annex A.
32. ComDesDiv 112, "U.S. Navy Operation Order No. 2-50," 1 December 1950 [hereafter CCD 112 Operation Order 2-50], Post-1946 Operation Plans, Task Force 72, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
33. CNO, ADM Robert B. Carney, memorandum to Joint Chiefs of Staff (Top Secret), n.d. [19 March 1953], enclosure (1), "Comment on Modified Operational Instructions to CINCPAC," Strategic Plans Division, box 289, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.

34. "Ship's History 1977," *USS* Buchanan *DDG 14,* annualhistory.uss-buchanan-ddg14.org/.
35. *U.S. Taiwan Defense Command Terminal History, 1 Jan 1978–30 April 1979,* p. 68.
36. Marolda, "U.S. Navy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945–1952," p. 180.
37. Ibid., pp. 189–90.
38. "First Taiwan Strait Crisis: Quemoy and Matsu Islands," GlobalSecurity.org, www.globalsecurity.org/.
39. UK Embassy, Peking, to Foreign Office (Secret), 5 February 1955, PREM 11/867, TNA/UK.
40. W. K. Smedberg III, Director, Politico-Military Policy, Strategic Plans Division, top-secret memorandum, "Probable Japanese Reactions If U.S. Becomes Involved in Defense of Formosa and the Pescadores or the Offshore Islands," box 326, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
41. U.S. Navy Training Operation Order 4-55, 7 November 1955, Post-1946 Operation Plans, Task Force 72, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Harry Donald Felt, *Reminiscences of Admiral Harry Donald Felt, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1974), vol. 2, p. 396.
45. "Memorandum of Conversation," 2 September 1958, *FRUS,* vol. 19, *China: 1958–1960* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1996), p. 120.
46. "USS *Randolph* and the Nuclear Diplomatic Incident," *Nuclear Information Project,* www.nukestrat.com/.
47. UK Consulate, Tamsui, to Foreign Office.
48. John Foster Dulles to Harold Macmillan (Top Secret), 5 September 1958, CAB 21/3272, TNA/UK.
49. Felt, *Reminiscences of Admiral Harry Donald Felt, U.S. Navy (Retired),* p. 396.
50. In 1974, all nuclear weapons were moved from Taiwan to Clark Air Base in the Philippines. "CINCPAC Command History, 1974," *Nautilus Institute: Digital Library,* oldsite.nautilus.org/.
51. Several authors have argued that PRC invasion of Taiwan was "frustrated" by the presence of the U.S. Navy. See, for example, John Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 40–44, and Allen Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 63–64.
52. James A. Barber, interview, 2 May 2009.
53. Hatfield, interview.
54. Romanski, interview. The reference is to the "cathodic protection" of a ship's underwater hull by attached anodes of a more corrosive metal or alloy (typically zinc).

CHAPTER FOUR

U.S. and British Disputes over Trade with China

During the early 1950s, the United States and the United Kingdom carried out nearly continuous discussions on whether a formal naval blockade against the PRC should be instituted or a more limited strategic embargo was sufficient. The U.S. government supported a policy of refusing to recognize or trade with the PRC at all, but the British were obliged to be concerned about the fate of their colony of Hong Kong. At any point, Beijing could send in troops and take Hong Kong by force. The colony's vulnerability led to the British decision to recognize the PRC on 6 January 1950 and to adopt a more liberal trade policy with it.

As argued persuasively by A. E. Franklin during January 1951, "Hong Kong and its population of over 2,000,000 Chinese are largely dependent on trade with China," and a complete embargo "would inevitably lead to serious discontentment and possibly even to loss of the Colony to China, which clearly would be harmful all round."[1] Furthermore, Hong Kong's strategic location could provide the West crucial leverage over the PRC. It was of great value that Hong Kong should continue without undue economic dislocation as part of the free world and the West "must therefore insist on the importance of preventing economic distress which would foster popular unrest that might easily precipitate a dangerous state of affairs."[2]

Washington was not immediately convinced by this reasoning, however, and ordered the U.S. Navy to conduct a number of studies on how effective a total American naval blockade of the PRC might be. Completed during 1951, these studies tended to confirm Hong Kong's crucial strategic role and warned that any blockade of the PRC that did not close Hong Kong's trade with the mainland was bound to fail. So as to avoid undermining Anglo-American relations, it was eventually decided to rely more on the U.S. embargo of strategic goods, with help from the Nationalist navy to enforce it, to put economic pressure on China.

The British Decision to Recognize the PRC

In sharp contrast to the gradual support of the United States for the Nationalist blockade, the British government saw the continuation of trade between Hong Kong and the PRC as leaving the door open for China to move closer to the West. Unlike the United States, which had no empire to protect, Britain had to be concerned with the safety of its colonies in India (before 1947), Singapore, and Malaya. Hong Kong's geographic position, just a stone's throw from the PRC, made diplomatic talks between the UK and China particularly important. As a result, Britain broke with the United States and recognized the PRC.

Hong Kong was vulnerable to any fluctuations in trade. Its population thrived on international commerce with the mainland, and approximately 45 percent of all of Hong Kong's own exports went to China. A complete embargo would devastate these commercial enterprises. During the first eleven months of 1950, for example, Hong Kong's exports to China equaled 460 million Hong Kong dollars; another 235 million went to Macao, where much was reexported to China. According to Hong Kong's governor, without this trade the "thriving, trading, financial and insurance entrepot of the Colony" would become "an economic desert."[3]

Another factor to keep in mind was Hong Kong's strategic maritime location. Should it fall to the Communists, Hong Kong would provide the PRC a first-class naval base with valuable repair facilities, as well as one of the best airports in South China. If Russian forces were stationed there, it could quickly become a threat to the U.S. bases in the Philippines. Finally, Hong Kong's fall would have huge propaganda value and would assist the spread of communism into Southeast Asia.[4] One British memo even warned that if Hong Kong fell into China's hands it "would be a useful base for operations against Formosa."[5]

There was always a chance, however, that China would reject monolithic communism. As long as it could expect to obtain certain supplies from the West, Beijing would not be completely dependent on the USSR and its East European satellites.[6] Britain's long-range goal vis-à-vis Hong Kong accordingly was to maintain a commercial and cultural foothold so as to keep Western influence alive in the PRC.[7] Where the American policy might throw China into Russia's arms, British recognition strengthened Mao's leverage in his negotiations with Joseph Stalin.[8] The British warned that the West's policy should not solidify against it the seven hundred million Russians and Chinese.[9] At some point, they hoped, Britain's more friendly policy toward China might even pay the dividend of "driving a wedge" between the PRC and the USSR.[10]

The U.S. government, in turn, was forced to turn a blind eye to Hong Kong's commercial relations with China, since the danger of losing Hong Kong was greater than any

possible trade benefits to the PRC. Meanwhile, U.S. policy toward the PRC was moving closer to the Nationalists. Since the summer of 1949 and intensifying through early 1950, the United States adopted a policy of sealing the Communists into their continental territory through trade embargo.[11] During 1950, Dulles, the future secretary of state, began to argue that the best defense against Sino-Soviet military cooperation "lies in exploiting potential jealousies, rivalries, and disaffection within the present area of the Soviet Communist control so as to divert them from external adventures." Eisenhower later acknowledged that "trade might be a very useful tool" to "weaken the Sino-Soviet alliance."[12]

In sharp contrast to British recognition of the PRC, therefore, the U.S. government continued to recognize the exiled Nationalist officials on Taiwan. Beginning in January 1950, the United States imposed a strategic embargo on shipping certain goods to the PRC, but Washington did not want to become involved in a cross-strait war. Nonetheless, with the outbreak of the Korean War, and in particular after the PRC's military intervention in November 1950, the U.S. government for a short time considered instituting a naval blockade of its own.

Debates over Establishing a U.S. Navy Blockade of the PRC

As the Korean War heated up during the fall of 1950 and Chinese forces intervened, the JCS ordered the U.S. Navy to study the prospects for adopting a full naval blockade of China.[13] The CNO was to estimate both the effects of a naval blockade on China and the USN force requirements to conduct it. It soon became apparent that a full naval blockade of China might easily result in increased tension not only with the USSR, which continued to occupy the ports of Lüshun and Dalian in Manchuria, but also with America's staunchest European ally, the United Kingdom, since such a blockade could be truly effective only if it cut off trade between Hong Kong and the PRC.

On 6 January 1951, the CNO, Adm. Forrest Sherman, submitted to the JCS the final study, entitled "Estimate of the Effects of a Naval Blockade of China." It concluded that an effective naval blockade of China would have to be applied equally to Hong Kong, the Portuguese island of Macao, and the Soviet-controlled ports of Lüshun and Dalian. Blockading Manchuria would undoubtedly cause serious repercussions in the USSR, but otherwise the blockade would absolutely have to include Hong Kong and Macao, which would negatively impact American relations with Britain and Portugal. It would need to cut off all petroleum supplies, machinery and machine tools, railway equipment, rubber, and chemicals. Of course, many of these items could still be imported by land, and it was assumed that China would continue to receive economic and military assistance from the USSR, but given the available land routes, "prevention of such imports by sea

would leave China dependent upon the Soviet Bloc for these materials which are likewise in short supply in those countries."[14]

The U.S. Navy would need to close the ports of Hong Kong and Qingdao, plus Korea Bay, the Bo Hai Gulf, and the mouth of the Yangtze River. For such a massive operation, a minimum of thirty-six destroyers or other patrol vessels would need to be allocated full-time, to be supported by five VP squadrons and from four to six submarines for occasional patrols as "opportunity, reconnaissance needs and other circumstances dictate." An operation of this magnitude would also require huge logistical support, including at least four tenders on station at all times.[15]

In his conclusion, the CNO reiterated that if ports in Manchuria were not included in the naval blockade, then Hong Kong and Macao would have to be blockaded. He listed nine possible outcomes. Such a blockade operation would

a. Aid in the restoration of the prestige of the United States in the Far East and throughout the world.

b. Reduce the threat of amphibious invasion of Formosa, Japan and other Far Eastern areas.

c. Keep Chinese Communist Forces under surveillance and provide early warning of any movement by sea.

d. Permit the strengthening of Japan and Formosa without undue fear of Chinese Communist attack.

e. Impose an economic strain on the war making potentialities of the Chinese Communists.

f. Overload and reduce the efficiency of the Chinese transportation system and place an additional strain on Russian transportation.

g. Encourage the Nationalist guerrilla forces now operating in south China and probably cause them to intensify their efforts while reducing Chinese Communists' ability to resist them.

h. Force the USSR to supply the major part of the equipment required by the Chinese Communists, thus interfering with the Russian armament program for her satellites in Europe.

i. Force certain United Nations members to recognize the fact that the United States refuses to continue the present conflict upon a "business-as-usual" basis.[16]

The CNO's nine concluding points were highly positive in nature, but the political reality was that a U.S. blockade would have to be focused either on the Soviet Union or on the United Kingdom. Any American naval blockade of Hong Kong would immediately undermine the long-standing Anglo-American alliance that was so important for the NATO security system in Europe and the UN military effort in Korea. For this very reason, USN vessels patrolling the Taiwan Strait were warned beginning in December 1950 to interrogate passing vessels discreetly, since too thorough an interrogation might appear to be part of a blockade.[17] One USN study even cautioned that because the PRC was almost sure to retaliate with force were a full blockade to be adopted, it was essential

that "before establishing it [naval blockade,] insure that Hong Kong is adequately defended."[18]

Given the assumption that a full U.S. blockade might lead to a break in diplomatic relations with Britain, on the one hand, or a PRC invasion of Hong Kong, on the other, it was not a coincidence that the CNO submitted his report to the JCS on 6 January 1951, the first anniversary of the British recognition of the PRC. Thus, even though the CNO began his letter by stating that it would not deal with political issues, the glaringly obvious political importance of retaining friendly British relations virtually guaranteed that the U.S. Navy would never be ordered to institute a naval blockade of China that would include Hong Kong. Additionally, a strict naval blockade of the USSR's military bases in Manchuria might result in Soviet efforts to expand "Chinese Communist capabilities in submarine, air and mine warfare."[19]

British Discussions of a Full Trade Stoppage with the PRC

While the United States and Britain fought side by side in Korea, the British traded freely with the PRC, but the Americans did not. During early 1951, largely in response to China's armed intervention in the Korean War, but with due consideration for the Nationalist blockade, the British government considered halting trade with the PRC. This question was discussed in some detail by W. P. S. Ormand, a Ministry of Transport official, in a 16 January 1951 report. He concluded that the large ocean-liner companies would not be too badly hurt by a stoppage, especially considering the drop in port visits to China in any case due to political friction, but that local tonnage, mainly based in Hong Kong, would "undoubtedly suffer severely from any stoppage and would have difficulty in finding alternative employment."[20]

Further, not only could such a stoppage lead to the permanent loss of land in the PRC owned by British shipping companies, valued at an estimated eighteen million pounds in 1941 but probably considerably more valuable in 1950, but without sufficient warning—a minimum of five days but preferably ten—many British ships might be stuck in PRC ports, thus risking confiscation by China. Ormand estimated that at any one time there could be as much as 120,000 tons of British-owned shipping in Chinese ports, which reinforced the need for notice to British vessels if they were not to fall into Chinese hands.[21]

Another long-term consideration was the future of British trade with China. In 1936, British shipping had accounted for 36 percent of all ocean entrances and clearances and an even higher 41 percent of China's interport clearances, excluding the junk trade. If British trade with China were cut completely, Ormand concluded, "the abandonment now of the important overseas and local trades with China and of the local agencies would be a grave set-back to the eventual recovery of a trade in which British shipping

has had a preponderant stake—a set-back from which our shipping interests in those trades would be hardly likely to recover."[22]

Considering its large share in the China market, British shippers felt compelled to continue to trade. But this meant British ships had to challenge the Nationalist navy's aggressive blockade. The Nationalists were using offshore islands to mount attacks against the mainland ports, Communist-held islands, and convoys escorted by junks armed with small artillery pieces, mortars, and automatic weapons. Whenever possible, Nationalist ships would attack, surround, and sink the convoys. The Nationalists also used various offshore islands as listening posts to collect intelligence and as sanctuaries from which to send agents into China, in preparation for the Nationalists' hoped-for return to the mainland.

The economic impact of the Nationalist blockade operation was significant, since, in combination with the U.S. embargo on strategic goods, it accounted for a high percentage of China's international trade. Between 1950 and 1952, the Nationalists halted and searched some ninety ships heading for Communist ports, two-thirds of them British-flagged ships registered in Hong Kong. The British government was particularly vocal in protesting the seizure of cargo, arguing that these ships were complying with U.S. limits on strategic goods and so were carrying only nonstrategic cargoes.[23]

As noted, a number of pro-Nationalist guerrilla groups occupying Nationalist-claimed islands helped enforce the economic aspects of the blockade. After May 1950 the only remaining full-time Nationalist blockade base was on Jinmen Island, but the other Nationalist offshore islands, such as Yushan Island, the Dachen Islands, and the so-called Dog Islands, were all under the control of guerrilla forces. The degree to which the Nationalists interacted with and controlled their guerrilla allies was intentionally left unclear. For example, in the Dachen Islands naval interdiction was carried out only by the guerrillas, allowing the Nationalists to avoid any blame for their actions. When the guerrillas' actions were potentially embarrassing Taiwan denounced them, but as the ONI assessed, "even though the Nationalists have the capability, they probably do not wish to suppress the guerrilla activities because it would undoubtedly lose them the guerrilla support in the coastal islands."[24]

To motivate the guerrillas, the Nationalists decided early on that the crew of each blockading vessel would share in the prize money earned from capturing blockade-running ships.[25] Not surprisingly, many of the guerrillas were more intent on lining their pockets than carrying out an effective naval blockade. In one case, a guerrilla junk raiding a Panamanian ship, *Taluei,* reportedly sank under the weight of the confiscated loot.[26] For this reason, it was essential that the Nationalist blockade be backed up by a U.S.-led embargo of strategic goods.

U.S.-Led Strategic Embargo of the PRC

A full American naval blockade of the PRC was politically infeasible, due to the possible retaliation of the USSR, on the one hand, and to Hong Kong's sensitive strategic position, on the other. Beginning in December 1950, the U.S. government instead began to impose a complete embargo on strategic goods to the PRC. This policy fell under the COCOM trade-control regime, which had been adopted in January 1950. Although the strategic embargo was a less effective option than a full naval blockade, Washington worked closely with the Nationalists to help enforce it.

The COCOM group was composed of the United States, all of the NATO countries (minus Iceland), plus Australia and Japan. To convince other countries to conform to its proscriptions against China, Congress adopted the Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act of 1951. Commonly called the Battle Act, after its sponsor, Congressman Laurie C. Battle, this legislation would terminate economic and military aid to countries that refused to cooperate with the control program.[27] During the fall of 1952, the China Committee (CHINCOM) of the Paris Consultative Group of Nations instituted controls that were even tighter, embargoing industrial machinery, steel-mill products, and metal of all types. Meanwhile, the American embargo recruited more countries into COCOM and CHINCOM, such as Greece and Turkey in 1953, and the embargo was further bolstered by pledges of cooperation from Sweden and Switzerland, both important neutral countries.[28]

The Nationalist navy fully cooperated in enforcing the U.S. sanctions program. For example, in early 1951 a Norwegian-owned ship, *Hoi Houw,* was reported to be carrying U.S.-made medicines and other manufactured items to China.[29] These goods had originally been shipped, on American-flagged vessels from the United States to Bombay, before the total embargo was instituted. They had then been reloaded at Bombay onto the Norwegian-owned ship for transport to the PRC. The United States asked Britain to intercept the cargo when the ship docked in Hong Kong and halt its delivery to the PRC. But instead the governor of Hong Kong arranged with the Norwegian consul so that *Hoi Houw* would not call at Hong Kong.[30] *Hoi Houw*'s failure to stop in Hong Kong ignited a widespread search. Four USN destroyers and planes swept the Taiwan Strait, and three Nationalist destroyer escorts and planes looked east of Taiwan, the latter intercepting *Hoi Houw* sixty miles east of the island on 11 February 1951. Its cargo was impounded at Keelung; ship and crew were released on the 20th.[31]

Because *Hoi Houw* had not stopped in Hong Kong as originally planned, the only British interest in this seizure was possible insurance liability. Lloyd's of London was concerned that it would have to reimburse the owner for losses of over a million pounds sterling, having insured the cargo prior to the adoption of U.S. sanctions.[32] The British

government's viewpoint was that this was the insurer's problem, since "either the underwriters took the possibility of seizure by the Nationalists into account and demanded a correspondingly high premium—in which case they went into this with their eyes open; or they did not underwrite against this sort of eventuality, in which case they are presumably not liable."[33]

As reported by Cdr. M. E. Lashmore of the Royal Navy, the interception and detention of *Hoi Houw* showed the close cooperation between the Americans and the Nationalists: "There can be little doubt that the Americans were behind the seizure and whatever the cargo was, were determined to stop it reaching China. They were in the happy position of being able to get the Chinese Nationalists to do their work for them, and thus in theory being in no way connected with the incident."[34]

Later, American government officials took their "ingenuous bluff," as Lashmore called it, even farther by asking authorities in Hong Kong for information on what was happening to *Hoi Houw* on Taiwan, "on the grounds that the U.S. authorities there did not know anything about her!"[35] According to a report from the British consul in Taiwan, when asked about the matter U.S. government officials said they could not "officially . . . approve the interception which contravened both International Law and the agreement between Nationalist China and America over the protection of Formosa, [but] they consider it most unlikely that they will be instructed to make any protest as American public opinion obviously approves of the Nationalist action."[36]

Although a confidential 1955 USN report admitted that the strategic embargo was incomplete and that China obtained many goods through triangular deals and transshipments, the overall success of the embargo was shown by the facts that China's procurement was seriously hampered and that higher costs reduced the total amount purchased.[37] A British report from February 1951 likewise concluded that the American sanctions program was quite effective and had inflicted a great shock on the mainland Chinese economy.[38] The Swedish ambassador confirmed that the strategic embargo was having the desired effect, inasmuch as international "shipping was the Achilles heel of China and that if the amount of shipping engaged in trade with China would be drastically reduced it would have a serious effect on the Chinese economy."[39] The embargo's effectiveness had a negative impact on British trade with China, however, and led to a sharp increase in tension in the strait.

Heightened Trade Tension in the Taiwan Strait

As a direct response to the Nationalist blockade, beginning in 1953 Royal Navy warships were ordered to protect British commercial ships employed in legal trade from interference by Nationalists under the guise of what the British considered to be an

illegal blockade of the mainland.[40] London's decision to form a Formosa Straits Patrol to protect British shipping put its naval forces at odds with Nationalist ships attempting to enforce the blockade. While the British were allied with UN forces in Korea, their decisions to recognize and continue trade with the PRC broke with the American embargo. To some, this policy appeared contradictory. During one October 1953 incident, for example, the captain of a Nationalist warship even signaled the British captain, "You should leave here at once. You were the enemy against the Communists in Korea, here you are their friends. Don't you feel ashamed of your honourable dead in Korea."[41]

In October 1952 the British government was considering changes to its export control policies, and it was suggested that this opportunity be used to stop the illegal attacks on British merchant ships.[42] But American support for the Nationalist blockade had shifted from opposition to lukewarm support to more active support for an air-based blockade in 1953. The Nationalists largely depended on guerrillas in the Dachen Islands to enforce the blockade in the north, with the energetic assistance of the United States. On Lower Dachen Island, for example, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)–funded organization, Western Enterprises, Incorporated (WEI), sent American advisers to train the guerrillas. Lon Redman, a WEI adviser, even attempted to bulldoze an airstrip so that C-46 cargo planes could land. But this plan had to be abandoned once it became clear that a strip long enough for a C-46 could not be built without bulldozing almost down to sea level.[43]

The Nationalists portrayed these guerrilla bands as anti-Communist fighters. But to many foreign shippers, the pro-Nationalist guerrillas appeared little better than modern-day pirates. As reported by one British official in 1952, "Indications are that most of the piracies are done by Nationalist guerrillas not under the effective control of Taipei. The border line is obscure. In 1948 it was respectable for bandits to masquerade as Communist Liberation forces; in 1952 it is respectable for pirates to masquerade as the Nationalist Navy."[44]

The Office of Naval Intelligence provided a good example of how the Nationalist-guerrilla blockade functioned. On 8 September 1952, the British merchant ship *Admiral Hardy* was intercepted by guerrillas trying to enter Fuzhou. The guerrillas took the ship to White Dog Island, where they claimed it was carrying strategic goods and so impounded the entire cargo. A $2,300 bribe was necessary to win the release of the ship and its crew. Before allowing the ship to leave, the head of the guerrilla group indicated that there would be no interference with that ship during any future trip if fifteen thousand dollars were paid in advance to his agent in Hong Kong. This arrangement was to be secret; the guerrillas were apparently "apprehensive lest the Nationalist Navy learn of this transaction."[45]

Sometimes these guerrilla units attacked the wrong ship, as occurred on 11 February 1951 when the British-registered *Wing Sang,* sailing from Hong Kong to Taiwan, was boarded and looted by Nationalist guerrillas. The Nationalist government immediately denied any connection with the guerrillas. After British protests via the U.S. embassy in Taipei, however, the Nationalists announced that the guerrilla leader responsible for the attack had been captured and executed. As one source noted, "In this case the [pro-Nationalist guerrilla] attackers made the mistake of attacking a ship engaged in trade with Formosa."[46]

The British government repeatedly protested against the Nationalist blockade policies, in particular against the illegal interference of Taiwanese warships and guerrillas with British merchant shipping.[47] During the three years from 1951 to 1953 there were 141 reported incidents, including attacks from the sea (sixty-one), from land batteries (fourteen), and from the air (three) that resulted altogether in four casualties and one death.[48] These numbers gradually decreased following the creation of the Royal Navy's Formosa Straits Patrol, but the Nationalist air blockade actually became tighter, as U.S.-built, Nationalist-piloted planes harassed and even damaged British-owned ships. As one British master complained, "I can handle any two Nationalist warships. I don't mind their guns or their old planes. But I hate these jets! They come screaming out of nowhere, blast you and then they're gone. You don't have a chance."[49]

With Chinese coastal shipping blocked by the Nationalists, much of the PRC's domestic north–south trade was diverted inland and carried by train. Meanwhile, China's international maritime trade was largely conducted by either foreign-registered or Hong Kong ships, which—in theory at least—were neutral vessels. The bulk of China's foreign trade now had to be conducted overland, either with the Soviet Union directly or via the USSR with a number of friendly Eastern European countries. This put enormous strains on China's own railway system, not to mention the trans-Siberian railway, but by the late 1950s over half of China's foreign trade was with the USSR.[50]

Conclusions

In 1951, a full American blockade of the PRC was discussed by U.S. Navy planners, but fear of undermining the Anglo-American alliance both in Europe and in Korea overshadowed any possible benefits. During late 1953 and early 1954, therefore, the U.S. government provided the Nationalists with better equipment to enforce the blockade from the air. About half of China's trade was at that point being conducted overland, mainly with the USSR; an estimated thousand foreign ship arrivals per year accounted for the rest of its foreign trade. The U.S. government hoped that with American training, equipment, and financial backing to build up Nationalist naval and air forces the partial blockade would grow even more effective.[51]

During 1953–54, the Nationalist enforcement of the blockade gradually shifted away from patrol vessels toward airpower, mainly provided by the United States. In April 1953 Taipei also adopted more stringent shipping regulations, largely in line with those already promulgated by the U.S. Maritime Shipping Association, which would prohibit any government-chartered foreign vessel from proceeding to any communist country within a "60-day period after it had discharged its cargo at ports in Free China."[52] Incidents involving Nationalist ships steadily decreased, even as airplane patrols became more common. During 1954, for example, there were a total of thirty-two incidents in which the Nationalist air force attacked British shipping.[53]

The British were upset by American support for the Nationalist blockade of China. In particular, they feared that too strict an embargo might spark a war with the PRC.[54] But an even greater concern to London was that increasing Anglo-American friction might prejudice the two nations' worldwide cooperation, with possibly serious consequences for the security of Western Europe.[55] Given British reluctance to break openly with the U.S. government, however, it would be up to the PRC to stop the Nationalist air attacks. In 1954–55, during the so-called first Taiwan Strait crisis, one of the PRC's most important objectives was to force the Nationalists to end their blockade of the Chinese coastline. U.S. Navy ships assigned to the Taiwan Patrol Force were destined to play a crucial role during this crisis.

Notes

1. A. E. Franklin, "Control of Exports from Hong Kong to China," 15 January 1951, FO 371/92274, TNA/UK.
2. A. E. Franklin, memorandum to Foreign Office, 9 January 1951, FO 371/92272, TNA/UK.
3. "Sanctions against China: Probable Economic Political and Strategic Consequences in Hong Kong, Malaya and South East Asia Generally," draft memorandum (Top Secret), n.d. [December 1950?], FO 371/92276, TNA/UK.
4. British Government, Telegram 821 to Washington, discussing Hong Kong (Secret), 1 March 1951, FO 371/92276, TNA/UK.
5. Foreign Office, telegram to Washington (Secret), 1 March 1951, FO 371/92276, TNA/UK. This line was deleted from the telegram, perhaps because it made it sound as if the British government was using Hong Kong's possible occupation by the PRC to discourage U.S. support for Taiwan.
6. Franklin, "Control of Exports from Hong Kong to China."
7. N. C. C. Trench, "Effects on Hong Kong of American Economic Action against China," 13 January 1951, FO 371/92275, TNA/UK.
8. "Conversation between the Foreign Secretary and Mr. Spender at the Foreign Office on 1st September, 1950," PREM 8/1121, TNA/UK.
9. United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff, "War with China," memorandum, n.d. [1950?], PREM 8/1408, TNA/UK.
10. Admiralty, memorandum to R. A. Butler, MP, on China sanctions (Secret), 21 October 1952, T 237/205, TNA/UK.
11. H. A. Graves, British Embassy in Washington, to P. W. S. Y. Scarlett, Far Eastern Department (Secret), 4 February 1950, FO 371/83425, TNA/UK.
12. Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo against China and the*

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13. JCS 92847 directed "CinCPac to develop a plan for a blockade of the China coast by naval forces." Cited in Director, Strategic Plans, memorandum to DCNO [Deputy Chief of Naval Operations] (Operations) (Top Secret), 14 June 1951, Strategic Plans Division, box 266, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
14. Chief of Naval Operations [hereafter CNO], "Estimate of the Effects of a Naval Blockade of China," study (Top Secret) submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 6 January 1951, Strategic Plans Division, box 266, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
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17. CCD 112 Operation Order 2-50.
18. R. E. Stanley, "Blockade of Communist China," memorandum for the record (Top Secret), 12 February 1953, Strategic Plans Division, box 289, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
19. CNO, "Estimate of the Effects of a Naval Blockade of China."
20. W. P. S. Ormand, "Effect on British Shipping of Stoppage of Trade with China," 16 January 1951, FO 371/92273, TNA/UK.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. "The Southeast China Coast Today," *ONI Review* (February 1953), pp. 51–60.
24. Ibid.
25. "Study on the Problems Involved in Military Aid to China," *FRUS,* vol. 9, *1949* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1974), p. 563.
26. *New York Times,* 20 July 1951.
27. "Southeast China Coast Today."
28. Sherman R. Abrahamson, "Intelligence for Economic Defense," *Central Intelligence Agency: Freedom of Information Act,* www.foia.cia.gov/.
29. The U.S. strategic embargo's effectiveness was shown by descriptions of how rare American medicines became in the PRC during the early 1950s, to the point that only the communist elite could obtain access to them. Jung Chang, *Wild Swans* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), pp. 175–76.
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31. Cdr. M. E. Lashmore, Royal Navy, "Interception and Detention of M.V. *Hoi Houw* 11th to 20th February, 1951 (Secret)," 9 March 1951, FO 371/92278, TNA/UK.
32. Supplementary memorandum to the Foreign Office, "Hoi Houw" ss., 4 February 1951, FO 371/92277, TNA/UK.
33. Trench to Fitzmaurice, 15 March 1951.
34. Lashmore, "Interception and Detention of M.V. *Hoi Houw* 11th to 20th February, 1951 (Secret)."
35. Ibid. [exclamation mark in original].
36. Consul E. T. Biggs, Tamsui, Formosa, to G. W. Aldington, political adviser, Hong Kong, 24 February 1951, FO 371/92276, TNA/UK.
37. W. K. Smedberg, Director, Politico-Military Policy, "Memorandum of Information for the Secretary of the Navy (Confidential)," 13 October 1955, Strategic Plans Division, box 326, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
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CHAPTER FIVE

The First Taiwan Strait Crisis, 1954–1955

By the summer of 1953, the Korean conflict had ended in an apparent stalemate. There were numerous reasons for signing the armistice, but Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 helped break a negotiating deadlock over the status of North Korean defectors. The Korean armistice was finally signed on 27 July 1953. Soon afterward, the PRC began to redeploy troops from north to south. Tensions gradually grew throughout the south, particularly in the Taiwan Strait region, where conditions were, as Dulles described them, equivalent to "living over a volcano."[1]

On 11 August 1954, Zhou Enlai stated that the PRC had to liberate Taiwan. Three weeks later, on 3 September 1954, PLA forces began to bombard Jinmen Island, killing two American military advisers, Lt. Col. Alfred Mendendorp and Lt. Col. Frank W. Lynn. This renewed focus on the Taiwan Strait was intended to show Mao's independence from Moscow. But another important PRC goal was to interrupt the Nationalist blockade. During November 1954, Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru reported that Chinese leaders had told him during a recent trip to Beijing that the Nationalist blockade was a major problem and that they were "faced with continuous pin-pricks and irritations of cumulative effect."[2]

The shelling of the offshore islands was also a cover to attack other Nationalist-controlled islands, in particular the most northerly Nationalist-held group, the Dachens. Rapid response by the U.S. Navy helped to resolve this crisis. Chiang Kai-shek agreed to evacuate the Dachens, and the U.S. Navy provided ships, training, and protection during the evacuation operations. During this crisis, the Taiwan Patrol Force remained the first line of defense against any possible PRC cross-strait invasion.

The Changing Goals of the Taiwan Patrol Force

Soon after the Communist victory in China and with the beginning of the Korean War, the U.S. government had instituted the Taiwan Patrol Force to neutralize the Taiwan Strait region. But as the ongoing conflict in Korea had already shown, what the

Communist forces lacked in technology and ordnance, they could more than make up in sheer numbers. During the early 1950s it was generally conceded that the Chinese Communists could take the disputed offshore islands along China's southeastern coastline whenever they wanted, if they were willing to devote the necessary manpower. The relatively small size of the Taiwan Patrol Force would, at the most, represent a temporary obstacle to any such invasion.

From 1950 through early 1953, the Taiwan Patrol Force was ordered to stop attacks from either side of the strait. In this operation, USN ships were intended to play a neutral role, acting as a buffer between the PRC and ROC. While the PRC clearly resented the presence of USN ships in its offshore waters, at some point Beijing leaders must have appreciated the fact that the Nationalist forces were being actively dissuaded thereby from attacking the mainland. The neutralization order, however, specifically did not include the many offshore islands controlled by the Nationalists; on 7 October 1950, it was clarified in Operation Order 7-50 that Seventh Fleet vessels were not to participate in the "defense of any coastal islands held by the Nationalist Chinese nor will they interfere with Nationalist Chinese operations from the coastal islands."[3]

Shortly after Dwight D. Eisenhower won the 1952 presidential election, the focus of the Taiwan Patrol Force began to change. At least at the beginning of his administration, Eisenhower heeded a call by hard-liners to unleash Chiang Kai-shek.[4] A Gallup poll from early in 1953 showed widespread public support, with 61 percent of Americans in a nationwide survey in favor of supplying more warships to Taiwan for use in blockading the Chinese coastline and more airplanes to bomb the Chinese mainland.[5]

Tensions were already high in the Taiwan Strait. During 11–15 April 1952, for example, the Nationalists and Communists fought over Nanri Island, off Fujian Province, about seventy miles south of Fuzhou. The Nationalists were eventually forced to abandon the island. But later that year, during the early morning of 11 October 1952, approximately four thousand regular Nationalist Fifth Army troops and about a thousand guerrillas from Jinmen attacked it. The raid failed, largely because the civilian junks the guerrilla army used as amphibious lift dropped the troops too far at sea and then left them stranded there.[6] The Nationalists were forced to withdraw on 14 October, and in retaliation Communist forces attacked and took Nanpeng Island, part of the Lamock group of islands, off the port of Shantou, in fighting that lasted from the 18th to the 20th. This Nationalist loss proved to be permanent, breaking the blockade of Shantou and leaving Jinmen as the southernmost Nationalist island base.[7]

Carrying out his campaign promises, on 2 February 1953, Eisenhower lifted the U.S. Navy's previous orders to restrict the Nationalist forces. According to a U.S. government statement, the Seventh Fleet would "no longer be employed as a shield for the mainland

of China."[8] One immediate result was that the commander of the Seventh Fleet was instructed that the Taiwan Patrol Force was no longer to prevent the use by the Nationalists of Taiwan or the Penghu Islands as bases for operations against the Chinese mainland.[9] Predictably, this change led to the immediate amendment of previous orders. In particular, on paper copies of Operation Order 20-52, "Special Patrol Instructions," the sentence "Large forces moving from Formosa toward the mainland will be reported to CTG 72.0" was stricken through.[10]

During April 1953 talks were held in Taipei between Adlai Stevenson, a recent presidential candidate who had lost to Eisenhower, and Chiang Kai-shek. During this meeting Chiang promised Stevenson that with continued American military support his forces would be ready to return to the mainland within three years at the latest and that once they had returned to China they would gain a significant domestic following within "three to six months."[11] The U.S. government agreed to support this plan. One purpose later given by Dulles to the British ambassador was to "free the United States Navy from the obligation to protect the mainland against attack from Formosa."[12]

But another major reason for this U.S. policy change was to open a new peripheral theater in the south so as to put pressure on Beijing to sign a peace treaty ending the Korean War.[13] Washington's goal was to "make a diversionary threat at a time when fighting was going on in Korea so as to cause the Chinese Communists to transfer forces away from Korea towards Formosa."[14] Dulles even told a New Zealand delegation that "unleashing Chiang" would "encourage the Chinese [Communists] to retain substantial forces opposite Formosa."[15] That is, Washington's strategic objective was to put additional military pressure on China's southern flank so that it would feel compelled to reduce the PLA troops in Korea.

The Nationalists seemed eager to carry out this new policy. The first raid mounted directly from Taiwan following Eisenhower's February 1953 de-neutralization order was against Dongshan Island, which had been taken from the Nationalists on 11 May 1950 by over ten thousand PLA troops. In mid-July 1953, the Nationalists tried to retake the island with approximately 6,500 guerrillas, marines, and paratroopers. Airplanes from the Nationalist air force dropped paratroopers on the northwest coast. Meanwhile, the Jinmen-based amphibious force—called the "Sea Guerrilla Task Force"—landed on the northeast coast and occupied Dongshan City.[16] This attack ultimately failed, however, and the Nationalist forces were forced to retreat, but the threat to the PRC was real.

The pressure that Eisenhower's decision to open a peripheral campaign in the Taiwan Strait put on Beijing played a crucial role in the PRC's decision to come to terms in Korea. After the armistice was signed on 27 July 1953, the PRC immediately began to move troops south and station them across from Taiwan. This led to escalation on both

sides of the Taiwan Strait, and during August 1954 Chiang Kai-shek ordered additional deployments of fifty-eight thousand troops to Jinmen and of fifteen thousand to Mazu. These movements had all the outward appearances of preparation for a Nationalist invasion of mainland China. The PRC was sufficiently concerned to authorize attacks against the Nationalist-held offshore islands, in particular the northernmost islands of Yijiangshan and the Dachens.

The Beginning of the 1954–1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis

When China intervened in the Korean War in the fall of 1950, the United States actively helped the Nationalists tighten their naval blockade of the PRC. It hoped that American military equipment, training, and financial backing would make the blockade of strategic goods even tighter. The blockade was highly effective, and during November 1954 PRC leaders explained to the visiting prime minister Nehru that the Nationalists from their offshore bases were conducting nuisance raids and interfering with shipping. Upon his return, Nehru immediately warned the British high commissioner in India that China was "determined not to tolerate this situation any longer."[17]

During the early 1950s, U.S. Navy and other military representatives helped equip Taiwan's navy and air force to conduct a more effective blockade.[18] But by late 1953 immediately before tension erupted over Jinmen and Mazu Islands, the Nationalists held only twenty-five islands, down from thirty-two the year before.[19] The U.S. Navy sent aircraft carriers to the region. For example, USS *Taussig* (DD 746), which had been in early July 1950 one of the first USN destroyers on the Taiwan Strait patrol, departed on its first peacetime deployment to the western Pacific on 3 March 1954 to escort the aircraft carrier USS *Boxer* (CV 21). The destroyer remained in the region for the next three months, screening *Boxer,* conducting various HUK antisubmarine warfare (ASW) exercises, and patrolling the Taiwan Strait.

On 3 September 1954, the PRC, having relocated troops from north to south following the end of the conflict in Korea, began to shell Jinmen. PLA attacks also began against the Dachen Islands, where there was an important guerrilla base for the Nationalist blockade. These attacks were aimed mainly at halting guerrilla activity; taking the northernmost of the offshore islands in order to stage an invasion made little sense, since they were too far from Taiwan. According to Rear Adm. Samuel Frankel, "From the viewpoint of protecting Taiwan, I think that these islands have no significance at all."[20]

As early as 15 July 1953, Adm. Arthur W. Radford, dual-hatted as the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command and Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, had warned Chiang Kai-shek to bolster the sagging defense of the northern islands, but as he

reported back to Washington, Chiang was reluctant to deploy adequate forces. Radford was concerned that retaining the islands was important psychologically to Taiwan's defense and strategically for gathering intelligence on the PRC. For a time, Radford even considered proposing that they be put within the "U.S. defense perimeter."[21]

On 21 July 1953 the Eisenhower administration concluded that "although the importance of these islands to Taiwan's defense is generally recognized here, the prevailing view is that the responsibility for their defense must remain with the Government of China."[22] On 25 September 1953, Adm. Joseph J. "Jocko" Clark, commander of the Seventh Fleet, clearly stated that his instructions to protect Taiwan and the Penghus from aggression did not embrace the Nationalist-held islands close to China's coast.[23] Beginning in December 1953, ONI began to warn that "the Nationalists now hold these coastal islands by default," and only because the "Communists have not yet thought them of great enough value to tie down the necessary forces to take the area." This ONI report even suggested that "there has been some indication that the Nationalists are trying very hard to get the U.S. to make a statement obligating the Seventh Fleet to the protection of the offshore islands as well as Formosa."[24]

As the U.S. military advisers had warned from July 1953 onward would happen, on 1 November 1954 PRC planes began to bomb and strafe the Dachens. During early 1955 the PLA focused its attention on a small island, Yijiangshan, only eight miles north of the Dachens. Using tactics that reflected Soviet training, on 18 January 1955 over fifty PLA Air Force (PLAAF) planes attacked Yijiangshan. High winds disrupted the first attack, but the second was evaluated as a "well-planned, well-organized, and well-executed operation." Yijiangshan fell on 18 January (map 5). On 19 January 1955, the PLAAF began to attack the Dachen Islands, with seventy aircraft.[25] This new attack spurred an American decision to convince the Nationalists to abandon the Dachens.

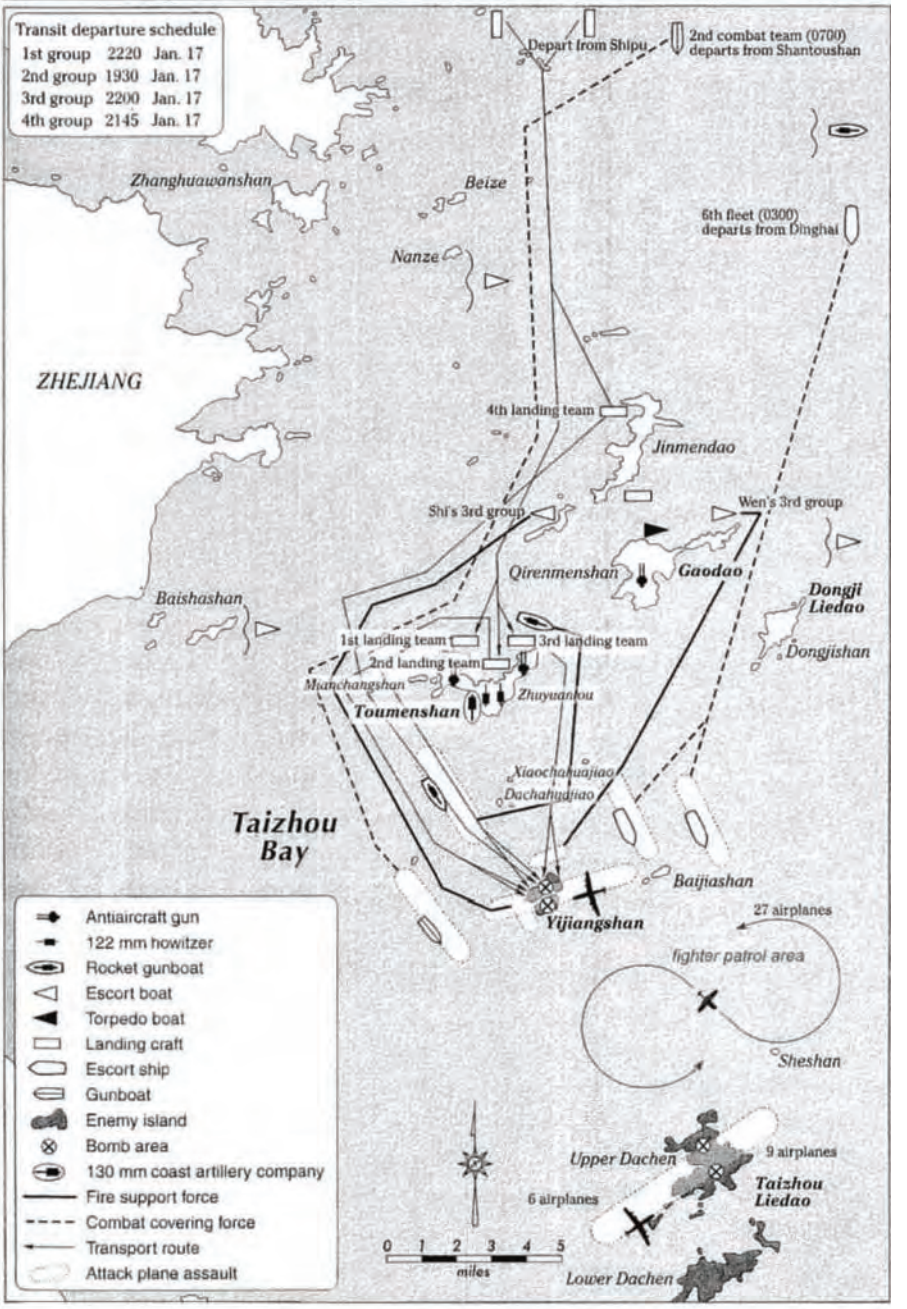
The Decision to Evacuate the Dachen Islands

During mid-January 1955, the Nationalists requested that the Seventh Fleet be moved closer to the Dachens to expedite the delivery of crucial supplies.[26] Later that month, they also asked for USN air support, a request that the American ambassador to Taiwan backed in order to avoid undermining confidence in American determination.[27] But defending the Dachen Islands permanently would be difficult, requiring two full-time USN aircraft carriers plus supporting ships. According to Dulles, the Dachens "were too far from Formosa, too vulnerable, and insufficiently important from the strategic point of view to justify an American commitment to defend them."[28]

On 23 January 1955, the United States recommended that the Dachen Islands be evacuated. Chiang agreed to withdraw only reluctantly, in particular because giving up a

MAP 5

PLA January 1955 Yijiangshan Landing Campaign



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strong position like the Dachen Islands without a fight would "gravely affect troop and civilian morale." To avoid the impression that he was backing down, Chiang refused to agree to a cease-fire of any kind.[29] Facing overwhelming odds, however, the Nationalists finally agreed to evacuate. The PRC was warned not to interfere, and USN forces were ordered "not to accept any tactical disadvantages." Or, put another way, U.S. pilots were not to get "altruistically shot down."[30]

The evacuation, called Operation KING KONG, proved to be a massive undertaking. The 209-man party sent ashore included eleven USN personnel as part of a reconnaissance team; the majority were U.S. Marines, including members of the 3rd Shore Party Battalion and 3rd Marine Division, supported by eighteen Nationalist interpreters. An on-island Command Group (twelve Americans), supported by a Radio Relay Group (four) on USS *Henrico* (APA 45), commanded two groups, the larger of them (110 men) on North Island, the other (eighty-three) on South Island. There were two evacuation beaches on each island. Tank landing ships beached during high tide, loaded, and got under way again twelve hours later, during the next high tide. From 8 to 12 February 1955 the Marine teams evacuated "over 15,000 civilians, 11,000 military, 125 vehicles, 5300 tons of material, 7600 tons of ammunition and 165 artillery pieces," sustaining zero casualties to either U.S. or Nationalist personnel.[31]

To protect this massive evacuation, the Seventh Fleet assembled seventy warships, including a "backbone" of six attack aircraft carriers (CVAs), one antisubmarine aircraft carrier (CVS), and many escorts, like USS *Boyd* (DD 544).[32] During the early days of the crisis, *Carpenter* patrolled the Taiwan Strait and helped convoy Nationalist forces being evacuated. A total of twenty-two vessels, including the seven aircraft carriers—*Bennington* (CVA 20), *Hancock* (CVA 19), *Lexington* (CVA 16), *Midway* (CVA 41), *Shangri-La* (CVA 38), *Ticonderoga* (CVA 14), and *Princeton* (CVS 37)—became eligible for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal–Taiwan Straits.[33]

While the evacuation was a success, control over the operation was overly centralized, with local commanders "given grave responsibilities without the authority to exercise initiative and freedom of action in the execution of same." Poor vehicle maintenance and inadequate traffic control were major problems; the commander of the Dachen Defense Command Advisory Team, Gen. John C. Macdonald, spent "better than an hour in the vicinity of Ta-Ao-Li personally unsnarling a traffic jam and acting as an MP." These shortfalls led to unexpected delays that could have jeopardized the entire operation: "Had the evacuation been opposed by the Communists, failure might well have been the result."[34]

After the evacuation, the flag of the Republic of China was lowered by Chiang Ching-kuo, Chiang Kai-shek's son. The Zhejiang provincial government, to which the island

had historically been subordinate, was also abolished in the Republic of China. This meant that Nationalist forces now held disputed mainland territory only in Fujian Province. But rather than pushing the United States and Taiwan apart, as Beijing had undoubtedly hoped would happen, the evacuation of the Dachens unexpectedly led to closer relations between Washington and Taipei.

New U.S.-ROC Security Arrangements

The political impact of the PRC attack on the Dachens was to renew discussions of a new U.S.-Taiwan security treaty; earlier in 1954, all such talks had ended in failure. The new agreement reaffirmed the pledges made earlier by Truman and Eisenhower to defend Taiwan and the Penghu Islands against Communist attack, but it was deliberately vague about the security status of the other offshore islands. Previous USN operation orders had even specified that the term "enemy forces" did not include forces attacking other offshore islands held by the Nationalists.[35]

The international reaction to the Dachen evacuation was mixed. To the Australians, the loss of the Dachens was comparable to the 1938 fall of Czechoslovakia, while a PRC attack on Taiwan would be equivalent to the 1939 invasion of Poland. In a February 1955 Gallup poll, 66 percent of Australians favored joining the United States in a war to prevent the Chinese Communists from invading Taiwan. In a letter from April 1955, Prime Minister Menzies argued the "desirability of giving Formosa military and political strength to ensure the future will be decided peacefully and not as a result of Communist policies of force."[36]

But public opinion in the UK opposed a war with China. Winston Churchill, in a private letter to Eisenhower, warned him that "a war to keep the coastal islands for China would not be defensible here."[37] The British ambassador to Washington further emphasized that Britain, having recognized the PRC, necessarily "recognized that these islands were part of China." It was highly unlikely, therefore, that Britain could support the United States in any fight over the offshore islands. This greatly concerned the British government, since if war broke out, "the Western alliance might be split." The British ambassador asked, "Were these islands really worth it?"[38]

Taking into consideration the differing views of its allies, the U.S. government adopted an intentionally ambiguous policy of keeping the Communists guessing about the true defensive posture of the offshore islands.[39] According to one press report, "The pact will be deliberately vague about how the U.S. might react if the Reds were to invade any of the other Nationalist-held islands off the China coast. The U.S. doesn't want the Reds to know which it will defend, and which it will simply write off. It prefers to keep them guessing."[40]

After lengthy negotiations, the United States and Republic of China agreed to very specific, and in places deliberately ambiguous, wording. The treaty stated that the U.S. security guarantee was also "applicable to such other territories as may be determined by mutual agreement."[41] This deferred any decision on whether the offshore islands would be included in the security umbrella. The final U.S.-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty, which was signed on 2 December 1954, contained this ambiguous language.

PRC attacks on the Dachen Islands during January 1955 led Eisenhower to request Congress to give him special powers to defend Taiwan. On 29 January 1955, the "Formosa Resolution" was passed by Congress.[42] This resolution gave the president enormous latitude; only the president, it declared, could judge whether a PRC attack on the remaining Nationalist-held offshore islands was part of a more general assault on Taiwan.[43] The scope of the resolution was left unspecified; Congress agreed the president could authorize "securing and protection of such related positions and territories of that area [as are] now in friendly hands."[44] Soon afterward, on 9 February 1955, the Senate accepted the defense pact; final ratifications were exchanged on 3 March.

Leaving the status of the offshore islands vague gave the president the widest possible discretion in responding to future Communist attacks. In a top-secret letter Eisenhower explained to Churchill that Chiang Kai-shek had agreed not to "conduct any offensive operations against the mainland either from Formosa *or from his coastal positions,* except in agreement with us." This assurance would allow Washington to stop Chiang from using his offshore bases to continue the "sporadic war against the mainland" or to support an "invasion of the mainland of China." According to Eisenhower, these agreements showed that the U.S. government had "done much more than seems generally realized."[45]

The true challenge for American military and political leaders in the first Taiwan Strait crisis was to convince Chiang Kai-shek to settle the dispute over the offshore islands peacefully, preferably by abandoning them all completely, but without undermining the international community's faith in U.S. support for Taiwan. If the PRC took them by force, Chiang Kai-shek would lose "prestige."[46] In the Asian context, this meant losing face. Eisenhower even reminded Churchill on 25 January 1955 that the United States had to be concerned with the "solidarity of the Island Barrier in the Western Pacific," and deserting Taiwan might "risk a collapse of Asiatic resistance to the Communists."[47] This in turn would undermine the American containment policy. However, if Chiang withdrew from the offshore islands on his own volition, he would not lose face. During early 1955, various U.S. government and military officials attempted—without success—to convince Chiang to do so.

Failed U.S. Attempts to Force Chiang to Abandon the Offshore Islands

With his last foothold in his home province of Zhejiang gone, Chiang Kai-shek was determined to retain the remaining offshore islands—of which the most important were Jinmen and Mazu, where blockade bases had been set up—at any cost. Giving them up might be interpreted by overseas Chinese as a sign that his resistance to communism was collapsing. These concerns undermined prospects for a quick and easy settlement. The United States made repeated attempts, however—in a little-known aspect of the first Taiwan Strait crisis—to convince the Nationalists to abandon all the offshore islands, including Jinmen and Mazu. To many in Washington, the forced evacuation of the Dachens boded ill for the other Nationalist-occupied offshore islands.

In one such attempt, in early 1955, Admiral Radford, newly appointed as chairman of the JCS, and Walter Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, met with Chiang Kai-shek. They promised that the United States would supply better naval equipment for the Nationalist blockade if in return Chiang agreed to give up the remaining disputed offshore islands. Chiang left the room, supposedly to pray in the garden, returned, and said, "I just want to tell you that I have prayerfully concluded that I cannot accept such a proposal because I do not have the faith in your government to sustain it."[48]

Chiang's refusal left Washington with few options: it had either to support Chiang on his terms or risk losing Taiwan as a dependable ally and support of the Cold War containment policy. During the spring of 1955 Washington once again asked Chiang to consider giving up Jinmen and Mazu Islands, but he again refused.[49] Eisenhower even promised to create a joint U.S.-Taiwan defense zone, from Shantou to Wenzhou, in which the movement of all maritime traffic of a contraband or military character would be interdicted. In particular, the U.S. Navy would lay minefields that "would force coastwise junk traffic to come out where it also could be intercepted and controlled."[50] But Chiang vetoed this proposal as well, on the ground that relinquishing additional offshore islands would make his government look weak. Furthermore, Chiang argued, once he gave up Jinmen and Mazu the United States might soon halt any "effective shipping interdiction scheme in the face of strong and inevitable opposition by the British and others."[51]

Certain USN leaders, including the Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Arleigh Burke (photo 4), agreed with Chiang that defending the islands was necessary. Burke even told Eisenhower, "They don't mean anything, it's a purely symbolic thing, they don't mean anything except, who's daddy? Who runs that part of the world, the Red Chinese or the Nationalist Chinese? But physically it doesn't make any difference. . . . These are Nationalist Chinese islands, and they have to be held, or they have to be abandoned voluntarily

before they're threatened, before they're made to abandon them."[52] The big problem was that once the United States committed itself to defending the offshore islands, it had to be "prepared to follow through in event the Communists should decide to test U.S. willingness actually to participate in the defense of the islands."[53]

Photo 4
The CNO, Adm. Arleigh A. Burke, greeted by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek during a 1955 visit to Taiwan.

Naval Historical Center, Photo NH 54905

Washington still hoped to defuse military tension and to focus instead on longer-term goals. During a 10 February 1955 talk with Taiwan's foreign minister, George K. C. Yeh, Dulles explained that the solution to the "two Chinas" problem would take time. Instead of trying to force Chinese unification, the United States and Taiwan should capitalize on "the vulnerability of Communist regimes to economic and other pressures."[54] His goal was to "strain the Sino-Soviet alliance by compelling the Chinese to increase economic and military demands for Soviet support to the point where Moscow would be forced to drop Beijing."[55] These economic and other pressures were specifically designed to increase Sino-Soviet friction.

The Impact of Sino-Soviet Relations on a Taiwan Strait Resolution

The impact of Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations on the first Taiwan Strait crisis is too rarely considered. Following Stalin's death on 5 March 1953, the last thing the bickering new Soviet leaders wanted was for tension in the Taiwan Strait to drag them into a new world war, especially one that might escalate to the use of nuclear weapons. At the same time that the U.S. government was attempting to restrain Chiang Kai-shek, therefore, the USSR was actively reducing its military support for China. In fact, in the early spring of 1955, just as the first Taiwan Strait crisis reached its peak, Moscow decided to withdraw important defensive installations from its former naval base at Lüshun. This action made Manchuria vulnerable to attack from the sea, which in turn put pressure on Beijing to de-escalate its military operations far to the south in the Taiwan Strait.

These changes represented an important backdrop to the peaceful resolution of the first Taiwan Strait crisis. In Moscow, an intense leadership struggle erupted soon after Stalin's death and continued until the 20 February 1956 Twentieth Party Congress,

when Nikita Khrushchev, now First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, delivered his "secret speech" denouncing Stalin. During this three-year period, Mao Zedong attempted to renegotiate some of the more onerous aspects of the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty and to assert leadership over the international communist movement.

Even before Stalin's death important alterations in the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty had been made, especially concerning Lüshun and Dalian. A 1952 agreement scheduled all Soviet military forces to withdraw from these Manchurian ports by 31 May 1955. Moscow also agreed to transfer all Lüshun military installations to the PRC. For his part, Moscow having agreed to return the Manchurian railway and the Lüshun naval base to China without charge, Mao evidently thought that the USSR would also leave the large coastal artillery pieces protecting that port. But at the last minute Khrushchev demanded that China pay for the guns, and at full price: "These are very expensive weapons, we would be selling them at reduced prices."[56]

Moscow's decision to strip the naval base of its main defensive armament left China highly vulnerable in Manchuria. Further, Khrushchev's decision was a clear sign of his unwillingness to back Mao in an offensive to retake the offshore islands. He further hinted that the USSR's nuclear "umbrella" might not cover the Taiwan Strait.[57] The PRC had little choice but to back down in the south. On 23 April 1955 Beijing stated that it was willing to negotiate the status of Taiwan, and on 1 May it halted the shelling of Jinmen Island. Three months later, on 1 August, as a sign of goodwill, China even released eleven captured American airmen previously sentenced to lengthy jail terms.[58]

One can only speculate on the impact that the Soviet demilitarization of Manchuria had on Beijing's decision to halt the southern offensive against Taiwan. Certainly, linkages between north and south had been shown before, in particular by the impact of Eisenhower's "unleashing Chiang" policy on the successful negotiation of the Korean armistice, which had in turn freed the PLA to redeploy troops to the south. In any case, lacking firm Soviet support, Beijing called off attacks against the offshore islands. Given the forces arrayed against it, the PRC leadership had no choice but to back down in the first Taiwan Strait crisis. Ultimately, China's coercive tactics against Taiwan did not succeed in large part because the USSR "failed to come to the PRC's rescue when it was intimidated by the United States."[59]

Conclusions

In a show of force, the PRC initiated the first Taiwan Strait crisis during early September 1954. While shelling Jinmen Island, Communist forces overran Yijiangshan and

attacked the Dachen Islands, which were evacuated by the Nationalists. During this period Washington repeatedly urged Taipei to abandon all the offshore islands, but Chiang Kai-shek refused. Not only would complete abandonment force Chiang to lose face, but so long as the Nationalists held these islands, just off China's coast, the Communists could not proclaim total victory on the mainland. In addition, Chinese history had shown that the Nationalists could always stage a mainland invasion from these offshore bases, thereby using the disputed islands as stepping-stones to retake control of China.

Scholars have argued, however, that the PRC's primary motivation to initiate this crisis was to test American resolve to defend Taiwan.[60] From that purely strategic viewpoint, and although the PRC could claim a limited victory because Nationalist troops had evacuated the Dachens and several other smaller offshore islands, the PRC's attacks backfired. In December 1954 Taiwan and the United States signed a mutual security pact reaffirming that the latter would defend Taiwan and the Penghu Islands; Chiang Kai-shek promised that no offensive operations would take place against the mainland without America's prior agreement. Four years later Dulles said that Chiang "had maintained that limitation and honourably maintained it."[61]

The 1954–55 Taiwan Strait crisis also had important domestic consequences in the PRC. In December 1953, ONI had warned that Beijing's threats to attack the offshore islands and especially to invade Taiwan provided the Chinese leaders an important propaganda "gimmick."[62] But, with the exception of regaining Yijiangshan and the Dachens, which were not useful for an invasion of Taiwan, the PRC attacks had failed. Furthermore, the Soviet government showed that it would not give its full support to Beijing's military actions. Finally, rather than pushing the United States and Taiwan apart, the attacks brought about in the January 1955 Formosa Resolution even greater American security guarantees to Taiwan and the offshore islands. Reflecting the new climate of improved U.S.-ROC military relations, the U.S. Navy began to take on new responsibilities, including more robust funding and a more intensive training regime for the Nationalist navy.

Notes

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8. UK Embassy, Washington, to Foreign Office (Secret), 30 January 1953, PREM 11/867, TNA/UK.
9. CTF 72, "U.S. Navy Operation Order No. 2-A-53," 1 May 1954 [hereafter CTF 72 Operation Order 2-A-53], Post-1946 Operation Plans, Task Force 72, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
10. CTG 72.0, "U.S. Navy Operation Order, No. 20-52," 3 December 1952, Post-1946 Operation Plans, Task Force 72, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C. There is no way to know when this line was marked out, but most likely it was during January–March 1953.
11. Dulles Papers, 8 April 1953, 88851, reel 204/205.
12. UK Embassy, Washington, telegram to Foreign Office (Secret), 18 October 1954, CAB 21/3272, TNA/UK.
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20. Samuel B. Frankel, *The Reminiscences of Rear Admiral Samuel B. Frankel, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1972), pp. 359–60.
21. Dulles Papers, 15 July 1953, 89555, reel 204/205.
22. Ibid., 21 July 1953, 89596.
23. Excerpt from a *South China Morning Post* article, dated 25 September 1953, ADM 1/24789, TNA/UK.
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26. Dulles Papers, 14 January 1955, 92562, reel 210/211.
27. Ibid., 20 January 1955, 92599.
28. UK Ambassador, Washington, to Foreign Office (Secret), 19 January 1955, PREM 11/867, TNA/UK.
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30. UK Embassy, Washington, to Foreign Office, 6 February 1955, PREM 11/867, TNA/UK.
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36. UK High Commissioner in Australia, telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office (Top Secret), 16 April 1955, DEFE 13/288, TNA/UK.

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50. "Memorandum for the Record, by the Ambassador in the Republic of China (Rankin)," 29 April 1955, *FRUS,* vol. 2, *China: 1955–1957,* pp. 529–31.
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53. Adm. Robert B. Carney, "Security of the Offshore Islands Presently Held by the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China," memorandum to Joint Chiefs of Staff (Top Secret), 30 July 1953, appendix, Strategic Plans Division, box 289, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
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56. Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev and Sergei Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: Statesman, 1953–1964* (University Park: Penn State Univ. Press, 2007), p. 434.
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CHAPTER SIX

Funding and Training the Nationalist Navy

The Nationalist and Communist navies looked similar on paper during the early 1950s; in any actual encounter the handling of the ships by officers and crews would make the difference. Beginning in 1950, therefore, the U.S. Navy started to help train the Nationalist navy. By summer 1952, the maintenance of Nationalist ships and equipment had dramatically improved. However, with the active support of the USSR, the Chinese Communist navy was growing even faster and appeared likely to surpass the Nationalists'.

In the early-to-middle 1950s, the USN assessments of the Nationalist navy's capabilities were not optimistic. During actual Nationalist operations, the ONI reported, two U.S.-provided destroyers, *Tai Ho* (DE 23) and its twin *Tai Hu* (DE 25), experienced great difficulty working together.[1] This showed that the Nationalist navy was still incapable of effective joint operations.[2] Until these problems were solved, the CNO, Adm. Robert Carney, advised "no implied commitment on the part of the U.S. to provide additional ships."[3]

Following the first Taiwan Strait crisis and in line with the new U.S.-ROC mutual security pact, however, the U.S. Navy increased its funding and training efforts, particularly in the area of high-tech equipment. Over time, the Nationalist navy's efficiency increased, to the point where many American officers considered it nearly on a par with the U.S. Navy.[4] These improvements positively impacted the conduct of the Nationalist blockade and kept the Nationalist navy prepared to fight off a PRC invasion.

Growth of the PLAN

At the outset the Nationalist navy represented perhaps half of China's former navy and had only to protect a small geographic area around the island of Taiwan. The PRC created its own navy in April 1949, however, and once it began to acquire additional ships and weapons from the USSR, the Nationalist navy's lead began to slip. After the first Taiwan Strait crisis, there was concern that the PLAN could now threaten, perhaps

even defeat, the Nationalist navy. At this point the U.S. Navy stepped in with additional equipment and training. Often it was ships from the Taiwan Patrol Force that were tasked to conduct this training.

Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, the British and the Americans closely watched the development of the Nationalist navy and of the PLAN. In November 1949 the British listed Nationalist naval assets as seven destroyers, twenty-one destroyer escorts, and twenty-two gunboats, backed by a 300,000-man army and a 230-plane air force (145 fighter-bombers, sixty medium bombers, and twenty-five heavy bombers). Based on these numbers, the British Chiefs of Staff concluded that direct invasion of Taiwan would be improbable for several months, provided the Nationalist naval and air forces remained loyal, since the Communists had "inadequate naval and air forces to support the passage of troops and transports."[5]

Meanwhile, a prime American goal was to keep the Nationalist navy roughly equivalent to the PLAN, but not greatly superior, since it sought to avoid the possibility of a major Nationalist attack on the mainland. In July 1951 the PLAN was still being described by ONI as a "pick-up" fleet, the "youngest and weakest component of Red China's armed forces." In particular, it was handicapped by the lack of modern equipment and trained personnel. But the Communist ships' firepower—even discounting the still inoperable British cruiser *Chongqing*—included thirty-nine guns of diameters over three inches, compared to the Nationalists' twelve. Furthermore, the majority of China's largest and best ships were under the East China Military District Naval Headquarters and based in Shanghai, which faced Taiwan.[6]

During September 1952 USN analysts began to warn, moreover, that the Nationalist navy was "at present incapable of being employed in any fleet maneuver should an occasion demand it." A concept of "static zonal defense" had permeated the Nationalist navy to such an extent that it had lost one of its primary assets, mobility.[7] The Office of Naval Intelligence further cautioned that all too soon the PLAN would have greater firepower, plus a fleet of forty motor torpedo boats (MTBs): "It is difficult to conceive of any all-out engagement between the two navies which would not be close enough to the coast to enable some of the 40 Communist MTB to get into action, and the employment of MTB would further increase the Communist advantage in fire power."[8]

The PLAN grew quickly during the mid-1950s with help from the USSR. *Chongqing* was salvaged and renamed *Beijing.* Beginning in 1954, the USSR sold the PRC four Type 7 destroyers, known as the *Anshan* class in China.[9] By the mid-1950s the PLAN had largely caught up with the Nationalist navy in terms of ships, armaments, and training. One ONI assessment even warned during the spring of 1953 that if the two navies were

to meet in full-scale combat the "Communists' superiority in fire power, discipline, morale, and leadership would probably bring them victory."[10]

There were valid reasons, accordingly, for the U.S. concerns that the Nationalists could not permanently retain their island bases along the PRC coastline, much less use them to stage an invasion of the mainland. According to one ONI assessment from December 1953, the PLAN was more than a match for the Nationalists in the coastal waters of the Chinese mainland, since the Communist forces now had sufficient land-based airpower to control the sky over the area. In fact, it was unclear why the Nationalists had been allowed to keep the coastal islands. The Chinese problem, from a military and strategic viewpoint, was that the coastal areas of Fujian Province were almost entirely cut off from the interior; troops stationed there would be in a "deep freeze," "immobile as far as the over-all disposition of military forces in China are concerned." Therefore, any Communist invasion would require extremely large forces, enough to occupy each and every offshore island.[11]

Any PRC decision to attack the offshore islands also depended on the international climate. A truce ending the Korean conflict could free up many PLA soldiers:

> It is unlikely that the Chinese Communists will undertake to drive the Nationalists completely from the coastal islands of China as long as there is a possibility that the People's Liberation Army may again become actively engaged in the war in Korea. If a peace is concluded in Korea, or if the PLA is withdrawn from Korea, a campaign to "liberate" the coastal islands would have great value to the Chinese Communists who have the capability to undertake and carry to a successful conclusion such a venture against the Nationalists.[12]

The PRC had previously used mass forces to retake several crucial islands, including Hainan, but it needed to create a real navy if it hoped to take others so as to attack Taiwan itself. Early PLAN goals included destroying the sea blockade of liberated China, supporting the PLA in defense of Chinese soil, and wiping out all "remnants of the reactionary forces" on Taiwan.[13]

During this PLAN buildup, the Nationalist navy continued to carry out its blockade of the mainland. Through 1954 the Communists had little choice but to bear up as best they could, since they did not have the naval assets necessary to stop the blockaders:

> The Chinese Communists have undoubtedly been inconvenienced by this activity, but their military activity in the coastal areas has been almost solely defensive in nature. They have from time to time taken retaliatory action in reprisal for Nationalist activity, but with the exception of the disastrous attempt by elements of the Third Field Army to recapture Quemoy [Jinmen] in October 1949, they have made no concerted effort to retake these islands. Rumors that the Communists are very apprehensive of Nationalist landings on the mainland have persisted, and reports indicate that they have made defensive preparations even including the razing of villages adjacent to the sea. Strategically, the area is of secondary importance to the Communists. The important ports of Shanghai and Canton are unaffected by Nationalist activity, and although shipping into Wenchow, Foochow, Amoy, and Swatow is interfered with, these ports have no accessibility to railroads and no significant industrial development. It is probable that the Communists are content to endure the Nationalist

> nuisance activity until they are ready to assert naval and air superiority in the area in preparation for an attack on Formosa.[14]

While passively enduring the Nationalist blockade, the PRC continued to obtain military hardware from the USSR. In particular, China quickly increased the size of its own navy in order to try to wrest control from the Nationalists of some of the northernmost of the offshore islands, including the Dachens in 1955. In response, to help solve the Nationalist navy's operational problems, the U.S. Navy rapidly expanded its training mission in Taiwan.

The U.S. Navy Training Mission

Throughout the 1950s, the most important factor stopping a possible PRC invasion was the constant presence of the Taiwan Patrol Force, backed up by the full weight of the Seventh Fleet. Between 1949 and 1955, as noted, the comparative strengths of the Nationalist navy and the PLAN changed dramatically; at first the Nationalists were dominant, but with support from the USSR the PLAN quickly passed them. By 1956, soon after the first Taiwan Strait crisis, even the new air-based phase of the Nationalist blockade began to lose headway, and the overall impact of the blockade was described by one source as strategically "puny."[15] While PLAN assets now seemed capable of defeating the Nationalist navy, the Nationalists were in no position to stage a major attack of the mainland. Without the continued support of the U.S. Navy, therefore, the prospects for the Nationalist regime on Taiwan would have indeed been bleak.

In May 1951, Washington created the Military Assistance Advisory Group for Taiwan and began to allocate funds for it. One high estimate of U.S. military aid to Taiwan between 1950 and 1969 was $3.19 billion.[16] By 1951, the number of American advisers on Formosa totaled about 650, about half of these associated with the MAAG, the other half a variety of smaller organizations, including the aforementioned CIA-run Western Enterprises, Incorporated, which was engaged in "guerrilla training and psychological warfare."[17] At any one time about half of the American advisers—or from 250 to 300—were assisting the Nationalist navy.

Almost from the beginning of the Taiwan Patrol Force, some basic training was provided for the Nationalist navy. The Nationalists hired civilian specialists, many of them retired USN officers, to help them operate the ex-U.S. ships they had received. According to Rear Adm. Walter Ansel, USN (Ret.), when he arrived in Taiwan in the spring of 1950 as a civilian adviser to the Nationalist military, the State Department was not very enthusiastic about his mission, but this soon changed after the beginning of the Korean War. Ansel would later recount how as an operational liaison he often went to sea with the Nationalist ships. While the Nationalists thought highly of their destroyers, going to sea and actually shooting and "really getting down to slugging" was not very popular.

Among other innovations, Ansel helped set up around-the-clock watches and developed an English–Chinese signal book to be used in communications between American and Nationalist ships. With the help of foreign advisers, the number of Nationalist destroyers available for operations rose from two of the eight to four, and finally to "six out of eight that you could call on and send over to the mainland, for instance, and the islands between Formosa and the mainland."[18]

A new training regime was adopted beginning in the fall of 1952. USN orders for the conduct of the Taiwan Patrol Force provided for the "Training of Nationalist Government of the Republic of China Naval Personnel." Training sessions were divided into cycles of fifteen lessons, all conducted at Kaohsiung from 8:30 to 11:30 in the morning, Monday through Friday; each cycle took approximately three weeks to complete. While most of the training took place in port, several sessions were conducted under way. During these periods, the best-qualified personnel on each ship were assigned as teachers, and they were reminded to maintain favorable relations with individuals representing the Nationalist government of the Republic of China. Nationalist naval officers were cleared to use restricted materials and were urged to participate in ship handling, gun firing, and CIC plotting. Since many of the transferred USN vessels were more advanced than the average Nationalist vessel, USN personnel were reminded that "the mere demonstration of U.S. know-how, doctrines, maintenance measures, machinery records, etc., will be of considerable value."[19]

Training the Nationalist navy became one of the Taiwan Patrol Force's most important missions. In addition to conducting patrols of the Taiwan Strait, during early 1953 *Boyd*'s duties included training Nationalist navy personnel in ship operations.[20] On 13 January 1955, USS *Orleck* (DD 886) welcomed personnel from the Nationalist navy on board for three hours of training, including damage-control drills.[21] In May 1959 *Taussig* was assigned to the Fleet Training Group and operated as an engineering school ship during the succeeding summer.[22] All these training missions were simply part of the regular duties of the Taiwan Patrol Force, thereby maximizing its strategic impact.

Training became even more crucial in battle. Perhaps the most intensive training mission occurred during the various Taiwan Strait crises, when the Nationalist navy had to resupply embattled islands. USN ships could escort the supply ships most of the way, but they stopped before reaching the three-mile territorial limit, recognized by the U.S. government, to make sure that the isolated conflict did not turn into a larger war. Admiral Burke, as CNO, asked Eisenhower whether the U.S. Navy could resupply the embattled islands itself; Eisenhower emphatically replied no. However, the U.S. Navy was allowed to train the Nationalists to conduct these operations (photo 5). According to Burke, "So we gave them lots of training and we gave them lots of LSDs [dock landing ships] and

ships, boats, to supply the thing." With U.S. training and equipment the Nationalists "reinforced their garrisons and put their supplies in caves."[23]

Photo 5
U.S. Navy equipment and training involved in Nationalist resupply of Jinmen Island.

Without additional training by the U.S. Navy, the Nationalists would have found it difficult if not impossible to fight off the attacks against the offshore islands. As CinCPac Admiral Felt stated in a 1974 interview, the American and Nationalist navies "devised ways and means and tactics, and successfully did the job over a period of time. But it was touch and go there for a long, long time."[24] During these years, however, the USSR was busy transferring modern naval equipment to the PRC. The PLAN's capabilities were rapidly improving. Therefore, Washington also agreed to provide a wide range of new naval equipment to build up and sustain Taiwan's military capabilities.

Transferring American Military Equipment

The Nationalist navy depended on the U.S. Navy for equipment and for training in how to use that equipment. After initiation of a comprehensive training program, the next step was better equipment, including more modern ships. There were still grave doubts as to whether the Nationalist navy could effectively use the two USN destroyers that were to be handed over to Taiwan in 1954. During the summer of 1953, a USN study recommended that shallow-draft amphibious support craft would be a better choice. Smaller vessels were thought to be useful in that they could maneuver in the shallow waters between the islands and the coast to break up junk fleets and deploy troops.[25]

Public Law 188, signed on 5 August 1953, authorized the loan or donation of naval ships to friendly nations in the Far East. In order to assist the Nationalists in defending the offshore islands, the JCS allocated ten patrol-type craft, two landing-craft-repair ships, about a hundred small landing craft, and approximately ten additional support craft.[26] The Nationalist need for more destroyers was questioned. A footnote in Admiral Carney's previously cited memorandum to the JCS clarified that "delivery of any additional destroyers . . . beyond the two now planned for FY [fiscal year] 1954, will be effected only upon the clearly demonstrated capability of the [Nationalist government of the Republic of China] to man and operate them."[27]

In addition, by the mid-1950s the U.S. Navy had given Taiwan two old diesel submarines. Vice Adm. Philip Beshany, Commander, U.S. Taiwan Defense Command from 1972 to 1974, later recalled that handpicked Nationalist crews were trained in New London, Connecticut. They were top caliber and excelled as students. Instructors later recalled that the Nationalist officers took to submarine operations "like ducks to water." The United States did not provide Taiwan with torpedoes, since the two submarines were intended only to help train the Nationalist navy in antisubmarine warfare, but Beshany would thoughtfully observe, "I often wonder if they didn't somehow get some torpedoes from some other country."[28]

New airplanes too were crucial to Taiwan's defense. Of the $132 million in equipment deliveries between 1951 and 1954, fully two-thirds was aircraft and aircraft spares, while another 18 percent comprised bombs, rockets, and ammunition. In 1954 alone the United States shipped $48.3 million in equipment to Taiwan. By December 1954, 456 of the 657 aircraft promised to Taiwan had been delivered, 131 of them that year. These included seventy-two F-84Gs, twenty-five F-86Fs, sixteen T-33s, and five RT-33s.[29]

Another example of providing Taiwan with high-tech equipment was the American decision to deliver F-104s to Taiwan by means of cargo planes. According to Admiral Felt, it was the "first time it had ever been done, I guess. They took the little old stub wings off of them and flew them out to Taiwan, unloaded them, stuck the wings on, and there we had an F-104 squadron!"[30] The first F-104s arrived in early 1960; eventually Taiwan acquired 247 of them, mainly from the United States but also secondhand from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, and Japan. One of their primary missions was to patrol the strait. On 13 January 1967, Maj. Shih-Lin Hu of the ROC Air Force and Capt. Bei-Puo Shih each shot down a PLAAF MiG-19, the first-ever F-104 combat victories.[31]

The high-tech equipment and U.S. military training on how to use it proved indispensable. As Adm. George Anderson later recounted, "It was a fascinating job because, in addition to everything else, you really had the Chinese Navy even if not under direct command you had the primary influence on the Chinese Navy, and the great respect of

the Chinese military, including their navy, including Chiang Kai-shek."[32] When not actually engaged in patrol or training duties, USN ships scheduled combined naval exercises with Nationalist vessels to make sure the two navies could cooperate in a crisis.

Combined U.S.-ROC Naval Exercises

While training individual Nationalist naval officers was a top priority of the U.S. Navy, combined naval exercises were equally important, to ensure that American and Nationalist naval forces were ready for all phases of operations necessary to defend Taiwan and the Penghu Islands. Commander, Task Force 72 laid down, "It is recognized that combined training will be the best practicable means for determining deficiencies in equipment, training standards, tactics, techniques, and procedural arrangements within and between the respective armed forces."[33]

Combined exercises were held between the USN destroyers on the Taiwan Patrol Force and several of the Nationalist destroyers. In one night exercise five U.S. ships tried to penetrate the Taiwan Strait and were quickly intercepted by the Nationalist vessels. In another exercise, the destroyers of the two navies grouped together and tried to protect the flagship against a submarine attack, but the submarine managed to slip by twice and "torpedo" the flagship. Adm. Paul D. Stroop, commander of the Taiwan Patrol Force from 1957 to 1958, would later recall, "This was the first time I'd ever attempted to maneuver—work—combined operations with U.S. and Chinese forces, and I was pleased that they were fairly successful."[34]

Beginning in 1954, many training duties initially carried out by the CIA through such entities as WEI were transferred by presidential directive to the Department of Defense. This new task required assigning about fifty additional USN personnel to the theater, mostly to the MAAG in Taipei. For example, one top-secret memo noted that three officers and five enlisted personnel would be assigned to help train a 14,500-man marine division and the three-thousand-man Guerrilla Parachute Command. It was expected that some of these American naval advisers would be stationed on offshore islands.[35]

The U.S. Navy actively assisted the Nationalist amphibious operations by participating in combined landing exercises. According to Capt. Phil Bucklew, these exercises took place along Taiwan's southeast coastline, so as to keep the American officers away from the actual staging areas on the west coast of the island. Still, Bucklew was impressed with the Nationalist training, calling it "thorough" and "strenuous." Bucklew felt that "in many ways, their operation was even more demanding than ours in training and qualifications." As a result, he concluded, "their general capabilities, I thought, were among the best in the Far East. The amphibious exercise in which we participated jointly with them was a very good show."[36]

While the U.S. Navy conducted shipboard training, the U.S. Air Force was assigned to train Nationalist pilots. As Admiral Felt would recall,

> We had an Air Force section of the MAAG down there, the Military Assistance [Advisory] Group, which trained our Chinese friends and they were well trained, every bit as good tactically as the U.S. Air Force or Naval Air fighters. They'd go out on these patrols, out over the straits, and just loiter at their best fighting altitude, more or less presenting themselves as bait. The Chinese would come out at higher altitudes and finally couldn't resist the temptation to come down, and when they came down they got took. Also it was the first combat introduction of the Sidewinder [air-to-air missile], which had been given to the Chinese. I can't remember the numbers, but I think it was something like 21 of the Communist planes shot down and success for the Sidewinders, not 100 percent but a very fine performance.

As a result of superior U.S. equipment and training, Admiral Felt continued, the Nationalist pilots exercised air control, and the "Red Chinese weren't much interested in challenging in the air."[37]

Finally, notwithstanding the U.S.-made destroyers, submarines, and airplanes, it was a generally acknowledged fact the Nationalist navy did not have very much equipment. In the event of war it would be "dependent, really, on the Seventh Fleet." The decisions to train better pilots and supply Sidewinder missiles were probably the most important factors adding to the Nationalist military's capabilities. In addition, American advisers in Taiwan helped build airfields and provided better radar equipment. All of these U.S. efforts would allow the Nationalists to assert a measure of air control should the PRC decide to attack the offshore islands again.[38]

Conclusions

With equipment and training from the U.S. Navy, the Nationalist navy gradually improved. From the early 1950s onward, USN ships often joined with it to conduct combined training exercises, both to pass on expertise and to ensure that the two navies could cooperate if a war ever broke out. The U.S. government also authorized the transfer of high-tech naval equipment to Taiwan. Even after the United States recognized the PRC in 1979 this aspect of the U.S.-Taiwan military-to-military relationship continued, and it does so unchanged to the present day.

After the first Taiwan Strait crisis, 1954–55, the U.S. Navy's training mission became more intense. With American help the Nationalist navy was able to receive advanced equipment, including additional destroyers and diesel submarines. More importantly, the U.S. military transferred high-tech aircraft and Sidewinder missiles to Taiwan. These technological advances were to allow the Nationalists to adopt a more offensive policy, including on occasion using marine forces trained by U.S. Navy advisers to mount attacks against the mainland and Communist-held islands.

Better equipment and training for the Nationalist navy meant that it was no longer clear that the PLAN could defeat it in a fleet-on-fleet battle at sea. These USN efforts largely matched the Soviet Union's ongoing attempts to build up the Chinese Communist fleet and effectively denied Beijing the expected military benefits of its alliance with Moscow. To bolster Taiwan's security further as well as to help build up its economy, USN ships also carried out naval demonstrations, morale-building exercises, and frequent R&R visits.

Notes

1. *Tai Ho* was the *Cannon*-class destroyer escort USS *Thomas* (DE 102), commissioned on 21 November 1943 and transferred to Nationalist China on 14 December 1948; *Tai Hu* was the *Cannon*-class destroyer escort USS *Bostwick* (DE 103), commissioned on 1 December 1943 and transferred to Nationalist China on 14 December 1948.
2. "Intelligence Briefs: China," *ONI Review* (August 1952), p. 336.
3. Adm. Robert B. Carney, "Review of Chinese Nationalist Forces," memorandum to Joint Chiefs of Staff (Top Secret), 16 December 1953, Strategic Plans Division, box 289, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
4. Jay Pryor, interview by author, 28 April 2009.
5. Chiefs of Staff, "Security of Hong Kong: Effects of Possible Future Developments in Formosa (Top Secret)," 18 November 1949, CAB 21/3272, TNA/UK.
6. "Chinese Communist Naval Vessels," *ONI Review* (July 1951), pp. 271–74.
7. "Intelligence Briefs: China," *ONI Review* (September 1952), p. 376.
8. "The Communist and Nationalist Navies: Their Comparative Capabilities," *ONI Review Secret Supplement* [declassified] (Spring 1953), pp. 14–16.
9. James Bussert and Bruce A. Elleman, *People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) Combat Systems Technology, 1949–2010* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2011), p. 18.
10. "Communist and Nationalist Navies," pp. 14–16.
11. "The Struggle for the Coastal Islands of China," *ONI Review Supplement* (December 1953), pp. i–ix.
12. Ibid.
13. David Muller, *China as a Maritime Power* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1983), p. 14.
14. "The Southeast China Coast Today," *ONI Review* (February 1953), pp. 51–60.
15. "A New Type of Formosa Warfare: Reds Spot British Cargo Ships for Chiang's Bombers," *U.S. News & World Report,* 18 November 1955.
16. Gabe T. Wang, *China and the Taiwan Issue: Impending War at Taiwan Strait* (Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 2006), p. 160.
17. Naval Liaison Office, British Consulate, Tamsui, "American Military Activity in Taiwan (Secret Guard)," 5 October 1951, FO 371/92300, TNA/UK.
18. Walter C. W. Ansel, *The Reminiscences of Rear Admiral Walter C. W. Ansel, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1972), pp. 230–41.
19. CTG 72.1, "U.S. Navy Operation Order 2-52 (Revised)," 8 September 1952 [hereafter CTG 72.1 Operation Order 2-52 (Rev.)], Post-1946 Operation Plans, Task Force 72, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
20. "USS *Boyd* DD-544," *National Association of Destroyer Veterans,* www.destroyers.org/.
21. "USS Orleck Chronology," *Destroyer USS* Orleck *Association,* www.ussorleck.com/.
22. *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships,* s.v. "Taussig," www.history.navy.mil/.
23. Arleigh A. Burke, *Recollections of Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1973), pp. 43–44.

24. Harry Donald Felt, *Reminiscences of Admiral Harry Donald Felt, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1974), vol. 2, p. 392.
25. Adm. Robert B. Carney, "Security of the Offshore Islands Presently Held by the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China," memorandum to Joint Chiefs of Staff (Top Secret), 30 July 1953, appendix, Strategic Plans Division, box 289, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
26. Ibid. [basic memorandum].
27. Carney, "Review of Chinese Nationalist Forces."
28. Philip A. Beshany, *The Reminiscences of Vice Admiral Philip A. Beshany, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1983), vol. 2, pp. 887–88.
29. "Summary of NDAP Support (Secret)," 24 March 1955, Strategic Plans Division, box 326, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
30. Beshany, *Reminiscences of Vice Admiral Philip A. Beshany, U.S. Navy (Retired),* p. 395 [exclamation mark in the original].
31. "ROCAF F-104 Retirement," TaiwanAirPower.org, www.taiwanairpower.org/.
32. George W. Anderson, Jr., *Reminiscences of Admiral George W. Anderson, Jr., U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1983), vol. 1, p. 307.
33. CTF 72, "U.S. Navy Operation Order 2-56," 1 October 1956 [hereafter CTF 72 Operation Order 2-56], Post-1946 Operation Plans, Task Force 72, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
34. Paul D. Stroop, *The Reminiscences of Vice Admiral Paul D. Stroop, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1970), pp. 278–79.
35. Robert L. Dennison, "Transfer of Responsibility for Support of and Training for Coastal Raiding and Maritime Interdiction Operations (China)," memorandum (Top Secret), 21 July 1954, Strategic Plans Division, box 306, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
36. Phil H. Bucklew, *Reminiscences of Captain Phil H. Bucklew, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1982), pp. 300–304.
37. Felt, *Reminiscences of Admiral Harry Donald Felt, U.S. Navy (Retired),* p. 391.
38. Anderson, *Reminiscences of Admiral George W. Anderson, Jr.,* pp. 310–11.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Morale Building and Rest-and-Recreation Visits

Throughout the Taiwan Patrol Force's existence, morale building—for the Nationalists—and frequent R&R visits—for visiting USN crews—were important functions of the patrols. As Eisenhower put it to Churchill in a March 1955 "Eyes Only Top Secret" letter, the only way to avoid losing Taiwan, the loss of which would "doom the Philippines and eventually the remainder of the region" to communism, was to "sustain a high morale among Chiang's forces."[1]

During the early 1950s, morale was particularly low within the Nationalist navy. According to one ONI report, the attitude of officers toward shipboard life left something to be desired; also worrisome was their "lack of interest in the training and advancement of their juniors." Moreover, there was still a sense of "aimlessness and idleness" among the Nationalist crews when under way.[2] The American response of morale building meant showing the flag, so as to prove that the U.S. Navy was backing Taiwan. Morale building could also involve the participation of USN personnel in sporting events, such as softball or baseball games, with local teams.

Taiwan's morale was also closely linked to its economic well-being. U.S. government financial aid and preferential trade rights were crucial for the ROC during the early-to-middle 1950s. Since Taiwan was virtually cut off from mainland China, traditionally one of its greatest trade partners, its businessmen had to conduct correspondingly more trade with Hong Kong, Japan, and the United States. Military-to-military relations directly added to Taiwan's security, which indirectly enabled stronger trade and commercial links between Taiwan and the United States. In this way, USN vessels visiting Taiwan contributed to the island's economic growth.

Political and Economic Impact of U.S. Aid

Following their defeat on the mainland, the Nationalists were well aware of the precariousness of their existence on Taiwan. Tensions between the exiled mainlanders and

the local Taiwanese were high. On 28 February 1947 Nationalist troops suppressed a Taiwanese protest; estimates of the dead ranged in the tens of thousands. The Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) was urged by Washington to overcome these problems by creating a hybrid government that mixed elements of democracy with one-party rule and adopting a market-driven economy. To support this transition, between 1952 and 1960 approximately $100 million in economic aid was given to Taiwan each year.[3] One estimate of the total American economic aid between 1950 and 1969 is $2.2 billion.[4]

Learning from its many mistakes fighting the Chinese Communists, the Nationalist government on Taiwan ultimately succeeded in merging basic democratic principles and anticorruption measures with economic growth and price stability. For example, the Nationalists embarked on land reform in Taiwan in 1948, selling public land that had formerly belonged to Japanese landlords. During the early 1950s, the percentage of farmers on Taiwan owning land rose from 25 to 35 percent.[5] This redistribution policy paralleled the highly successful communist land practices on the mainland.

The U.S. government played a major role. In 1951 alone, its economic aid to Taiwan amounted to 10 percent of the island's entire gross national product (GNP).[6] Between 1951 and 1954, American grants totaled $375 million.[7] However, it was assumed that this level of support could not last forever. During 1953, the U.S. embassy in Taipei reported that the Nationalists had just adopted a four-year plan that sought to make the ROC economically independent of the United States by 1957.[8]

The Taiwanese economic plan was ambitious. To promote rapid industrial development, the Nationalists focused on import substitution. By erecting a tariff wall to protect infant industries, they aimed to substitute locally made consumer goods for imported ones. In addition, they sought to develop export industries, so as to profit from value-added processing of raw materials. Taiwan also emphasized light industry and the production of consumer goods that would improve the local standard of living. It would not focus on heavy industry until the 1960s. These economic policies stood in stark contrast to the Soviet model for industrial development followed by mainland China, which emphasized heavy industry first.

American economic support had a dramatic impact on Taiwan. On 3 May 1951, E. H. Jacobs-Larkcom, the British consul in Taiwan, reported on the positive benefits of this American aid:

> It was not until the accelerated American aid programme of 1949/50 that the Formosans found an administration to their taste. The Americans have insisted on political and social reform—e.g. a measure of democratic self-government has been granted, and land rentals have been reduced to fair levels. In addition, American material aid really reaches the common people, and at fair prices. I think it may be stated, therefore, that what the bulk of the native population desire is a continuation of the present American colonial regime.[9]

In March 1955, British observers remained impressed, noting approvingly that the Nationalists were gradually bringing about a more democratic climate, although their government was "still a dictatorship, albeit a benevolent and—in so far as the President was elected and his emergency powers were approved by the National Assembly—a constitutional one."[10]

Considering that these years of extremely high economic growth on Taiwan corresponded with the presence of the Taiwan Patrol Force, it is apparent that the security the U.S. Navy provided helped promote the so-called Taiwan miracle. Among the most obvious contributions of the U.S. Navy were frequent naval demonstrations. These shows of force sought to boost Nationalist morale, even while sending highly visible warnings to the PRC not to attack.

Naval Demonstrations as Shows of Force

Throughout the 1950s, the United States sponsored periodic naval demonstrations in the Taiwan Strait to show the flag. By doing so it sought to reassure the Nationalists and the overseas Chinese community that their concerns were not being overlooked. The full-time presence of the Taiwan Patrol Force was the most constant reminder to the Nationalists of American support. In the view of one participant, "The Patrol was a good idea and served well its purpose of demonstrating in a visible way the U.S. commitment to the defense of Taiwan."[11] During "invasion season," usually the late spring or early summer of each year, the U.S. Navy organized special demonstrations as shows of force and morale boosters in Taiwan—and just in case of actual PRC attacks.

On 8 April 1951, with Vice Adm. H. M. Martin, Commander, Seventh Fleet, on board USS *Philippine Sea* (CV 47) and Adm. William G. Tomlinson in USS *Boxer* as officer in tactical command, Task Force 77 left Korea and steamed south through the East China Sea. On 11 April, just outside the three-mile limit off the Chinese mainland, a carefully crafted show of force was staged. On the 13th Admiral Martin flew to Taipei to visit Chiang Kai-shek. U.S. Navy planes flew over Taiwan, to "bolster Nationalist morale."[12]

In July 1952 it was the turn of USS *Essex* (CV 9), again with *Philippine Sea,* to conduct this operation. Special Task Group 50.8, under the command of Rear Adm. Apollo Soucek, included two aircraft carriers and eight destroyers. On 24 July, reconnaissance airplanes flew over Communist military installations on the mainland and Hainan Island. The Communists fired on the planes and sent up fighter aircraft, but with no effect. CinCPac, Admiral Radford, later told the press that this demonstration proved that the Navy could bomb the coastal cities of Xiamen, Fuzhou, and Shantou at any time without "draining its forces in Korea."[13]

Because the Seventh Fleet had such a wide range of duties to perform and could not concentrate all of its efforts on Taiwan, it was important that the Nationalists' morale (and therefore willingness to contribute to their own security) be kept as high as possible and that the PRC be deterred from attempting an invasion. Of course, these demonstrations were not equally successful. On 1 June 1954 the U.S. Seventh Fleet made a show of force in the Dachens, and later that summer, on 18 August, other Seventh Fleet ships paid a visit.[14] The movements represented a calculated attempt to "create the impression that the US is prepared to use force."[15] In this particular case, the PRC decided to call the U.S. bluff: by early 1955 increased PLA attacks had forced the Nationalists to evacuate the Dachen Islands.

Naval demonstrations could also be costly in terms of aircraft and pilots. In demonstrations carried out in September 1958, for example, the carrier air-group commanders were too enthusiastic, and the "Navy paid a price for the show of force put on by the combat air patrol over the Taiwan Strait, losing four planes and three pilots in accidents."[16] Even though dangerous, naval demonstrations were nonetheless considered to be highly important for building up Taiwanese morale.

USN Morale-Building Activities

It was feared that the 1955 decision to evacuate the Dachens would have a serious psychological impact on the Nationalists. The U.S. government had to be concerned about these trends. Throughout the 1950s there were concerns that the morale of Taiwanese citizens was waning; after all, they were a small island nation facing an enormous continental power. As Ambassador Karl L. Rankin explained to a British visitor in 1953, "The Chinese Nationalists on Formosa represented the only case where a sizeable element of a communist dominated country had escaped from behind the iron curtain and was conducting his affairs as an independent government." Taiwan's success or failure could have a dramatic effect on "the whole anti-communist problem . . . in the ultimate showdown." Because of Taiwan's "unique position" it required "great vision and foresight in framing our future policy toward communism as a whole, and in particular, towards the situation in the Far East."[17]

It was a delicate balancing act keeping the Nationalists happy, while not giving them too much leeway. In a 10 February 1955 "Eyes Only Top Secret" letter, Eisenhower described this problem to Churchill:

> To defend Formosa the United States has been engaged in a long and costly program of arming and sustaining the Nationalist troops on the island. Those troops, however, and Chiang himself, are not content, *now,* to accept irrevocably and permanently the status of "prisoners" on the island. They are held together by a conviction that some day they will go back to the mainland.

> As a consequence, their attitude toward Quemoy [Jinmen] and the Matsus [Mazus], which they deem the stepping stones between the two hostile regions, is that the surrender of those islands would destroy the reason for the existence of the Nationalist forces on Formosa. This, then, would mean the almost immediate conversion of that asset into a deadly danger, because the Communists would immediately take it over.
>
> The Formosa Resolution, as passed by the Congress, is our publicly stated position; the problem now is how to make it work. The morale of the Chinese Nationalists is important to us, so for the moment, and under existing conditions, we feel they must have certain assurances with respect to the offshore islands. But these must be less binding on us than the terms of the Chino-American Treaty, which was overwhelmingly passed yesterday by the Senate. We must remain ready, until some better solution can be found, to move promptly against any Communist force that is manifestly preparing to attack Formosa. And we must make a distinction—(this is a difficult one)—between an attack that has *only* as its objective the capture of an offshore island and one that is primarily a preliminary movement to an all-out attack on Formosa.
>
> Whatever now is to happen, I know that nothing could be worse than global war. . . . I devoutly hope that history's inflexible yardstick will show that we have done everything in our power, and everything that is right, to prevent the awful catastrophe of another major war.[18]

As Eisenhower emphasized in a later letter to Churchill, in some ways the U.S. government had actually gained much less than it wanted in negotiations with Taipei, since it had to be careful not to coerce Chiang Kai-shek lest it undermine the "morale and the loyalty of the non-Communist forces on Formosa."[19]

The American embassy on Taiwan was primarily responsible for tracking morale. In a 31 March 1955 memo it reported that to an average native on Taiwan the recent U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Security Treaty had increased the security of the island. But mainland Chinese living in exile on Taiwan were upset over U.S. attempts to sign a cease-fire that would permanently pacify the Taiwan Strait area, as well as over the American failure to commit itself fully to the defense of Jinmen and Mazu Islands.[20] An April 1955 assessment was more optimistic: "The Embassy believes we can count on the determination and fighting spirit of the Nationalists until they are convinced the U.S. has abandoned their cause."[21] During June 1955, however, Chiang Kai-shek informed Dulles that he wanted to reinforce the offshore islands by sending an additional division. But before taking action, he wanted to learn Washington's view, since should the public and military learn that Washington opposed reinforcing the island garrisons, they might "deduce that we are thinking of urging another Dachen-like withdrawal."[22]

Concerns about low morale among the Nationalists also affected the overseas Chinese. According to Eisenhower, millions of ethnic Chinese living in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, and Hong Kong were looking to Chiang Kai-shek, and "if the Chinese National Government should disappear, these émigré Chinese will certainly deem themselves subjects of the Chinese Communist Government and they will quickly add to the difficulties of their adopted countries."[23] A British report confirmed that overseas

Chinese support for the West would disappear if Taiwan were completely neutralized with "no stake at all in mainland China."[24]

U.S. Navy Ship Visits to Taiwan

Frequent U.S. Navy port calls were another highly visible method to boost morale on Taiwan. Military exercises were held, usually accompanied by lavish banquets. Swimming and beach recreation parties were planned and carried out at every opportunity. Ships would organize boxing teams to compete with Nationalist boxers; one match had well over three thousand onlookers. Basketball and baseball games were also held. It was generally found that the Taiwanese were good at American sports and fielded highly competitive teams.[25]

One important aspect of morale building was interactions of American naval personnel as individuals. This seemed to convey convincingly that the U.S. Navy was there to help the Nationalists oppose a PRC invasion, if the need ever arose. Military and naval exercises and accompanying banquets were good excuses to get together. On one occasion officers of USS *Manatee,* led by Capt. W. G. Chapple, were invited to observe military maneuvers. Almost all the high-ranking officers of the Nationalist army were present.[26] According to an account of a similar event,

> The Nationalists worked at maintaining good relations. I remember being impressed that during the times I served as CTG 72.1 my opposite number was a Taiwanese Vice Admiral. I was at the time a Lieutenant Commander. They threw at least one banquet at which our wardroom officers were guests, and they provided for our use of athletic facilities (tennis court and playing fields). We met with the [vice admiral] and his staff to plan at sea exercises with units of the Taiwan navy, then carried out these exercises at sea. I recall an exercise in which four Taiwanese destroyers operated with our two DERs, with the Taiwanese Vice Admiral serving as the Officer in Tactical Command (OTC) for half of the time, and me as a Lieutenant Commander exercising command the other half of the time. If this rank imbalance bothered them they did not show it.[27]

There were some unavoidable cultural differences, however, between the Americans and their Nationalist hosts. For example, Asian customs of how a good host should act differed from those of the West. Providing female companionship was often considered a common courtesy to visiting guests. Once Admiral Anderson, visiting a warlord in charge of the Penghu Islands, was told by the Chinese gentleman, "Oh, you're here. I have a very nice Chinese girl for you." When Anderson replied, "Thank you very much. I live on my flagship," the warlord replied, "Oh, that's all right," and kindly offered to send the girl on board.[28] On the grounds that allowing any civilians on board ship—especially a female companion—was against USN regulations, Anderson was able to decline the offer without insulting his host.

The generally good behavior of U.S. personnel visiting Taiwan helped convey a positive image of Americans to the people on Taiwan. One glaring counterexample occurred in

May 1957, when a U.S. Army sergeant was tried by court-martial and acquitted for the death of a local Peeping Tom. When the court ruling was announced, crowds of angry locals attacked the U.S. embassy in Taipei on 24 May. Ambassador Rankin was out of the country, but thirteen American citizens were hurt, and the embassy building was described as left "in shambles" (photo 6). The Taiwan Patrol Force flagship was recalled to Keelung for possible evacuation of U.S. citizens, but the local police contained the riot.[29] There has been speculation that the riot was government sponsored, perhaps to obtain access to confidential notes housed in the embassy.[30]

Photo 6
U.S. embassy in Taipei looted by rioters on 24 May 1957.

Government Information Office, Republic of China (Taiwan)

It was more usual for Nationalist newspapers to write flattering articles concerning the fine conduct of USN crew members on liberty.[31] In July 1955, therefore, a British observer was able to report that "morale is high, and Nationalist naval and air strength growing."[32] Also, much of the USN crew members' pay found its way into the local economy, which could not help but make American sailors popular.

U.S. Navy Crews Given R&R on Taiwan

In addition to other port calls, USN vessels assigned to the Taiwan Patrol Force were frequent visitors to Keelung and Kaohsiung, Taiwan, periodically pulling into one of these two port cities to replenish supplies. As soon as it arrived, a destroyer would be met by trucks carrying ship's stores, and a fuel hose would be hooked up from the pier. Usually a courier came on board with a large canvas bag containing classified and unclassified publications and orders, mail for the crew, and official correspondence. The crewmen were granted leave, during which they conducted morale-building activities and community service, and generally enjoyed the local R&R opportunities.

While in port, there were many ship responsibilities the crews had to carry out, such as painting and repairing the ship, restocking, and refueling. Repairs were often delegated to Nationalist contractors. At one point, *Hissem*'s supply officer attempted to get the ship's mess decks fixed up in Keelung, by having local workers install a false overhead

to cover the cables and pipes. The job was almost complete when it was noted that the contractor was using wood, an obvious fire hazard: "In the end, it all had to come out and we were back to square one. Now we can laugh about it."[33]

When visiting Taiwan, ships gave special attention to sponsoring social events for the crew. Beach parties were especially popular. In this regard, morale on the ships assigned to Taiwan Patrol Force did not differ in any substantive way from that in other naval assignments. By and large, team building, a sense of mission, and frequent R&R stops contributed to high morale among the USN crews. Certainly this is what James Barber, captain of *Hissem,* remembers:

> I think that there were several contributing factors. In no particular order: the size of the crew, about 130, meant that everyone could know everyone else, and contributed to a "we are all on one team" feeling. The Executive Officer, then Lieutenant Ed Hart, was a former Chief Quartermaster and beloved by the crew. We were fortunate to have outstanding officers and men in key roles. The ship was consistently ranked at the top among our sister DERs. Before being deployed to the Seventh Fleet the ship had gone through a rough patch with inadequate resources and material failures. Once this situation was remedied there was a sense of everything getting better. We had a variety of interesting operations, including rescue of the crew of a burning U.S. merchant ship in the middle of a typhoon, operations in every one of the Vietnam Market Time zones, and our Taiwan Patrol assignments. We had some enjoyable liberty ports, including going up the river to Bangkok, Hong Kong (where we had a stay as station ship), Brisbane, Pago Pago, Jesselton [in North] Borneo, Vung Tau, and the Taiwanese ports. All of these things, and probably some other factors I have missed, contributed to a sense of shared adventure.[34]

Certain ships offered to assist the Nationalists in building schools and other community projects. For example, the crew of *O'Brien* (DD 725), which had assisted in the evacuation of the Dachens ten years before, completed several important building projects during a visit in the mid-1960s.[35]

As might be expected, much of the crews' R&R time was spent in the local bars or at the Officers' Club. According to one account: "Nancy's Harbor Bar and Grill served as almost an American Club during our in port periods. Some of the crew alleged that there was really just one set of bar girls in Taiwan, and they would appear in either Kaohsiung or Keelung, depending on ship's schedules, about which they were exceptionally knowledgeable."[36] To assist in controlling the spread of venereal diseases, bar girls were required by the Nationalist authorities to keep a logbook. U.S. naval personnel were urged not to try to evade this system by giving false names, since only complete records would allow a disease to be traced to its origin.

During R&R periods, the crew still had to be available for duty. Sometimes they were interrupted by emergencies:

> I mentioned Nancy's Harbor Bar and Grill above. One night while we were in port Kaohsiung a ship's party took place at Nancy's to celebrate the promotion of one of the crew. While this was going on we received a distress message from a U.S. Navy repair ship [USS *Dixie* (AD 14)] that had lost all power and was adrift south of Taiwan. We did an emergency recall of ship's personnel, which was

> aided by the fact that almost all of the liberty party was at Nancy's, but was hindered by the fact that some of them were two sheets to the wind. We got under way safely, but I have sometimes questioned my judgment in doing so. As I recall the only recommendation I received from Ed Hart, who was serving as Navigator as we exited the harbor, was "Go out this way about a mile, Skipper, and turn south." As it turned out, the repair ship regained power and our assistance was not required.[37]

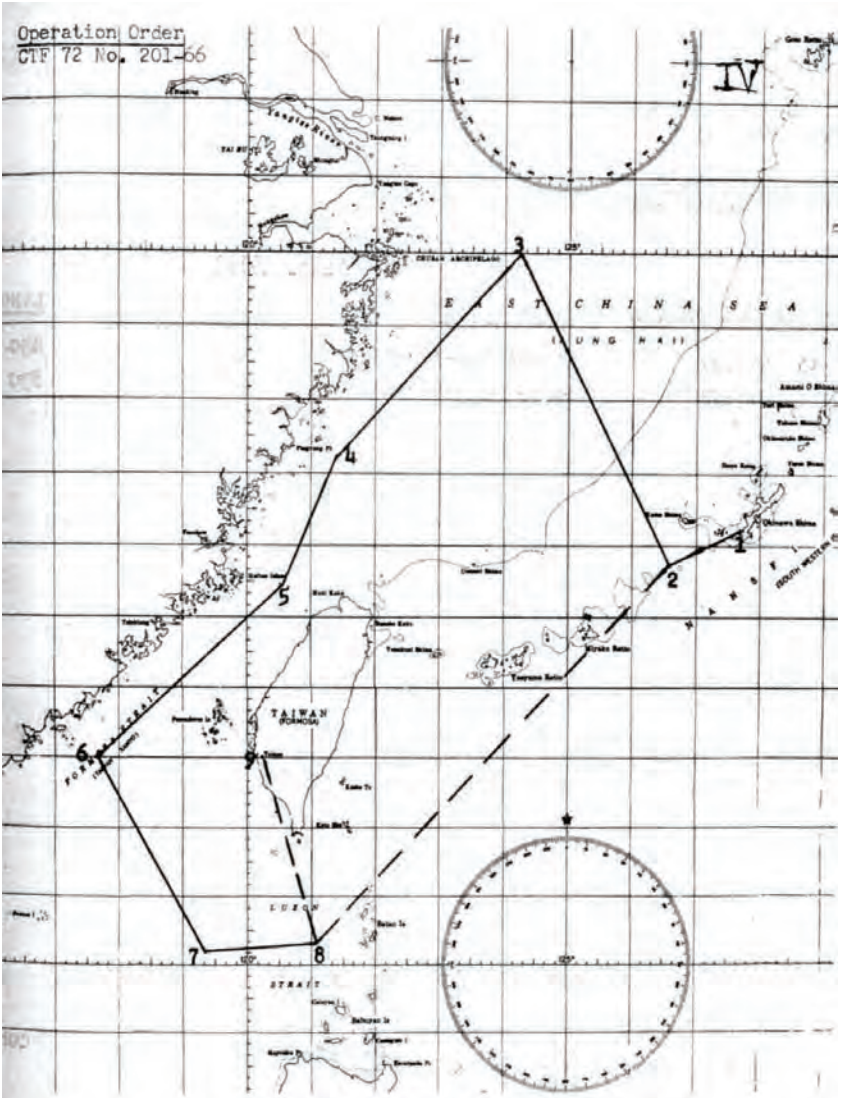
Others recalled the same incident: "I still remember the night orders from the XO. They simply said 'Head south to *Dixie*' in a drunken scribble." The rescue was not necessary, since *Dixie* was able to fix its problem before *Hissem* arrived. But the experience of getting the ship under way safely with a "limited but effective watch team" was unforgettable: "We did good."[38]

Being assigned to the Taiwan Patrol Force was considered hazardous duty, in particular since the first vessel to be attacked in a Taiwan Strait incident would be the trip wire that brought in the rest of the Seventh Fleet. In addition to regular R&R visits to Southeast Asian ports, therefore, the U.S. Navy worked hard to keep spirits high on board ships. American military personnel received medals for their service on various missions, including the China Service Medal for serving on the Taiwan Patrol Force. This built morale and could mean monetary rewards, since certain awards gave the recipient tax breaks or other financial benefits.

Since the beginning of fleets, naval personnel have vied for recognition through obtaining medals. Some have put much time and effort into maximizing their awards during an assignment. A pilot stationed in the western Pacific explained, "We occasionally were visited by officers from CinCPacFleet staff who had the requisite security clearances to fly with us as observers. And, for their benefit, we created the 'Instant Hero' patrol route. While I cannot offer the exact route, suffice it to say that it ran through the Taiwan Strait and nicked the Korean Combat Zone before retiring to Okinawa." In this way an observer could acquire in ten hours a China Service Medal, a Korean Service Medal with a battle star, a United Nations Service Medal, and a Korean Presidential Unit Citation (map 6). This averaged one medal every two and a half hours. They also qualified for a tenth or a twentieth of an Air Medal if there was enemy fire. According to one of the pilots of the "instant hero" flights, "They loved us for our thoughtfulness."[39]

Medals could not only enhance careers but bring a two-hundred-dollar deduction on income taxes. Over time there developed some highly elaborate methods for maximizing one's medals and tax deductions, even though actual time in the particular war zone might be measured in minutes rather than weeks or months. These activities, so long as they did not break rules, were usually ignored, since they ultimately helped boost morale.

MAP 6
Flight Path Similar to the "Instant Hero"



WHISKEY-2 Coordinates

2.	25-45N	126-40E
3.	30-00N	124-15E
4.	27-10N	121-25E
5.	25-16N	120-36E
6.	23-00N	117-42E
7.	20-10N	119-25E
8.	20-25N	121-10E

Conclusions

With American political and financial support, Taiwan experienced rapid economic growth from the early 1950s through the 1970s. By the mid-1980s, Taiwan's GNP was approximately half the PRC's, even though it had less than one-fiftieth of China's population. Taiwan was also well on its way to adopting a true democratic government. The U.S. Navy played an important role during these years by helping to maintain Nationalist morale. One major morale builder involved coordinated naval demonstrations. Another was the scheduling of frequent port calls and R&R opportunities for USN crews. This was all part and parcel of a larger American economic program intended to put Taiwan on its feet.

Rest-and-recreation visits might include sporting matches with local teams, interviews with the press, and tourist travel around the island. Some crew members even brought golf clubs and enjoyed playing on Taiwan's world-class, Japanese-built golf courses: when a golf ball went astray, the young female caddies would reportedly use their only English phrase, *"Oh bee-ah!"* (Oh dear!), to express dismay. Many USN personnel remember fondly their liberty ashore in Taiwan, often revolving around a favorite restaurant or tavern. Social mores were relatively relaxed, and bar girls would often appear at pubs frequented by foreigners. As one sailor recounted, there was always the "bar scene with the girls pandering for our bucks."[40]

Considering Taiwan's geographic isolation, the U.S. Navy was important for helping to prop up local morale. Higher morale in Taiwan could, in turn, have a significant impact on the overseas Chinese community throughout East Asia and Southeast Asia, which was looking to Taiwan for moral and political leadership. The people on Taiwan clearly appreciated U.S. Navy efforts to protect them from invasion across the strait. In fact, during its decades-long existence the Taiwan Patrol Force was the most obvious and visible sign of U.S. government support for the Republic of China. All of these political, economic, and psychological factors were to play especially important roles during the second Taiwan Strait crisis, in 1958.

Notes

1. President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Churchill (Eyes Only Top Secret), 29 March 1955, PREM 11/879, TNA/UK. "Eyes Only" meant that only the prime minister, personally, was to receive the letter.
2. "Intelligence Briefs: China," *ONI Review* (August 1952), p. 336.
3. Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, *United States–Taiwan Security Ties: From Cold War to Beyond Containment* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994), p. 21.
4. Gabe T. Wang, *China and the Taiwan Issue: Impending War at Taiwan Strait* (Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 2006), p. 160.

5. Bruce A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine, *Modern China: Continuity and Change 1644 to the Present* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2010), p. 363.
6. Ibid., p. 364.
7. Hickey, *United States–Taiwan Security Ties,* p. 21.
8. Dulles Papers, 15 April 1953, 88908, reel 204/205, citing an 8 April 1953 memorandum of conversation entitled "Chinese Nationalist Program for Economic Self-support in Four Years."
9. E. H. Jacobs-Larkcom, Consul, British Consulate, Tamsui, Formosa, to R. H. Scott, Foreign Office, London (Secret and Personal), 3 May 1951, FO 371/92225, TNA/UK.
10. A. H. B. Hermann, British Consulate, Tamsui, to Sir Anthony Eden, Foreign Office (Secret and Guard), 1 March 1955, FO 371/115042, TNA/UK.
11. James A. Barber, interview by author, 2 May 2009.
12. *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships,* s.v. "Philippine Sea," www.history.navy.mil/.
13. Edward J. Marolda, "Wall of Steel: Sea Power and the Cold War in Asia," in *Maritime Power in the Twentieth Century,* ed. David Stevens (St. Leonards, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1998), pp. 171–72.
14. Robert L. Dennison, "Information on the Offshore Islands Held by CHINATS," memorandum (Top Secret), 3 September 1954, Strategic Plans Division, box 306, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
15. "Comments on Tachen Operation (Top Secret)," 18 August 1954, p. 3, Strategic Plans Division, box 289, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
16. Joseph F. Bouchard, *Command in Crisis: Four Case Studies* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 76–77.
17. M. Shoosmith to Headquarters, United Nations Command, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff (Secret), 30 March 1953, FO 371/105323, TNA/UK.
18. President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Churchill (Top Secret, Eyes Only), 10 February 1955, PREM 11/879, TNA/UK [emphasis original].
19. President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Churchill (Top Secret), 19 February 1955, PREM 11/879, TNA/UK.
20. Dulles Papers, 31 March 1955, 93065, reel 210/211.
21. Ibid., 4 April 1955, 93088.
22. Ibid., 29 June 1955, 93578.
23. Eisenhower to Churchill, 29 March 1955.
24. John Ogle, Lt. Cdr., Royal Navy, British Consulate, Tamsui, report, 7 July 1955, FO 371/115077, TNA/UK [hereafter Ogle report].
25. "USS *Manatee* (AO-58)," *Unofficial USS* Manatee *(AO-58) Homepage,* www.ussmanatee.org/.
26. Ibid.
27. Barber, interview.
28. George W. Anderson, Jr., *Reminiscences of Admiral George W. Anderson, Jr., U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1983), vol. 1, p. 308.
29. "Post-1946," p. 6, Command File, Taiwan Patrol Force, box 784, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
30. George H. Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 413.
31. "USS *Manatee* (AO-58)."
32. Ogle report.
33. Michael Westmoreland, interview by author, 30 April 2009.
34. Barber, interview.
35. C. S. Christensen and J. B. Hattendorf, "*O'Brien*'s Odyssey: One Destroyer's Duty in the Seventh Fleet," *Our Navy* (September 1966), pp. 2–4, 60.
36. Barber, interview.
37. Ibid.
38. Westmoreland, interview.
39. Bob Bublitz, "To Speak of Many Things," *VQ Association News Letter Winter/Spring 2006,* www.centurum.com/.
40. Westmoreland, interview.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, 1958

Tensions between the PRC and Taiwan remained high after the first Taiwan Strait crisis in 1954–55. The Nationalist blockade of the PRC continued, although it halted a lower percentage of international shipping with the PRC, since it was now limited to the southeastern Chinese coast. However, the blockade, together with the U.S.-sponsored strategic embargo, which lasted through 1971, had a significant impact on the PRC. One scholar has even concluded, "It is no exaggeration that the U.S. embargo in part prompted the Three-Anti's and Five-Anti's campaigns, the Socialist Transformation, the Anti-Rightist movements, and the Great Leap Forward, which precipitated both economic disaster and political disorder in China."[1]

To make up for the loss of international seaborne commerce, the PRC was forced to turn to the USSR, conducting an ever-larger share of trade via the trans-Siberian railway. China's debts to the USSR grew to well over a billion U.S. dollars; one estimate of China's total debt was 1.5 billion rubles, or almost two billion 1962 dollars.[2] During the late 1950s, the PRC sought to break away from its overreliance on the USSR. In 1957 the British tried to help China diversify its trade by shipping to it a wider range of goods. In response, the Nationalist blockade tightened. On 7 June 1957, the Nationalist minister for foreign affairs pledged that his government would stand firm on its mainland "port closure order" even if the British sent warships to escort merchant ships into the Communist ports.[3]

Occurring as it did in the midst of the Nationalist retightening of the blockade, the second Taiwan Strait crisis was linked to the PRC goal of halting the blockade once and for all and thereby diversifying its international trade. To try to catch up with the West, Mao Zedong adopted unsound economic policies like the Great Leap Forward, which eventually produced a nationwide famine that killed millions of Chinese. Beijing's renewed attacks during 1958 on Jinmen—the Nationalists' main blockade base—put extreme pressure on Taiwan to end the blockade. As in the first crisis, during 1954–55, the Taiwan Patrol Force was put right in the midst of this dispute.

The Gradual Decline of the Nationalist Blockade

During the early 1950s, the U.S. government actively supported the Nationalist blockade, in particular when its enforcement helped to strengthen the U.S.-led strategic embargo of the PRC. By contrast, the British government opposed the blockade with its own Formosa Straits Patrol and in 1957 announced that it was planning to increase trade with China. Meanwhile, in 1954, the Nationalist navy had unwittingly sparked a diplomatic furor when it detained *Tuapse,* a Soviet-flagged tanker. Bad publicity about the poor treatment of the Russian crew eventually led to a reduction in congressional support for the Nationalist blockade.

By 1957, the blockade was under attack by the British, who protested its interference with Hong Kong's trade with China. During the year and a half between 1954 and mid-1955, there were thirty-five reported incidents against British shipping; however, the number of serious attacks dropped to a total of fourteen—nine from the sea, two from the land, and three from the air—with no reported casualties or deaths.[4] The Formosa Straits Patrol, unlike its American counterpart, operated only sporadically during the mid-1950s. Usually one Royal Navy ship was engaged on a patrol, and each patrol lasted only two or three days. During a five-month period in late 1954, for example, only seven British ships patrolled the Taiwan Strait, each for two or three days, which meant ships were only present twenty-four of about 150 days, or about 16 percent of the period.[5]

Unlike the USN vessels, whose complex duties included patrolling, training, and morale building, the Royal Navy sought simply to protect British shipping from interference by the Nationalists and their guerrilla allies. During a chance encounter in a Taipei bar, the commanding officer of a British ship displayed his orders, signed by the First Lord of the Admiralty: "You will uphold the Queen's interests in the Formosa Straits." Such orders differed from USN directives, which tended to outline every possible contingency, prompting the American officer to conclude, "I presume he may also have been given verbal guidance, but it was *not* in writing, so he had complete latitude in deciding how to act. Now that's the way to run a Navy!"[6]

One sure sign of the British patrol's impact became apparent on 8 September 1955, when the Nationalist government's Department of Defense ordered that attacks on shipping off the coast of China must be confined to Communist vessels and that no neutral ships should be molested unless it was necessary for self-defense. This sole exception would appear to cover a hypothetical situation where a neutral vessel "happened to be in the way of a *bona fide* attack on a Communist vessel."[7]

Although British-flagged vessels continued to be stopped and searched from time to time, in July 1956 it was reported that so far that year no British ship had sustained damage or casualties as a result of Nationalist air or naval action or by the fire of shore

batteries on coastal islands.[8] Almost a year after that, in May 1957, it was further reported that since December 1955 not a single British ship had been damaged, nor had there been casualties.[9]

The loosening of the Nationalist blockade against British shipping also corresponded with a gradual decline in U.S. congressional support. This was largely due to the June 1954 seizure by the Nationalists of the Soviet tanker *Tuapse*. Moscow immediately protested that a U.S. destroyer had conducted the operation, but Washington denied this accusation. Instead, as described by one specialist, the ship's capture was Chiang's "first act of revenge" against the Soviet Union for supporting the Chinese Communists.[10] *Tuapse* was taken to Taiwan, where its crew was released. Most of the Russians were eventually returned to the Soviet Union, but eleven elected to remain in Taiwan, and nine later asked for and were eventually granted political asylum in the United States. In 1956, the Soviet embassy requested that it be allowed to interview the nine defectors. Initially, the U.S. government refused, presenting "letters from all nine crew members stating they did not wish to talk with any Soviet official."[11]

When the nine crew members arrived in the United States, however, they met with Soviet diplomats. Five of the nine were convinced to return home; perhaps family members back in the USSR were threatened with punishment. Upon their return to the USSR, the five sailors told the Soviet press that they had been little better than hostages in Taiwan. They claimed to have asked to be returned home but had been put instead in solitary confinement, where they had been "cruelly beaten and abused almost every day for two months."[12]

The bad publicity surrounding this incident increased U.S.-Soviet diplomatic tensions, which undermined congressional support for the Nationalist blockade. The Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, in particular, blamed the U.S. government for letting Soviet officials put pressure on the sailors to redefect. The generally negative press created a bad impression in the United States and abroad, since it seemed to many that the Soviet crew members had been forced to defect first to Taiwan and then later to the United States. After the *Tuapse* incident, there were far fewer cases of search, seizure, and attack by Nationalist warships.

By 1957, the Nationalist blockade of the PRC had been in effect for almost ten years. A combination of British protests and the presence of the Royal Navy gradually limited its usefulness against British shipping. However, on 31 May 1957, the thirty-third anniversary of the 1924 Sino-Soviet Treaty opening diplomatic relations between the USSR and China, a Nationalist naval squadron sank a 1,500-ton Communist transport ship off the Xiamen coast.[13]

As late as June 1957, the Nationalist government publicly warned foreign ships entering Communist ports that they did so at their own risk.[14] That month, however, after years of internal debate and discussion, the British government finally decided to end entirely its support for the U.S.-led embargo. Beginning in early 1958 Sino-British trade increased dramatically, both in volume and in types of items. This prompted the American embassy in Taipei to warn during summer 1957 that "the Chinese Communists may wish to neutralize it [Jinmen] in order to facilitate a greater use of the harbor following the British action on trade controls."[15] The PRC did in fact attempt to neutralize Jinmen Island, resulting in the second Taiwan Strait crisis.

The PRC Attack on Jinmen

As the U.S. embassy had predicted, one of the PRC's top priorities in 1958 was to increase its trade with Britain. The key was to eliminate the threat from the Nationalist base on Jinmen. Since the mid-1950s an estimated 750,000 PLA troops had been permanently stationed along the mainland coast opposite the offshore islands. This deployment had been a drain on the PRC and had definitely slowed any PLA probing elsewhere.[16] According to one historian, therefore, the PRC's "first objective" during the second Taiwan Strait crisis "was to deter the Nationalists from using the offshore islands for harassment of the mainland, or as a base for a future invasion of the mainland."[17]

On 23 August 1958, Communist forces began shelling Jinmen Island, firing an estimated forty thousand shells during the first attack. Scholars have argued that the timing of China's attack was linked to the ongoing Lebanon crisis in the Middle East.[18] While it is true that Beijing hoped that the U.S. military would be too heavily committed in the Mediterranean to respond to the Jinmen attack, the British decision to liberalize trade with China was also an important contributing factor. For example, during August 1958, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, president of the Council of Ministers of Cambodia, visited China to mediate with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, and in mid-September he explained to Walter S. Robertson, assistant secretary to the U.S. mission to the UN, that the PRC leaders were "concerned by the fact that the offshore islands are being used to mount Commando attacks on the mainland and to impose a blockade."[19]

Immediately after the shelling began, the Nationalists requested full American military support. Vice Adm. Roland N. Smoot, the commander of the U.S. Taiwan Defense Command from 1958 to 1962, had no choice but to tell Chiang that according to the U.S.-ROC defense treaty the USN could not get directly involved. However, the U.S. military assisted in other ways: "We could and did take over military defense of Taiwan itself, thus releasing his military forces to defend and resupply the offshore islands."[20] Accordingly, the PRC attack on Jinmen immediately drew in the Seventh Fleet. A direct Sino-U.S. conflict was narrowly avoided when on 24 September 1958 USS *Hopewell* (DD 681)

went to the assistance of a Nationalist LST being attacked by Communist torpedo boats. *Hopewell*'s orders were to remain clear of the fighting and not to fire unless fired on. The Communist patrol boats circled the destroyer but elected not to fire. As one account of this standoff concluded, "Thus, caution on both sides averted the first potential clash between Communist and American forces in the Strait."[21]

By mid-September 1958 the U.S. Navy had positioned five carriers and their escort ships near Taiwan, and another two were on their way. A clear message was sent to the PRC when it was revealed on 1 October that a number of eight-inch howitzers, capable of firing nuclear shells, had been delivered to Jinmen Island.[22] In addition, it was on this occasion that the Nationalist air force was provided with advanced Sidewinders. In one air battle on 24 September 1958, Nationalist F-86s shot down an impressive ten MiGs, plus two other probable hits, without sustaining a single loss.[23] These were the first-ever kills by these air-to-air missiles.[24]

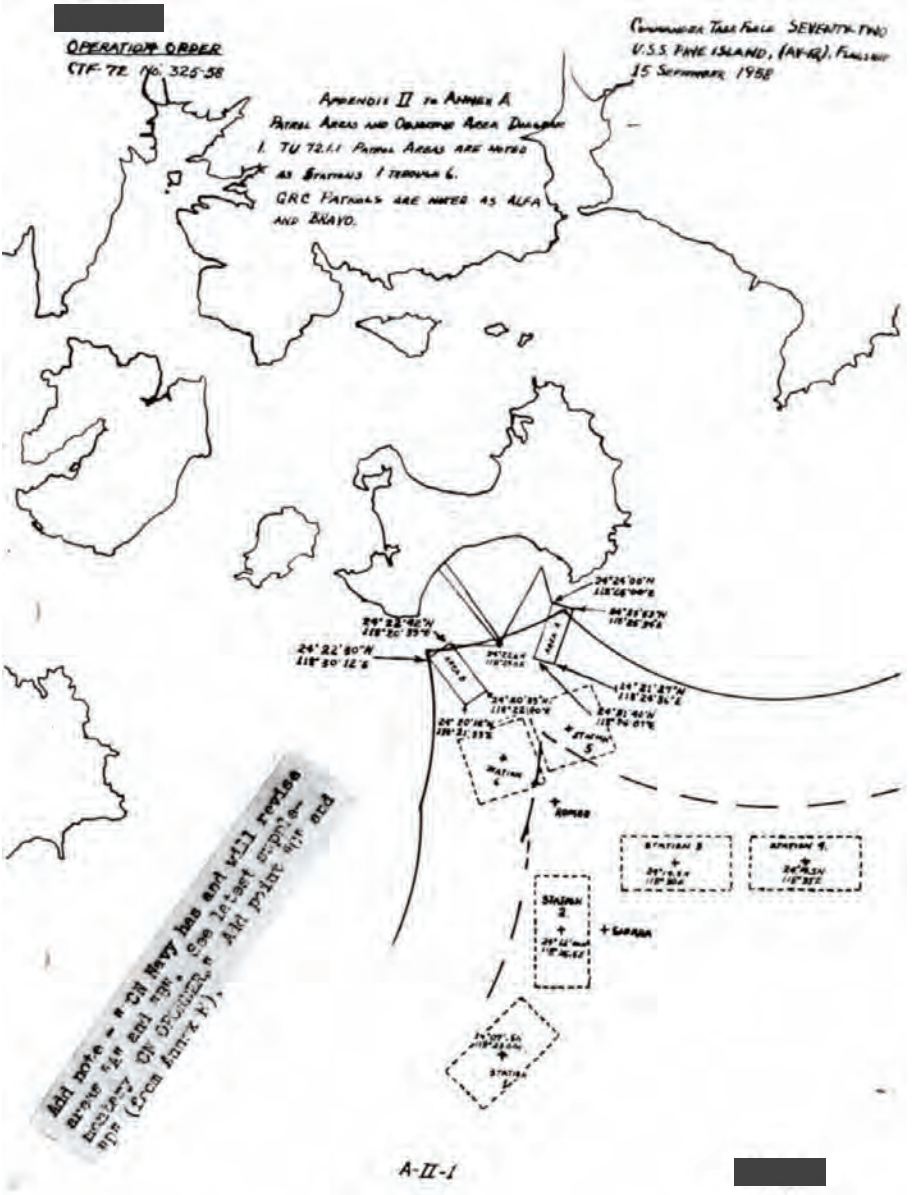
Most importantly, the U.S. Navy helped protect the shipping lanes supplying Jinmen. In early September 1958, the Taiwan Patrol Force was ordered to assist the Nationalist effort to resupply Jinmen by providing landing ships, plus escort and support forces to protect the Nationalist convoy. On 6 September, the first U.S.-escorted Nationalist convoy, code-named LIGHTNING, reached Jinmen with crucial supplies. The Taiwan Patrol Force escort included four destroyers and two cruisers, including USS *Helena* (CA 75). With USN assistance, Nationalist supply ships began to reach Jinmen in sufficiently large numbers that by mid-September they had broken what was being called a PRC artillery blockade of the island. By 19 September a total of nine convoys had reached Jinmen; the final four were able to land an average of 151 tons of supplies.[25]

Of particular importance was safeguarding the supply ships' arrival in and withdrawal from the area. Aircraft were provided for antisubmarine and surface reconnaissance within twenty-five miles of Jinmen Island. U.S. aircraft were told to stay at least twenty miles off the Chinese coastline and USN vessels to remain at least three miles from shore. U.S. Navy ships were particularly warned not to shoot at the mainland.[26] However, special ROE were issued stating, "US Commanders are authorized to engage hostile surface vessels in territorial or international waters if they are attacking the RCN [Republic of China Navy] forces."[27] Meanwhile, intensive training was undertaken by USN personnel to ensure that the Nationalists could carry out a successful convoy operation. A 15 September 1958 map shows how USN ships—stationed in the dotted boxes—protected Nationalist ships resupplying Jinmen (map 7).

Washington's support for the Nationalists was not unconditional. For example, when Chiang told Admiral Smoot that he wanted to use Taiwanese planes to bomb the mainland, Washington was concerned this might escalate the conflict. According to Admiral

MAP 7

U.S. Navy's Jinmen Convoy Operations



Smoot, "We [U.S. Navy] developed a study which proved to them that for every one of those guns that they might silence by the type of bombing they had available, they'd probably lose almost a squadron of planes. This, of course[,] was too big a price to pay, and they were convinced of the proposal's infeasibility."[28]

During late September 1958, the PRC sent a message through Indian intermediaries that if the Nationalists withdrew from the islands they would not be attacked, and Beijing would not press immediately its claims to Taiwan.[29] The Chinese leaders, clearly concerned about further U.S. intervention, ordered the artillery units firing on Jinmen to be sure that "no strike should be aimed at American ships."[30] However, Mao refused to accept American demands that a cease-fire precede Sino-U.S. talks to resolve the crisis.[31] For this reason, a negotiated settlement appeared unlikely.

Growing Sino-Soviet Economic Tension

Behind the scenes, several important diplomatic factors contributed to the second cross-strait crisis. The PRC was determined to break the Nationalist blockade. This aim was linked to growing Sino-Soviet tension over the PRC's recently adopted economic plan, the Great Leap Forward. Mao's decision to shell Jinmen without first seeking Soviet approval has thus been described as "a challenge not just to Taipei and Washington but to Moscow's domination of the international Communist movement as well."[32]

Due in large measure to the U.S.-led economic embargo of China, the PRC's economic dependence on the USSR had grown rapidly throughout the 1950s. Since 1950, when the PRC had borrowed three hundred million American dollars from the USSR, a sum that was clearly insufficient to solve China's many economic problems, it had gotten progressively deeper in debt to Moscow. The PRC's intervention in the Korean War led not only to huge military losses but to even greater debt to the USSR, since, to "add insult to injury," Stalin demanded that China pay for all Soviet military equipment sent to Korea.[33]

During August 1958, Mao initiated a new phase of the Great Leap Forward; Soviet imports rose by an "astounding 70 per cent in 1958 and 1959" to support his industrialization plans.[34] But Beijing's constant demands on Moscow entailed political costs. During summer 1958, when Mao requested nuclear submarines, Khrushchev in turn pressured Mao to agree to allow Soviet submarine bases in China. This proposal was a clear throwback to tsarist Russian imperialism, undermining China's sovereignty. Proposed Soviet bases and the artillery attack on Jinmen were major factors in the Sino-Soviet dispute.[35]

When the PRC refused the USSR's request for basing rights, Khrushchev asked how China could pay for the submarines; Mao responded that China had unlimited supplies of grain. True to his words, beginning in 1959 the PRC began to export millions of tons

of grain, worth an estimated U.S.$935 million, largely to fund its purchases from the USSR.[36] About three-quarters of all famine-related deaths in China during 1959–61 occurred in 1960, which corresponds to the highest grain exports.[37]

To increase grain sales to pay for the Great Leap Forward, Beijing desperately needed to increase its maritime trade. PRC officials attempted to exploit Anglo-American differences in trade policy to achieve this goal. Mao also put pressure on Taiwan to give up its last offshore island bases, the only parts of the mainland the Nationalists still controlled.[38] Not only would this undermine Chiang's goal of returning to the mainland, but when it happened, the PRC would finally be able to claim to have reunified all of mainland China. All of these foreign-policy, economic, and political factors contributed to Mao's decision during August 1958 to attack Jinmen Island.

Dulles Halts the Nationalist Blockade

Washington, concerned that fighting in the Taiwan Strait might escalate into all-out war, tried in 1958 to persuade Chiang to reduce the Nationalist forces on the islands so as to halt the commando raids.[39] Although it was left unstated, any decision to cut forces on the offshore islands would also necessarily result in the termination of the Nationalists' decade-long naval blockade of China.

In October, Dulles flew to Taiwan.[40] During private talks, Chiang refused to withdraw, rejecting any proposal that seemed to him to suggest "retreat from his position as head of the only legitimate Chinese Government."[41] Dulles instead urged him to renounce the use of force to reunify China.[42] Included in this plan would be a substantial reduction of forces on Jinmen and Mazu.[43]

Decreasing forces on the offshore islands would mean the end of the Nationalist blockade. Dulles told the British Foreign Office immediately before he left for Taiwan that ending the blockade was one of his goals.[44] The blockade was no longer necessary, since the PRC was experiencing an economic implosion due to the Great Leap Forward. Meanwhile, it was well-known in Washington that Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations were already under increasing stress.[45] It was to be no coincidence that the Nationalist blockade ended just as the first hint of what would soon be called the Sino-Soviet split appeared.[46]

On 6 October 1958, after forty-four days, the PRC halted the shelling. Civilian casualties were 138 dead and 324 injured; the dead and wounded soldiers numbered close to three thousand. In addition, an estimated seven thousand buildings on Jinmen had been either damaged or destroyed.[47] The cessation was not permanent; artillery fire continued for the next twenty years, ending for good only in January 1979 after the United States and the People's Republic of China recognized each other. Firing would take place

on alternate days of the week, with the shells mainly containing propaganda leaflets. An estimated one million steel shell casings were fired at Jinmen, in what would be the longest sustained artillery barrage in world history.[48]

Nonetheless, even after the October 1958 pause, all American attempts to resolve PRC-Taiwan differences peacefully failed. On 27 October 1958, British foreign secretary Selwyn Lloyd wrote to Dulles that the Chinese seemed to be in no hurry to make peace with Taiwan and would pursue their aims by whatever political means they could think of: "They do not want mediation and their ultimate goal appears to be some direct arrangement with the Nationalists." Lloyd concluded by predicting—with great accuracy, from the viewpoint of half a century later—"We are, therefore, likely to be in for a fairly long period of such tactics."[49]

The Economic Impact of the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis

Following the end of the Nationalist blockade, China's international maritime trade gradually began to recover. Between 1957 and 1959 there was almost a doubling of imports from Britain and nearly a tripling of imports from West Germany.[50] The fact that much of China's foreign trade with Europe was still being funneled through the USSR, by means of the trans-Siberian railway, gave a false appearance that Sino-Soviet trade was continuing. But once the Sino-Soviet split occurred, beginning in August 1960, there was a complete shift away from the Soviet Union toward the West.[51]

By 1960, the PRC was facing a domestic financial disaster as a result of the Great Leap Forward. As soon as the Sino-Soviet split became public, however, Beijing insisted on repaying its estimated billion-ruble-plus debt to the USSR. Mao was reportedly desperate to break away from the USSR-dominated economic system.[52] Enormous Chinese grain exports in 1959 and 1960 helped fund these repayments—at the cost, as noted, of nationwide famine. During 1961, the PRC finally began to import more grain than it exported.[53] But according to one study, almost half a billion rubles was repaid to the USSR during 1960–62, as tens of millions of Chinese were dying of hunger. By ignoring the plight of the Chinese people, Beijing managed to repay its entire debt to Moscow by 1965, ahead of schedule.[54]

In the aftermath of the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis, Sino-Soviet trade began to decline, just as China's trade with the West began to grow. According to one view of the U.S. embargo,

> China's dependence on Soviet assistance inevitably created heavy economic burdens on Moscow and could slow down Soviet development, thus making the Moscow-Beijing alliance quite costly. On the other hand, Sino-Soviet economic leverage placed the Kremlin in a politically favorable position from which to dictate relations within the alliance and influence the CCP's [Chinese Communist Party's] domestic and foreign policies. This paradoxical situation turned out to be a major

> contributor to the collapse of the Soviet economic cooperation and the eventual deterioration of the alliance between the two Communist powers.

Thus, in this view, the indirect and long-term effect of the U.S. strategic embargo was to create tension in Beijing's economic relations with Moscow sufficient to help lead by 1960 to the disintegration of the Sino-Soviet alliance.[55] This political outcome largely achieved one of Dulles's prime strategic goals of pushing the USSR and the PRC together so as to tear them apart.

Conclusions

The second Taiwan Strait crisis ended the Nationalist blockade of the PRC. The blockade had already lasted ten years and, in combination with the ongoing American strategic embargo, had exerted extreme economic pressure on the PRC. Sino-Soviet economic tension eventually forced a major realignment in the PRC's foreign trade. In the immediate aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split, Chinese trade with the USSR dropped sharply, just as imports—especially much-needed grain from Canada and Australia to offset the effects of the Great Famine—soared.

During the 1958 crisis the Taiwan Patrol Force "accomplished one of the most important missions of her career by playing a major role in aiding the Chinese Nationalists."[56] But according to Dulles, the real dispute was not one of geography but of human will. If the United States "seems afraid, and loses 'face' in any way, the consequences will be far-reaching, extending from Viet Nam in the south, to Japan and Korea in the north."[57] Periodic PLA attacks against Jinmen were intended to make it a whipping boy for Taiwan itself.[58] In Dulles's view, the PRC leaders were pursuing mainly a political, not a military, strategy and intended to play a cat-and-mouse game with the offshore islands. The PRC announcement that shelling of Jinmen might switch from even-numbered days to odd-numbered days seemed to substantiate this assessment: "This rather fantastic statement seems to confirm," Dulles observed, "our analysis of the Chinese Communist attitude as being essentially political and propaganda rather than military."[59]

Meanwhile, the U.S. government's announcements remained intentionally vague about its decision not to use military force to support the Nationalist bases on Jinmen or Mazu. However, a secret 26 December 1959 operation order, while acknowledging that the offshore islands were not covered under this agreement, stated that the United States had committed itself to the defense of Taiwan, the Penghu Islands, and—most importantly—the offshore islands of Mazu and Jinmen, insofar as a threat to these islands was considered to threaten Taiwan and the Penghus.[60] The U.S. government decision to defend any offshore island the loss of which would pose a direct threat to Taiwan virtually guaranteed that the Taiwan Patrol Force would continue for some time to come.

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CHAPTER NINE

The Third Taiwan Strait Crisis and the End of the Taiwan Patrol Force

With the public acknowledgment of the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, the PRC's main source of advanced military equipment disappeared. There was a third, belated Taiwan Strait crisis in 1962, which was settled diplomatically rather than by fighting. Over time, however, the military rift with the USSR so negatively impacted the PLAN's technical capabilities as to undermine the PRC's ability to invade Taiwan. The chaos surrounding the 1966–76 Cultural Revolution exacerbated this situation, as resources available for naval development became scarce.

This reduction in threat level produced significant changes to the Taiwan Patrol Force during the 1960s, including assignment of fewer and smaller warships. However, USN ships remained on patrol duty in the Taiwan Strait throughout the 1960s and until late in the following decade. With the escalation of U.S. actions in Vietnam, the Taiwan Patrol Force became closely linked with the interdiction program off North Vietnam. Sino-U.S. tension also remained high throughout most of the 1960s because of the Vietnam War.

The 1969 Sino-Soviet dispute represented a long-awaited opportunity to improve Sino-U.S. relations. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger ordered the American ambassador in Taiwan to tell Vice Premier Chiang Ching-kuo that modifications to the Taiwan Strait Patrol would occur in November 1969. When Taiwan protested, Kissinger replied that "the decision to change patrol from permanent to intermittent status is not subject to change."[1] This naval de-escalation sent a potent message to Beijing, as did Washington's simultaneous decision to modify the American embargo on strategic goods. According to Kissinger's memoir, these were messages that "Peking . . . understood."[2] However, not even Richard M. Nixon's historic 1972 visit to Beijing brought an end to the Taiwan Patrol Force; it continued for another seven years, until the establishment of official Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations in 1979.

The Third Taiwan Strait Crisis

Tension in the Taiwan Strait remained high after 1958. During the 1960 American election, the offshore islands became a hotly debated issue. Richard Nixon accused John F. Kennedy of lacking the resolve to protect the offshore islands with force. By the early 1960s there was a significant PLA buildup across from Jinmen Island; during the spring of 1962 the PRC began to deploy additional troops to the Taiwan Strait region. This sparked what is often referred to as the third Taiwan Strait crisis and prompted a rapid U.S. diplomatic response.

The background to this third incident was the severe famine brought about by Mao's determination to pay back China's debts. Estimates vary, but tens of millions of Chinese died in the Great Famine between 1958 and 1961. Food shortages continued into 1962. Beginning in May of that year over a hundred thousand refugees flooded across the border into Hong Kong. Taking advantage of this crisis, the Nationalist government agreed to accept all refugees who wished to move to Taiwan. Two days later the U.S. government agreed to accept several thousand Chinese refugees.[3]

When the Kennedy administration came into office, it considered relaxing trade controls with China in light of the unfolding Sino-Soviet split and the humanitarian crisis caused by the famine, but it rejected the suggestion.[4] In fact, as Admiral Smoot later admitted, the Nationalists were doing all they could to exacerbate the crisis. For instance, and with U.S. approval, teams were transported to the PRC to conduct sabotage missions: "They'd take a midget submarine and 20 or 30 men ashore at night, then they'd go over where the communists had a bunch of guns annoying the offshore islands. The men would go and cut the throats of all the gun crews and then disappear. The communists would wonder why the guns weren't firing, and in their investigations would find all the crews with their throats cut." But these sabotage missions were meant simply to harass the enemy; they were not part of a Nationalist attempt "to return to the mainland in force."[5]

In reaction to the flood of refugees, and fearful that Taiwan might be contemplating offensive operations against the mainland to take advantage of the general collapse of the Great Leap Forward, the PLA moved additional divisions to the zone facing Jinmen and Mazu.[6] During the spring of 1962, Secretary of State Dean Rusk was able to confirm that American intelligence services had determined that the PLA had moved six or eight divisions to coastal areas opposite Taiwan. However, there was as yet no sign that junks were assembling, so he concluded that the Chinese moves were probably precautionary in nature.[7]

On 23 June 1962, the American ambassador to Poland asked his Chinese counterpart in Warsaw about this unexplained buildup. The Chinese diplomat claimed it was a

response to the threatening posture of the Taiwan authorities. Averell Harriman, the former American ambassador to the USSR, immediately warned the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, of the extreme dangerousness of any attempt by the Chinese Communists to attack the offshore islands. Harriman asserted that Washington was giving Chiang Kai-shek no encouragement to pursue reckless policies against the PRC. Dobrynin questioned whether America would support Taiwan in a conflict, especially considering that Kennedy had argued during his presidential campaign that offshore islands need not be defended, only Taiwan itself; Harriman cautioned this would be a most unwise conclusion to draw and that any move against the islands by the Communists would run "terrible risks."[8]

On 27 June 1962, the twelfth anniversary of the founding of the Taiwan Patrol Force, Kennedy warned—having apparently decided since his campaign that the security of Taiwan depended on that of the islands—that if the PRC attacked the offshore islands, his administration would stand by the 1955 Formosa Resolution to guarantee the defense of Taiwan: "Any threat to the offshore islands . . . must be judged in relation to its wider meaning for the safety of Formosa and the peace of the area."[9] Meanwhile, Beijing was also reassured by American officials that Washington would not support a Nationalist attack against the mainland. The American ambassador to Taiwan even warned Chiang Kai-shek that the U.S.-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty did not say the United States would support a Taiwanese counterattack against China, and it would be "a mistake to create [an] impression in the minds of the people that [the] US has any such obligations."[10]

Tension remained high, but there was no military conflict. Arguably, the crisis was resolved by the Kennedy administration with diplomacy, backed by the USN forces in the region. By utilizing the ambiguity in the wording of the Mutual Defense Treaty, Washington succeeded in de-escalating the dispute. However, to help ensure that Taiwan could adequately defend itself, during the early 1960s the United States also began to provide the Nationalist military with more powerful missiles. Highly visible Nationalist missile tests were intended to send a warning to the PRC not to attempt a cross-strait invasion.

Nationalist Missile Tests over the Taiwan Strait

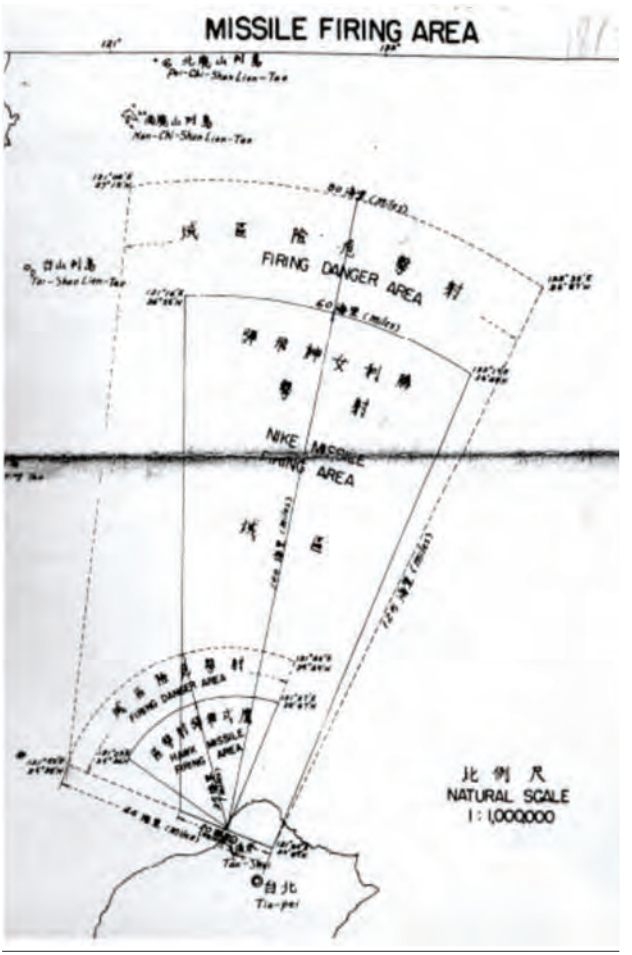
In 1962 the U.S. military transferred to Taiwan additional high-tech weaponry, including Nike and Hawk surface-to-air missiles. The Nike Hercules missile had a range of about a hundred miles and was considered a highly effective air-defense weapon.[11] By contrast, the MIM-23 Hawk missile was a low-to-medium-altitude air-defense missile with a range of about fifteen miles.[12] Together, these two missile systems gave Taiwan unchallenged air control over the strait.

To send a highly public warning to the PRC not to attack, a series of missile tests were announced by the Taiwanese government during the spring of 1965. In April the Nationalist military carried out tests under the technical guidance of American experts. Taiwan announced that for a fifteen-day period in mid-April ships should stay clear of the "danger area."[13] During this period Taiwan fired four missiles to the north (map 8).

Most international shipping companies ignored these missile tests, but Alfred Holt and Co. of Liverpool complained to the British government that they violated freedom of the seas. On 29 October the Ministry of Defence determined that while these tests were a hindrance to shipping and therefore appeared to violate the principle of freedom of the seas, a formal protest did not seem necessary. Instead, it recommended that further questions be directed to either the Chinese Nationalists or to the Americans. It also asked the Board of Trade to inquire whether any other British shipping companies had been adversely affected.[14]

MAP 8

Missile Testing Zones North of Taiwan



Working through the British Chamber of Shipping, which took a poll of shipping companies impacted by the missile tests, the Board of Trade reported, "Although we cannot claim there has been actual inconvenience to our shipping so far there is no doubt that if the range is used more extensively in the future it will cause inconvenience." Depending on when the tests were conducted, British ships could experience delays

of up to ten hours or be forced to "proceed by way of the east coast of Taiwan, incurring extra distance and time." The board recommended that Nationalist authorities be requested to change the direction of the tests so as to fire over a comparatively little-used section of the China Sea and to circulate warnings of future tests well in advance, both by Notices to Mariners and by radio broadcasts.[15]

In the end, nothing seems to have been done; there are no copies of official protests in the British archives. However, it is important that the British Foreign Office considered these tests to be violations of freedom of the seas. The Foreign Office determined that the Taiwan missile range as declared in 1965 appears "to violate a principle, and every reasonable endeavour should be made to prevent such violations. Even if their immediate practical effects are not great they all add nails to the coffin of the freedom of the high seas."[16]

China's comparative naval weakness helped Taiwan during the 1960s, since it allowed the Nationalist government to allocate fewer maritime resources to protecting Taiwan from a naval invasion. Still, the PRC had a large force opposite Taiwan, and cross-strait relations remained tense. Against the backdrop of fundamental differences over Taiwan's international status, the U.S. strategic embargo continued throughout the 1960s. Meanwhile, the Taiwan Patrol Force was called on to broaden its patrol duties to include waters off Vietnam.

The U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War

By the mid-1960s, U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia had a major impact on the Taiwan Patrol Force. Although the U.S. Navy began to assign substantial naval assets to waters off Vietnam, the Taiwan Patrol Force continued to function, and it was to do so even at the height of the Vietnam War. In November 1965, while patrolling the Taiwan Strait, USS *O'Brien* arrived near Wuchiu Island just after an attack on two Nationalist patrol boats by PLAN torpedo boats and gunboats. One Nationalist vessel, *PCE 61,* had been sunk. *O'Brien* rescued survivors and transported them back to land. The PRC's 14 November "serious warning" about the incident was number 395.[17]

With the escalation of the Vietnam War, the Taiwan Patrol Force became more closely linked with ongoing naval operations there. During 1965, Operation Market Time was undertaken to interdict the delivery of supplies and weapons to the Vietcong by infiltration trawlers. This operation was destined to impact the Taiwan Patrol Force, since many of the same USN vessels were assigned to carry out both duties.

One of the Navy's greatest concerns was not to antagonize the PRC. Its ships were ordered, "Operations could not be conducted within thirty nautical miles of the Chinese

border, for fear of provoking Chinese intervention in the war."[18] Strict orders were given to all USN vessels in these waters not to enter China's territorial waters:

> While *Hissem* was assigned to MARKET TIME, I would guess in February of 1968, U.S. Navy P3s had been tracking a trawler in the South China Sea headed for Vietnam. The trawler, aware that he was being tracked, reversed course to return home, and the American commanders wanted to discover where his home was. *Hissem* was assigned to take an over-the-horizon radar turnover from a P3, and follow the trawler home without his knowing he was being tracked. We followed him around the southern side of Hainan island, up the eastern side of the island, and into the channel between Hainan and the mainland. As we approached Chinese territorial waters three high-speed gunboats came out to look us over. Since this was shortly after the *Pueblo* incident, things were a bit tense. We were at General Quarters, but did not train our weapons to avoid looking threatening. Our orders were to not enter Chinese territorial waters, but to track the trawler as long as we could. This we did until the trawler disappeared from radar.[19]

According to Captain Barber, even after *Hissem* disengaged Chinese gunboats continued to follow the ship but finally broke off. During this incident the ship was bombarded by an enormous volume of communications from everyone in the chain of command, including the "national command authority." The operations officer, Meredith Musick, did a "superb job of managing this inundation, and bringing to my attention only those things I really needed to see. Otherwise it would have made my primary job of being ready to fight much more difficult." The ship was especially vulnerable because there was no air cover.[20]

Since the PRC was the real focus of both operations, the United States and Taiwan worked closely during the Vietnam War. Because of the huge logistical needs of the U.S. Navy, Taiwan became a major support base. In October 1962, a memorandum of understanding was signed allowing the U.S. Air Force to build bases on Taiwan. The largest was outside of Taizhong, in central Taiwan, and was called Ching Chuan Kang (CCK). Beginning in 1966, three squadrons of C-130 transport planes were deployed to CCK on a permanent basis, and by 1972 the number of squadrons had grown to four. By the end of the 1960s quite a few different air assets were operating out of Taiwan, including several squadrons of F-100 fighter aircraft, EC-121 electronic-warfare aircraft, and KC-135 tankers, intended for midair refueling.[21]

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the Nationalists also acted as an unofficial military depot. In the final years of the Vietnam War, for example, about fifty F-5A aircraft donated by Taiwan were flown to South Vietnam to help prop up the failing government; Taiwan was later reimbursed with more modern F-5Es.[22] As Admiral Beshany later recalled, "I can tell you this, that every plane was there exactly on schedule. They didn't miss one flight of some fifty-odd aircraft that they transferred which was a big part of their Air Force. It was all the modern aircraft that they had. That was a personal sacrifice on their part, and it's one we can't kid ourselves about." In November 1972,

Secretary of State Kissinger sent a letter of thanks to the Nationalists for their "help and assistance in getting those aircraft over to Vietnam."[23]

As part of the global Cold War to contain the spread of communism, Taiwan reportedly became an important, albeit unofficial, U.S. nuclear base in the western Pacific. Recent declassifications have confirmed that the U.S. military stored nuclear weapons at Tainan Air Base, Taiwan.[24] When called on to assist, the Nationalist government could also be counted on to support other Asian countries fighting their own communist insurgencies. But beginning in 1969, this close U.S.-ROC defense relationship began to change as a result of border clashes between the PRC and USSR. These events soon led to a dramatic warming in Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations.

Opening Sino-U.S. Diplomatic Relations: The Taiwan Patrol Connection

By the late 1960s, Sino-Soviet tension had gone from bad to worse, including active fighting along the lengthy common border. Facing the threat of nuclear war with the USSR, in 1972 Mao invited Nixon to Beijing to open Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations. Seven years later, on 1 January 1979, Jimmy Carter completed the gradual transition in relations from Taiwan to the PRC by officially recognizing Beijing. Recognition also marked the official termination of the Taiwan Patrol Force.

During the late 1960s, increased Sino-Soviet tension gave Washington a long-awaited opportunity to combine forces with China to exert military and economic pressure on the USSR. As early as 1956, the British embassy in China had speculated on the possible effect of a Sino-Soviet dispute on Sino-U.S. relations. It concluded that any relaxation of PRC ties with the Soviets was likely to lead to improved relations with the United States, rather than with Britain. In support of this view, the paper cited the "traditional American friendship for China as opposed to the traditional British imperialist role in China."[25]

The Sino-Soviet monolith publicly split in 1960, but American leaders patiently waited until matters reached crisis stage. After all, Washington's policy was not simply to break apart China and the USSR but to force China to follow international law.[26] A historical account confirms that Washington's measured response to the Taiwan Strait crises played a role in this gradual PRC transition: "It is also likely that the restrained use of US power during the various Taiwan Strait crises of 1955, 1958 and 1962, somewhat moderated Chinese fear of US attack."[27] On 4 August 1969, at the height of the Sino-Soviet border conflict, the time finally seemed ripe. President Nixon made his intentions to Beijing clear by calling Moscow the main aggressor in the dispute and suggesting that the PRC's defeat would not be in the best interests of the United States. This statement indicated a dramatic shift from the former American policy of isolating China.

Next, Kissinger sent the PRC a potent signal by ordering the suspension of the Seventh Fleet's regular patrols of the Taiwan Strait. The official USN explanation was that the U.S. government had ordered a hundred-ship reduction in worldwide deployments due to a three-billion-dollar reduction in defense expenditures.[28] On 15 November 1969, a U.S. Navy order changed the Taiwan Strait Patrol "from a continuous patrol composed of DD types permanently assigned to Task Group 72.1 to a random patrol composed of various combatant and auxiliary units."[29]

These highly public changes in U.S. policy greatly concerned Taiwan. In response to Nationalist protests, CinCPac privately assured Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense that an average of fifteen U.S. Navy ships per month would still transit the Taiwan Strait.[30] On 17 December 1969, Ambassador Walter P. McConaughy explained to Chiang Kai-shek that most of the USN ships in the Far East would also be ordered to transit the strait rather than travel along the east coast of Taiwan. This would mean a higher number of transits than before, and therefore "a more thorough naval observation of the Strait under the new procedure than when the two DE's were on regular patrol."[31] In addition, the primary duty of the patrol would remain the same: "Detect and report Communist Chinese . . . shipping preparing for, or actually attempting an invasion of Taiwan and/or the Penghu Islands."[32]

The true reason for changing the Taiwan Patrol Force was to send an unmistakable signal to Beijing that Washington was willing to open talks. The State Department also sent this message via unofficial discussions in Warsaw, and it wanted to make the same "pitch" to a Chinese official in Hong Kong, just to "make sure that Peking gets the message."[33] To ensure further that the PRC did not misunderstand what the United States intended, "Kissinger told Beijing, via Pakistani President Yahya Khan, that the basic U.S. commitment to Taiwan's defense remained unchanged." The termination of the patrols was intended more as a "gesture intended to remove an irritant in relations."[34] In fact, Kissinger's offer to end the patrol was intended more to give Beijing leaders "face" than to make any substantive change in the operations of the Taiwan Patrol Force.[35]

This diplomatic ploy proved highly successful, and in 1971 Henry Kissinger made a secret trip to Beijing in order to prepare for Nixon's historic visit the next year to meet Mao Zedong. As a further concession to Beijing, the U.S. embargo on strategic goods, which had been adopted on 8 December 1950, was terminated on 10 June 1971.[36] In February Washington had publicly reiterated, however, that America's commitment to Taiwan's defense remained unchanged.[37] USN ships still visited Taiwanese ports, and combined exercises between the U.S. Navy and Nationalist ships continued throughout the 1970s. Intermittent patrols were still conducted by the Taiwan Patrol Force, but the new "Commander U.S. Taiwan Patrol Force [was] largely a planning function," an entity whose job was to plan and provide "designated forces as the Naval Component

Commander of the Taiwan Defense Command, in the event that wide ranging hostilities break out between the Communist and Nationalist Chinese."[38]

Nixon's visit to China resulted in a rapid change in U.S. foreign policy toward Taiwan. During Sino-U.S. meetings in 1972, the United States and China signed the Shanghai Communiqué. In this agreement, Washington acknowledged that there was only one China and that Taiwan was part of China. This led to the PRC's obtaining Taiwan's seat at the United Nations. Nixon next visited Moscow, where he warned General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev that attacking China would adversely affect American interests. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the U.S. and Chinese militaries began to work together against the Soviet Union. Increased military and naval cooperation enabled China and the United States to encircle the USSR on the east and west, forcing on the Soviet Union higher rates of militarization than its woefully inefficient economy could support.

With Jimmy Carter and Deng Xiaoping's mutual-recognition instrument of 1 January 1979, the U.S. 1955 Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan was unilaterally terminated. This elicited an angry Nationalist statement on 2 January 1979.[39] USS *Midway* was the last U.S. Navy aircraft carrier to visit Taiwan, as part of a combined exercise known as BLUESKY on 18 November 1978, less than six weeks before the United States officially recognized the PRC.[40] SHARK HUNT exercises between U.S. and Taiwanese warships ended the same month. All future combined exercises involving the U.S. Navy and the Nationalist navy were canceled, marking 1 January 1979 as the termination date of the Taiwan Patrol Force.[41]

Conclusions

The American embassy in Taipei closed its doors on 28 February 1979.[42] Although it appeared that the United States had abandoned Taiwan, on 10 April 1979 Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act. This codified Taiwan's unique position as part of "one China" and yet existing outside of PRC sovereignty claims. A Sino-U.S. communiqué signed on 17 August 1982 appeared to promise that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan would gradually diminish, but no date was set for ending the sales. Secretly, the Ronald Reagan administration reassured Taiwan that it would continue to monitor PRC military deployments and that if the PRC attacked Taiwan, "U.S. commitments [to Beijing] would become invalidated."[43]

Meanwhile, U.S. recognition of the PRC in 1979 allowed for a two-front strategy, with NATO on the USSR's western flank and China on the eastern. During the late 1970s China's new leader, Deng Xiaoping, announced an open-door policy that promised greater economic interaction with the West, largely on American terms. The PRC also began to adopt its own version of Taiwan's earlier, highly successful trade program.[44]

China's shift to a more market-oriented economy ultimately validated the U.S. policy, first proposed during the summer of 1949 and later supported by the creation of the Taiwan Patrol Force, of using the U.S. Navy to exert military, economic, and political pressure on that nation.

The combination of this new East–West strategic threat and China's rapid economic growth based on free-market reforms put enormous pressure on the Soviet Union to reform as well. During the mid-to-late 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev tried but failed to adopt similarly successful westernizing measures in the USSR. Among its other successes, Sino-American military cooperation has been cited as one of the major factors in forcing the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan during February 1989.[45] This military failure was correctly perceived by the USSR's client states in Eastern Europe as a sign of weakness. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the December 1991 collapse of the USSR, the Taiwan Patrol Force's original strategic purpose appeared to have disappeared for good. However, during the mid-1990s tension over the Taiwan Strait once again mounted.

Notes

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3. Ta Jen Liu, *U.S.-China Relations, 1784–1992* (Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 1997), p. 261 note 18.
4. Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949–1963* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001), p. 267.
5. Roland N. Smoot, "As I Recall: The U.S. Taiwan Defense Command," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 110/9/979 (September 1984), p. 59.
6. Stephen P. Gibert and William M. Carpenter, *America and Island China: A Documentary History* (Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 1989), p. 11.
7. "Record of a Conversation after Dinner at 1 Carlton Gardens on June 24, 1962," PREM 11/3738, TNA/UK. This buildup preceded by several months China's attack against India, far to the west, so in hindsight China's decision to beef up the PLA forces along the Taiwan Strait might have been intended to ensure that Taiwan could not take military advantage of the Sino-Indian conflict.
8. Sir D. Ormsby Gore, Washington, telegram to Foreign Office, London, 25 June 1962, PREM 11/3738, TNA/UK.
9. Liu, *U.S.-China Relations,* p. 261.
10. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Strategic Ambiguity or Strategic Clarity?," in *Dangerous Strait: The U.S.-Taiwan-China Crisis,* ed. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2005), p. 192, citing 611.93/7-562 #22 Kirk, Taipei, *FRUS,* vol. 22, *1961–63,* p. 288.
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14. Masters, Ministry of Defence, to J. Flynn, Foreign Office, London (Restricted), 29 October 1965, FO 371/181207, TNA/UK.

15. N. R. Swann, Board of Trade, to D. N. Wood, Foreign Office, London, 10 December 1965, FO 371/181207, TNA/UK.
16. Masters to Flynn.
17. C. S. Christensen and J. B. Hattendorf, "*O'Brien*'s Odyssey: One Destroyer's Duty in the Seventh Fleet," *Our Navy* (September 1966), p. 60.
18. R. L. Schreadley, *From the Rivers to the Sea: The United States Navy in Vietnam* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1992), p. 120.
19. James Barber, interview by author, 2 May 2009.
20. Ibid.
21. John W. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), p. 208.
22. Philip A. Beshany, *The Reminiscences of Vice Admiral Philip A. Beshany, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1983), vol. 2, pp. 925–27.
23. Ibid., pp. 927, 934.
24. "CINCPAC Command History, 1974," *Nautilus Institute: Digital Library,* oldsite.nautilus.org/.
25. Dulles Papers, 14 March 1956, 95016, reel 212/213.
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27. John W. Garver, *China's Decision for Rapprochement with the United States, 1968–1971* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1982), p. 52.
28. "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Republic of China and Commander, U.S. Taiwan Defense Command," 23 September 1969, *FRUS,* vol. 17, *China 1969–1972,* p. 89.
29. CTF 72 Operation Order 201, p. B-II-1.
30. "CINCPAC Command History 1969" (Top Secret), vol. 1, p. 143, NHHC Archives, Washington, D.C.
31. "Memorandum of Conversation," 17 December 1969, *FRUS,* vol. 17, *China 1969–1972,* p. 151.
32. CTF 72 Operation Order 201, p. B-II-1.
33. "Memorandum from John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," 21 November 1969, *FRUS,* vol. 17, *China 1969–1972,* p. 138.
34. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance,* p. 267.
35. For more on the practical uses of "giving face," especially in a public setting, see Bruce A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine, *Modern China: Continuity and Change, 1644 to the Present* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2010), p. 11.
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37. David Muller, *China as a Maritime Power* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1983), p. 175.
38. "Taiwan Patrol-Command History," 5 March 1971.
39. "Document 33: ROC Statement on U.S. Termination of Mutual Defense Treaty, January 2, 1979," in Hungdah Chiu, *China and the Taiwan Issue* (New York: Praeger, 1979), pp. 264–65.
40. "Taiwan Strait: 21 July 1995 to 23 March 1996," GlobalSecurity.org. *Turner Joy* may have been one of the last USN ships to transit the Taiwan Strait; see "USS *Turner Joy* (DD-951)," HullNumber.com.
41. Although the U.S.-ROC treaty officially ended on 1 January 1980, U.S.-ROC exercises actually ended on 1 January 1979, as confirmed by Edward Marolda: "I completely agree with the 1979 date. . . . [E]ven if patrols were infrequent during the 1970s, we still had a treaty obligation to defend the island"; e-mail, 12 December 2010.
42. This was the thirty-second anniversary of the 28 February 1947 massacre of Taiwanese by Nationalist troops, perhaps sending a signal to the Nationalist leadership concerning the need for greater democratic reforms on Taiwan.
43. Tucker, "Strategic Ambiguity or Strategic Clarity?," p. 194.
44. Sheppard Glass, "Some Aspects of Formosa's Economic Growth," in *Formosa Today,* ed. Mark Mancall (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 70.
45. John J. Tkacik, Jr., "Strategy Deficit: U.S. Security in the Pacific and the Future of Taiwan," in *Reshaping the Taiwan Strait,* ed. John J. Tkacik, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 2007), p. 13.

CHAPTER TEN

The U.S. Navy's Continuing Strategic Impact in the Taiwan Strait

From 1979 through 1989 the United States and the PRC actively cooperated against the USSR, with Washington authorizing sales of high-tech naval equipment to China.[1] This helped to limit tension in the Taiwan Strait. In fact, the need for the Taiwan Patrol Force itself seemed to be long past. However, the U.S. government maintained a strong interest in Taiwan's defense and continued to sell it weapons.[2] With the end of the Cold War in 1989, followed soon by the 1991 collapse of the USSR, the delicate balance of power in the Taiwan Strait began to shift once again.

These events gave China an unforeseen opportunity to expand its influence in Asia. It rapidly began to build up its naval forces, in part to fill the military vacuum left by the Soviet Union's retreat. With the help of the new Russian Federation—mainly sales of advanced naval equipment, including *Sovremennyy* destroyers and Kilo submarines—the PLAN began a long period of growth.[3] The PRC also developed a large missile force, deployed mainly against Taiwan. Arguably, it has been this rapid military growth that has in recent years upset the PRC-Taiwan military balance.

The growth of the PLAN has, in turn, created a strategic shift that has produced in a sense an unofficial reinstitution of the Taiwan Patrol Force. During 1995–96, as a result of PRC missile testing off Taiwan, the U.S. Navy responded by sending aircraft carriers and destroyers into the region. This naval demonstration was similar to the USN's response to the Taiwan Strait crises of the 1950s and early 1960s. In fact, these events represented the fourth Taiwan Strait crisis.[4]

The Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis

The July 1995 missile tests by the PRC are often portrayed as a response to the granting of an American visa to Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui for an unofficial visit to Cornell University in early June. However, the real issue was the PRC's concern over Taiwan's rapid democratization and the growing separatist claims by large numbers of

Taiwanese. On 18 July 1995, China announced that ballistic missile tests would take place between 21 and 28 July. These dates corresponded to the fiftieth anniversary of the 1945 Potsdam Treaty, by which China was to regain all territories it had lost to Japan, including Taiwan, after World War II.

In connection with the tests the PRC declared an exclusion zone, a ten-nautical-mile circle, which ships and planes could not safely enter. This zone was about eighty-five miles north of Taiwan, outside ROC sovereign waters but in a location that actively interfered with flight paths and shipping lanes. Beijing's announcement warned other states "against entering the said sea area and air space" during the firing period. Six DF-15 (CSS-6/M-9) short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) were fired, two each on 21, 22, and 23 July. Unlike similar tests by Taiwan itself during the mid-1960s, which were generally ignored, this one diverted hundreds of commercial flights heading for Taipei.[5]

The following month, from 15 to 25 August, the PRC held military exercises involving about twenty warships and forty aircraft in a large area to the northwest of the SRBM splash zone; both antiship and antiaircraft missiles were fired. In November 1995, just prior to Taiwan's December parliamentary elections, the PLA staged further naval, amphibious, and air-assault operations, near Dongshan Island. The scenario included blockade tactics, which made it appear that the PRC was planning to mount a naval blockade against Taiwan.

The PRC's use of a missile firing as an occasion to create an exclusion zone around Taiwan was not new, in that it essentially copied Taiwan's own Nike and Hawk tests in April 1965. Those tests had elicited no public protest, but due to the higher number of airplanes now overflying these waters, the PRC's 1995 exclusion zone put intense pressure on Taipei. It has accordingly been referred to as representing a new form of "missile blockade."[6]

In response, the U.S. Navy sent USS *Nimitz* (CVN 68) through the Taiwan Strait on 19 December 1995 on its way to the Indian Ocean. The stated reason for transiting the strait rather than going east of Taiwan was poor weather, and the PRC did not seem to know about, or at least did not acknowledge, the transit. But on 27 January 1996 the *United Daily News* and *New York Times* reported it. This was the first time an American aircraft carrier had transited the Taiwan Strait since the late 1970s. Whether intentionally or not, it sent a sharp signal to Beijing not to interfere in Taiwan's domestic politics.

In many ways, the December 1995 transit by a U.S. aircraft carrier of the Taiwan Strait paralleled the 29 June 1950 visit by *Valley Forge,* which had signaled the establishment of the Taiwan Patrol Force. The *Nimitz* transit, even if serendipitously, sent a similar hands-off message and in fact has been described as "a carefully controlled and minimally provocative use of military power which allowed the United States to reemphasize

the 'ambiguous' policy of previous U.S. presidents designed to maintain a balance in U.S. relations with both sides of the strait."[7]

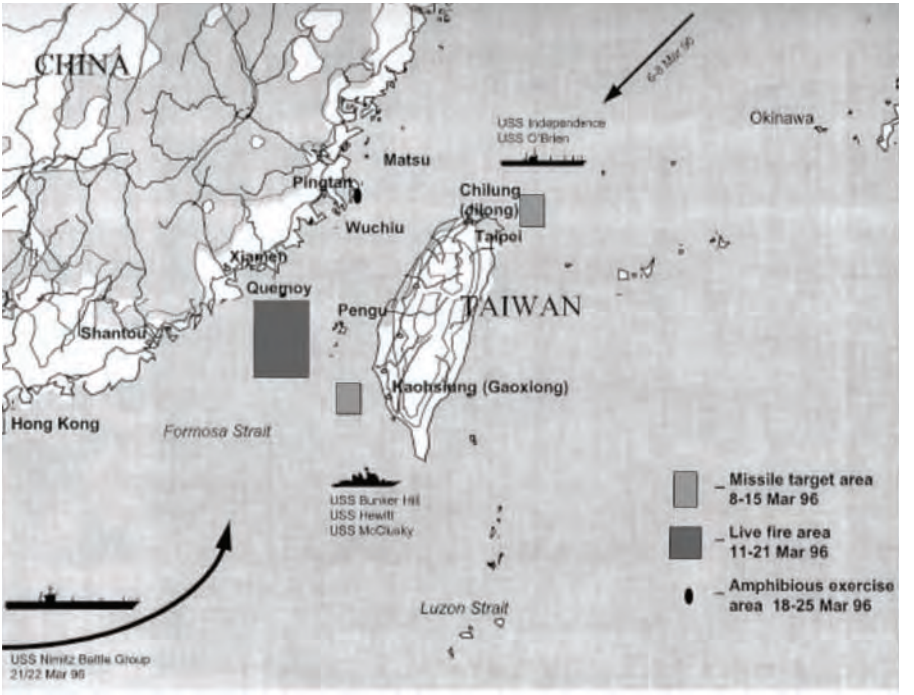
In response to what it now perceived as an American show of force, Beijing warned the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense, Charles W. "Chas" Freeman, Jr., that the PRC would launch a missile per day against Taiwan for a period of thirty days if Taipei continued on its path toward formal independence. A Chinese official, in an almost exact repeat of Mao's 5 February 1955 meeting with the Finnish ambassador in which he had threatened the United States with Soviet nuclear retaliation, even warned Freeman that Washington should not intervene in a cross-strait crisis, because American leaders "care more about Los Angeles than they do about Taiwan."[8] China's missile-a-day strategy and implied nuclear threat against the United States were also reminiscent of similar PRC pressure tactics during the 1950s in connection with Jinmen.

Sino-U.S. tension was now high. On 5 March 1996, the forty-third anniversary of the death of Stalin—one of the three world leaders at Potsdam—Beijing announced that it would conduct a new series of ballistic missile exercises during 8–15 March, which corresponded with the run-up to Taiwan's first presidential elections under universal suffrage. This time there were two missile splash zones. One was a square just thirty miles from Keelung, close to air and sea-lanes serving Japan and Korea. The other, also square, lay about forty-seven miles west of Kaohsiung, close to air and sea-lanes to Hong Kong (map 9).

The tests were clearly intended to cut trade routes from Keelung in the north and Kaohsiung in the south. These two ports accounted for about 70 percent of Taiwan's commerce. Between 8 and 13 March four dummy missiles landed in the target areas. On 9 March the PRC warned ships and aircraft to avoid a live-fire exercise from 12 to 20 March in the southern part of the Taiwan Strait. The rectangular zone declared for these exercises was just south of Jinmen Island. A further exercise was announced on 15 March, to be carried out 18–25 March, continuing the military pressure until after the presidential election. Although this new zone was smaller, it was strategically located between Mazu and Wuchiu.[9] The PRC tests were timed to influence Taiwan's presidential election, scheduled for 23 March, in such a way that the pro-independence candidates would not win.

In response, the USN dispatched the USS *Independence* (CV 62) aircraft carrier battle group to the area. Its aircraft patrolled about a hundred miles off Taiwan. The USS *Nimitz* group was ordered to return to the strait from the Persian Gulf at high speed. Other naval assets included two Aegis guided-missile cruisers and Air Force RC-135 Rivet Joint electronic surveillance aircraft.[10]

MAP 9
Location of PRC Missile Tests during 1995–1996



CinCPac, Adm. Joseph Prueher, decided to put *Independence* east of Taiwan and to assign the Aegis cruisers north and south of Taiwan: "Got them there fast. Got them there quietly. But nobody knew that they were there, so we had to tell the media in Okinawa and Japan. Media switch is not vernier switch but on/off switch. Pictures in the press began to appear." Apparently as a result of the presence of *Independence* and the recall of *Nimitz* from the Persian Gulf, the Chinese fired only five missiles, three in the north and two in the south, instead of the much larger number originally planned.[11] As noted by Adm. Lyle Bien, Commander, Carrier Group 7, "ordering *Nimitz* to sail all the way from the Gulf at flank speed was an unmistakable signal to the PRC that we were serious and it was noted by all onboard *Nimitz* that the missile firings stopped only when we approached on-station."[12]

The United States also sent official protests to the Chinese government, Secretary of State Warren Christopher calling the PRC's actions "reckless" and a White House spokesman stating that Washington was "deeply disturbed by this provocative act."[13] Congress resolved that in the face of overt threats by the PRC against the ROC and consistent with its commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States would

continue to supply defensive weapons systems, including "naval vessels, aircraft, and air defense, all of which are crucial to the security of Taiwan." Congress further resolved that the "United States is committed to the military stability of the Taiwan Straits and United States military forces should defend Taiwan in the event of invasion, missile attack, or blockade by the People's Republic of China."[14] Not only did this closely parallel congressional resolutions during the first Taiwan Strait crisis, of 1954–55, but its wording matched almost exactly the stated goals of the long-gone Taiwan Patrol Force.

The U.S. Navy's intervention gave the PRC pause. Washington's decision to send not one but two aircraft carriers—plus the two Aegis cruisers and other naval assets, including *O'Brien* (DD 975), namesake of the 1950s destroyer that helped in the evacuation of the Dachen Islands and later rescued Nationalist sailors—to the Taiwan Strait constituted the largest demonstration of American naval diplomacy against China since the first two strait crises of the 1950s.[15] The strategic rationale was much the same as in 1950: to neutralize this region so as to not allow a cross-strait invasion. While not officially part of a new Taiwan Patrol Force, therefore, *Independence* and *Nimitz* carried out a similar function. Seen in this larger historical context, Washington's decision to send in the U.S. Navy was a direct continuation in spirit of that earlier operation. That spirit continues to the present day.

The 1 April 2001 EP-3 Incident

U.S. Navy patrols in the Taiwan Strait have played a continuing and important role since the turn of the twenty-first century. After remaining fairly quiet since the 1995–96 events, U.S.-Chinese relations became extremely tense following a collision on 1 April 2001 between Chinese and American planes and the resulting unauthorized landing of the damaged U.S. aircraft, an EP-3 surveillance aircraft, on Hainan Island. The subsequent standoff over the return of the EP-3 crew led to discussion in Washington about whether to send yet another aircraft carrier to China. While USN vessels were not sent into the area, the suggestion shows that the same calculations that had led to the creation of the Taiwan Patrol Force still existed in 2001.

To resolve the standoff, Joseph Prueher, now the U.S. ambassador to China, worked closely with two Annapolis classmates, Richard Armitage, who was Secretary of State Colin L. Powell's deputy at the State Department, and Adm. Dennis C. Blair, CinCPac. At one crucial stage Admiral Blair offered to send an aircraft carrier to the waters off China. This would normally have been Prueher's favored solution, as shown by his own actions in 1995–96, but the ambassador declined this suggestion, fearing that too strong a signal might backfire and lead to the prolongation of the incident.[16]

Rather than turning to the U.S. Navy, then, Prueher urged the administration to ease tension and instead to negotiate a way out.[17] Early in the talks the Chinese tried to get the United States to say it had invaded China's airspace, but Powell refused: "We're not going to take that charge to the President, and we're not going to accept it." Prueher, however, having originally offered to express the "regret" of the United States for the unauthorized landing, shifted significantly to saying that his government was "sorry" for it, then "very sorry."[18] This language made it seem to the Chinese public that the United States was taking responsibility for the collision. After ten days of tense negotiation, this ambiguous apology helped break the diplomatic impasse. After the "two sorrys" letter was signed and delivered by Prueher, the EP-3's twenty-four crew members were released.

Resolving the EP-3 crisis peacefully was largely possible thanks to Prueher's qualifications as an aircraft carrier pilot with actual combat experience in the region, as a test pilot familiar with the capabilities of the airframes involved, and as a recent CinCPac with experience dealing with China. As he later explained, the dispute was not about an airplane but about "face," and China needed a "signal that it is taken seriously."[19] Prueher wanted to find a graceful way for Beijing to back down from its untenable position. His solution was the "two sorrys" letter, which the Chinese could interpret as a "formal apology" but the U.S. government could portray as "merely a polite expression of regret."[20]

Ultimately no aircraft carrier was sent into the region during 2001, but the fact that it was seriously considered emphasizes the flexibility inherent in having USN forces within easy reach of the Taiwan Strait. During the following eight years, Sino-U.S. naval relations remained outwardly calm, and there were few publicly acknowledged maritime disputes. This situation changed in March 2009, when two survey ships were accosted while conducting operations in international waters near China.

The 2009 *Impeccable* and *Victorious* Incidents

For almost a decade after the EP-3 incident, Sino-U.S. military-to-military relations seemed friendly. This situation suddenly changed during March 2009, however, when PRC ships confronted the civilian-manned U.S. ocean surveillance vessel USNS *Impeccable* (T-AGOS 23) while it was conducting maritime research in international waters in the South China Sea.[21] Two months later, in May 2009, American defense officials announced that Chinese vessels had surrounded a second surveillance ship, USNS *Victorious* (T-AGOS 19), in the Yellow Sea. These two incidents prompted a strong USN response.

On 8 March 2009, five PRC ships harassed *Impeccable* in international waters about seventy-five miles south of Hainan Island. Two of the Chinese vessels came within

fifty feet, and its sailors were observed "waving Chinese flags and telling the U.S. ship to leave the area." The State Department lodged a protest with Chinese officials, and spokesman Robert Wood later told reporters, "We felt that our vessel was inappropriately harassed."[22]

The U.S. Navy's reaction to these Chinese provocations was rapid. Within days a guided-missile destroyer, USS *Chung-Hoon* (DDG 93), "armed with torpedoes and missiles," was sent to protect USNS *Impeccable.*[23] The Chinese government condemned this USN action as provocative. One Chinese scholar declared, "The '*Impeccable* Incident' constitutes the most serious friction between China and the United States since the collision of their military aircraft near Hainan Island in April 2001."[24]

At about the same time as the *Impeccable* incident, another surveillance ship, *Victorious,* operating 120 miles off China's coast in the Yellow Sea, was harassed several times on 4–5 March 2009 by Chinese patrol ships and aircraft. On 1 May American defense officials announced the confrontation.[25] Pentagon officials claimed that two Chinese ships had come within thirty yards of *Victorious,* which had been forced to use water hoses to warn them off. Once again protesting, the U.S. government reiterated that it would not "end its surveillance activities in the region."[26]

Both incidents took place in international waters. As part of the U.S. government's longtime support for freedom of the seas, U.S. Navy officials emphasized that it should not be necessary to send armed ships to protect USNS survey ships.[27] The fact that the *Impeccable* incident took place in the South China Sea, south of Taiwan, and the *Victorious* incident in the Yellow Sea far to the north gives an impression of testing the U.S. Navy's readiness and resolve at the geographic extremes of the Taiwan Strait. The USN's rapid responses to these PRC provocations were largely in line with operational procedures first adopted by the Taiwan Patrol Force, beginning in late June 1950.

Conclusions

Although the Taiwan Patrol Force officially ended on 1 January 1979, the American reaction to the 1995–96 PRC missile tests proved remarkably similar to those to the earlier Taiwan Strait crises. In 2009 there was even a "touch of irony" in assigning *Chung-Hoon* to guard *Impeccable,* since that vessel was "named for a Chinese-American naval officer awarded the Navy Cross, the nation's second-highest combat decoration, for heroic action against Japanese kamikaze pilots during World War II."[28] Assigning this particular ship to patrol duty could not help but remind the PRC that the two countries had been close allies in World War II against Japan. It also showed American resolve not to cede freedom of the seas.

Even today the lingering effects of the Taiwan Patrol Force can be felt. While fixed patrols have not been carried out in the strait since 1979, the USN's presence in the region remains strong. There is a compelling argument to be made, therefore, that the Taiwan Patrol Force never really ended. In fact, the 1995–96 decision to send in aircraft carriers was part and parcel of the same 1950s buffer operation mounted to ensure that PRC-ROC tension did not escalate into a larger war.

The 1995–96 "missile blockade," the 2001 EP-3 incident, the U.S.-Chinese naval incident during spring 2009 in the South China Sea, and the similar incident in the Yellow Sea all occurred either in or at the ends of the Taiwan Strait. The similarity of the U.S. Navy's reactions to all of them highlights not only the continuing strategic value of this region but also the importance of the U.S. Navy's maritime presence to peace in the Taiwan Strait. In this sense, all these recent USN deployments to international waters near China have carried on the historical legacy of the Taiwan Patrol Force.

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Conclusion: The Taiwan Patrol Force as a Continuing Maritime Buffer Operation

The Taiwan Patrol Force was a maritime buffer operation, initially intended to keep two belligerents from attacking each other and thereby precipitating a larger war, perhaps even a global war. But the Taiwan Patrol Force's regular and intermittent patrols in the Taiwan Strait from 1950 to 1979 did much more than simply separate the two Chinas. Acting as moving trip wires that if threatened could quickly call in massive reinforcements from the Seventh Fleet, these USN patrols could also themselves exert varying degrees of military pressure on the PRC along the strategic strait. When necessary, tension could be ramped up along the strait to divert China's attention from other theaters, as happened during the summer of 1953, when Beijing was pressured to agree to an armistice ending the Korean War. In helping attain this goal the Taiwan Patrol Force contributed to an enormously important military objective.

The Taiwan Patrol Force produced valuable economic effects as well. The combination of the ten-year Nationalist naval blockade and the twenty-one-year-long U.S. strategic embargo limited the PRC's foreign maritime trade, forcing Beijing to rely more heavily on the USSR, as both a trade partner and a conduit—by way of the trans-Siberian railway—to trade partners in Eastern Europe. Over time, China's economic overreliance on the USSR exacerbated underlying political disputes that eventually resulted in the collapse of the Sino-Soviet monolith. The 1960 split met Washington's expectations: forcing the two communist countries to work together had produced increasingly bitter tension that eventually ripped them apart. By 1960, therefore, the American goal of using an economic weapon to break up the Sino-Soviet alliance had been achieved, even as Taiwan was well on its way to creating its own economic miracle. Both outcomes were to a large degree aided by, and in some measure were direct results of, the presence of the Taiwan Patrol Force.

Finally Washington's political signal in 1969 changing the Taiwan Patrol Force from a constant to an intermittent patrol helped bring about the decades-long diplomatic realignment of the PRC leaders toward the United States. By June 1971, the strategic embargo had ended, ushering in President Richard Nixon's historic visit in 1972, the gradual opening of diplomatic relations with the PRC, and finally President Jimmy Carter's recognition of the nation in 1979. Arguably, this political reorientation allowed China and the United States to cooperate in exerting pressure on the USSR from both east and west—representing what was historically the Russians' worst fear, the prospect of a two-front war. This policy deepened the Soviet Union's domestic and international

problems and contributed to the eventual collapse of its empire, the end of the Cold War, and the demise of the USSR.

Military Impact of the Taiwan Patrol Force

The military impact of the Taiwan Patrol Force is obvious enough usually to escape comment: neither the PRC nor the ROC ever mounted a major attack across the Taiwan Strait. It was precisely the neutralization of the strait that was behind the creation of the Taiwan Patrol Force in the first place. This objective remained important during most of the patrol's existence, since all attempts to urge a peace agreement on the PRC and Taiwan failed. In April 1955, during the first Taiwan Strait crisis, the U.S. government even proposed to Beijing that the Nationalists would evacuate all disputed offshore islands if the PRC would promise not to liberate Taiwan by force. Zhou Enlai flatly rejected this proposal, instead insisting that Chiang Kai-shek and his military forces first "leave the island" of Taiwan.[1]

Given the PRC's refusal to guarantee Taiwan's security, an ongoing and robust U.S. Navy presence in the Taiwan Strait was essential. The existence of the Taiwan Patrol Force not only undermined any PRC plans to invade Taiwan during the early 1950s but allowed Washington to exert military pressure—by means of threats of unleashing Chiang—to force the PLA to move units from the north to the south. In this regard, the Taiwan Patrol Force acted much like a vernier switch, allowing the USN to increase or decrease cross-strait tension in measured amounts that suited the U.S. government's larger policy objectives.

In March 1956 the British intelligence services gave the Taiwan Patrol Force credit for keeping the peace throughout the region. Their report concluded that although the Communists were capable of launching a full-scale attack on the offshore islands, it was "highly improbable that they will conduct military operations of this magnitude as long as the Seventh Fleet remains in the area." Instead of trying to stage an invasion, therefore, the PRC was obliged to assume (incorrectly) that time was on its side, that "it would be pointless to fight for areas which they hope to acquire in due course through subversion and propaganda."[2]

An equally important military goal of the Taiwan Patrol Force was to reassure America's East Asian allies, including Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia, that the PRC could not invade the First Island Chain (which, in PRC geostrategic theory, stretches from the Aleutian Islands through the Kurile Islands, the main islands of Japan, the Ryukyu Archipelago, Taiwan, and the Philippines to the Greater Sunda Islands). The Japanese especially were worried about Chinese expansionism. During 1955, a Japanese official in Taipei explained that it was the physical location of Taiwan, dominating the

sea-lanes from Japan to the south, that mattered most to Tokyo: "For the future the real problem of Taiwan was the strategic value of the island itself and the importance of keeping it from the Chinese Communists rather than the Chiang Kai-shek government."[3] During 1958, discussing his upcoming talks with Chiang, John Foster Dulles emphasized that the Japanese were watching to see whether the United States would give way to China on the issue of the disputed offshore islands. Dulles even expressed concern that if the Japanese should decide the United States was weaker than the PRC, "they would go over to the Chinese Communists just as quickly as they could."[4]

The Taiwan Patrol Force supported America's Asian alliances and coalition partners by making it more difficult for the PRC to invade Taiwan. One method to dissuade the PRC from attacking was to provide the Nationalists a dependable source of military equipment and training with which to defend themselves, but not sufficiently advanced equipment to allow them to attack the PRC of their own volition. According to an American intelligence advisory committee report from April 1957, in the near term the "Nationalists are very unlikely to launch an invasion or, in the absence of Chinese Communist provocation, to initiate other major military action."[5] On 25 June 1962 Rusk reminded the British foreign secretary, Lord Home, that Chiang Kai-shek would not have American support if he attempted to attack the mainland; the two agreed that the British chargé d'affaires would tell PRC leaders that the "United States had done and were doing everything possible to restrain the Nationalists from provocative action."[6]

Meanwhile, the Taiwan Patrol Force also contributed to high morale in Taiwan. In February 1955 a report from the British consulate in Tamsui, Taiwan, concluded that the morale of the Nationalist troops was excellent and that the PRC had no chance of winning Taiwan by "subversion alone."[7] For the overseas Chinese community, a strong Taiwan served as a viable alternative to the PRC. In October 1956, a U.S. intelligence advisory committee correctly predicted that "morale on Taiwan probably will not weaken critically so long as the people there remain confident of firm U.S. support for the defense of Taiwan."[8]

The Taiwan Patrol Force was truly a maritime buffer between the PRC and Taiwan, and it succeeded in neutralizing both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Constant patrols were replaced with intermittent ones in 1969, but USN vessels continued to transit the Taiwan Strait on a regular basis through the mid-to-late 1970s. Following Nixon's 1972 visit to China, however, it became clear to many American naval officers that the patrol would eventually be terminated. In preparation for this day, advisers redoubled their efforts to assist the Nationalist navy. Admiral Beshany would later observe, "I believe that there was a very deep feeling there—and there's no question about the Chinese Military and the American counterparts on the island—that [there] was a very strong bond and a desire to work together. I think all of us, and I don't know of any of my officers who

didn't have a strong and motivated feeling to help these people to be able to defend themselves."[9]

That no war broke out between the PRC and Taiwan was directly due to the certainty of military intervention by the Seventh Fleet. Maintenance of the military balance between the PRC and Taiwan has kept the peace for the past sixty years, during which time economic development became the most important measure of success of the PRC and Taiwan. From the earliest days of the Taiwan Patrol Force, its goals included exerting economic pressure on the PRC.

Taiwan Patrol Force's Economic Impact

The Korean War may have been the initial catalyst for the Taiwan Patrol Force, but the U.S. policy of isolating the PRC economically had arguably already started during the summer of 1949, increasing in January 1950 with the adoption of an embargo on strategic goods. Beijing's decision to intervene in the Korean War resulted in China's further economic isolation, as the U.S. government adopted a full strategic embargo. Faced with the Nationalist naval blockade, on the one hand, and a U.S.-led embargo on the other, the PRC had to make up its trade losses by turning to the Soviet Union. Before World War II, only 1 percent of China's foreign trade was with the USSR; by 1957 this figure had skyrocketed to over 50 percent.[10]

Following the June 1950 creation of the Taiwan Patrol Force, the PRC immediately condemned the U.S. neutralization policy as aggressive and demanded the Seventh Fleet's withdrawal from the strait. Beijing claimed that American policy favored Taipei. But according to British statistics covering the first nine months of 1950, the value of PRC imports from Hong Kong was three and a half times that of imports during all of 1949. Therefore, prior to China's decision to intervene in Korea during November 1950 the U.S. neutralization plan actually helped promote international trade with China, by stabilizing cross-strait relations. As reported by British officials, Anglo-Chinese trade boomed during most of 1950; there was active trade between Hong Kong and the major PRC coastal ports, at first running the Nationalist blockade but more freely after "President Truman's declaration neutralizing Formosa" (see chapter 2).[11]

After the PLA's intervention in the Korean War, the JCS considered a total naval blockade against the PRC. However, Hong Kong's strategic vulnerability had to be considered, so instead the U.S. government tightened the embargo on strategic goods. The Nationalist blockade secretly helped enforce the American embargo. Washington's long-range goal was to deny the PRC a wider range of trade partners. Over time, it was hoped, this would add friction to the already tense Sino-Soviet relationship.

By the mid-1950s, the PRC was forced to turn increasingly to the Soviet-bloc countries. It signed over a hundred trade treaties and agreements with the USSR and Eastern European countries, as compared to twenty or thirty with the rest of the world. The Nationalist blockade and the U.S. strategic embargo had their intended collective impact. On 18 July 1953 the U.S. consulate general in Hong Kong reported that Chinese officials were admitting that the embargo had slowed down their industrial program, causing the sudden loss of an estimated 75 percent of China's foreign trade. As a result, China was "forced to turn to the USSR as a source of supply and as their prime market, which resulted in highly adverse terms of trade and required an increase in the over-all volume of trade in order to maintain the desired pace of industrialization."[12] Due to these economic factors, by the late 1950s China's debts to the USSR had grown to almost two billion dollars, roughly equal to the U.S. government's economic grants to Taiwan between 1950 and 1969.

While they represented an extremely long-term policy, one that was to take well over two decades to complete and therefore brought no immediate benefit to Washington, the Nationalist blockade and American strategic embargo were highly effective in aggravating the Sino-Soviet rift. One Dutch official confirmed in 1957 that there had been a profound deterioration in the PRC's economic situation and in living conditions since he had arrived in China eighteen months before. This sharp decline could not help but create tension between China and its Soviet advisers; "The Russians [the Dutch official] met while traveling in China were very frank about their contempt for the Chinese, their dislike of their assignments in China and their eagerness to return to the USSR as soon as possible."[13]

By the late 1950s, relations between the PRC and the Soviet Union had worsened dramatically. In order to begin to pay off China's enormous debt to the USSR, Mao Zedong adopted economic policies that, like the Great Leap Forward, produced a nationwide famine.[14] Some historians have argued that the resulting Sino-Soviet rift took Washington by surprise, that it did not adopt policies to widen it.[15] But others have confirmed that Dulles actively sought to split the Chinese and Russians by driving them closer together.[16] Washington had to be careful this plan did not backfire; Eisenhower, for instance, refused even to talk about Sino-Soviet tension, to avoid saying something that might undermine trends that Washington desired.[17] In fact, the collapse of the Sino-Soviet monolith in 1960 was fully in line with Washington's strategic objectives.

Meanwhile, with American assistance, Taiwan took a completely different development path. British officials reported in 1955 that Taiwan was prospering, due to U.S. aid, and that its standard of living was higher than that of most other Asian countries. While political rights in Taiwan were negligible, the British consulate found no large-scale corruption, so the average person on Taiwan could "enjoy considerable freedom

otherwise."[18] Eschewing a simple military approach to unification, Chiang Kai-shek prophetically told an Australian newspaper that Taiwan would focus on economic development: "We shall continue to build up Taiwan as an example of what free men can do."[19]

American support was absolutely crucial to what is often referred to as the Taiwan economic miracle. In fact, it has been largely overlooked that Taiwan's GNP grew 72.7 percent between 1953 and 1961, an average increase of 7.1 percent per year, with a high of 8.4 percent growth in 1954. Even more importantly, Taiwan's industrial growth rates between 1953 and 1978 averaged 15.9 percent annually, 25.4 percent in 1978 alone. Without a doubt, Taiwan's enormous growth rates were made possible by the security provided by the U.S. Navy, backed up by a large infusion of American economic aid and scientific expertise.[20] In large measure, the PRC's huge growth rates since the adoption of an open door in the 1980s have merely replicated Taiwan's experience of 1950–78.

In the final analysis, Beijing's overwhelming reliance on Moscow restricted China's economic options, thereby exacerbating friction within the international communist movement. The end result was a shift away from the Soviet bloc and closer to the West. Following the 1960 split, the PRC's army and naval forces became focused on not just a domestic foe—Taiwan—but a foreign one as well, China's former ally the Soviet Union. During the middle and late 1960s, border conflicts helped prompt the PRC government's political decision to begin to open diplomatic relations with the United States.

The Taiwan Patrol Force's Political Impact

The U.S. Navy's defense of the offshore islands, beginning with the formation of the Taiwan Patrol Force in 1950, denied the PRC the opportunity to invade Taiwan and politically unify all of China.[21] By ensuring that no invasion could succeed while intensifying the PRC's increasingly tense relationship with the USSR, the Taiwan Patrol Force contributed to a seminal political shift in the PRC's foreign diplomacy. Within little more than a decade after the Sino-Soviet split, the PRC moved from a Soviet alliance to diplomatic relations with the United States. Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 led to full U.S. recognition of the PRC under President Carter in 1979, an essential component of a two-front strategy against the USSR.

The Taiwan Patrol Force was a necessary compromise in the context of the U.S. Cold War alliance with the United Kingdom. On the surface, American and British economic policies toward the PRC differed dramatically. But they sought the same goal, that of bringing the PRC into the Western camp. The British thought that it was better to leave the door open to China than to cut it off from international trade. This difference caused friction in Anglo-U.S. relations. In 1962 Rusk told Harold Macmillan that "it was not comfortable for the United States when the United Kingdom traded with China

and the United States provided the gendarmes to keep the Chinese in their place."[22] In private, however, Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd reassured Dulles, "Your troubles are our troubles"; he even asked Dulles, "Is there any way in which we can help?"[23]

Over time, this carrot-and-stick approach contributed to Beijing's political decision to move closer to the West. During late 1959, the U.S. State Department felt compelled to remind the Defense Department of the Taiwan Patrol Force's political role. After the Seventh Fleet authorized on 14 September 1959 a shift in the patrol pattern without first consulting State, the latter issued a critical memorandum. Emphasizing that the free world expected the United States to adhere strictly to a "posture of restraint vis-à-vis the Chinese Communists" and "eschew unnecessary actions that could lead to, or give a plausible pretext for, Communist counteraction," this memorandum concluded, "It is therefore requested that in the future, the Department of Defense inform the Department of State of any contemplated change in the Taiwan Strait patrol pattern in an inshore direction sufficiently in advance that its political implications may be fully assessed and given due weight in the final decision."[24]

Clearly, the Taiwan Patrol Force was seen by the State Department as a political tool, a means to influence the PRC's behavior. Sino-U.S. relations remained particularly unfriendly throughout the 1960s, due to the Vietnam War. However, in March 1969 a series of border incidents along the Ussuri and Amur Rivers pitted the PLA against the Soviet army.[25] There was real concern that they might escalate into a nuclear war.[26] Although neither side was victorious, the 1969 clashes gave the PLA confidence that it could counter the Soviet army. For China's leaders this set the political stage for a new foreign-policy initiative aimed at opening diplomatic relations with the United States.

The Nixon administration's 1969 decision to change the Taiwan Patrol Force from a permanent to an intermittent basis sent a potent signal to Beijing. Although Taiwan was told that this change was due to economic necessity, it was in fact a political decision. This first, small step in opening relations with the PRC eventually led to Nixon's historic 21–28 February 1972 trip to Beijing. Following this much-publicized visit, Mao Zedong endorsed a major military modernization program that involved developing an ocean-going navy. Naval modernization, which had started in the 1950s with Soviet assistance, had ground to a halt in the early 1960s; without foreign help, China's production of naval vessels had slowed almost to a standstill. Beginning in the early 1980s the PLAN began to grow again, largely with American assistance.[27] However, the PRC's military forces were now almost entirely focused not on Taiwan but on the USSR and its allies, including the recently reunified Vietnam, a firm supporter of the Soviet Union.

On 1 January 1979, Jimmy Carter and Deng Xiaoping brought this lengthy political process to its ultimate conclusion when they extended mutual recognition. As a result of

this Sino-American rapprochement, the USSR suddenly had to be concerned about war with not only American-led NATO forces in the west but Chinese forces in the east as well. Throughout the 1980s, the United States and China cooperated in efforts to undermine the Soviet Union. By 1989 these policies had helped precipitate the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, followed two years later in 1991 by the breakup of the Soviet Union.

China's gradual reorientation from membership in the Soviet bloc to cooperation with the United States against the USSR was just one result of the constant political pressure put on Beijing by the containment policy of the United States and its allies. The USN's impact on these epochal political events was largely outside the public view. To a large degree, however, the Taiwan Patrol Force was the tip of the spear, as best shown by its 1969 role in signaling to Beijing Washington's desire to open talks. Thus, a relatively obscure naval operation helped to produce enormous consequences far out of proportion to the scope of its daily activities. Using similar methods, the U.S. Navy has continued to shape the military, economic, and political environment in East Asia.

Concluding Thoughts

As this study has sought to show, while the Taiwan Patrol Force's buffer operation formally ended in 1979, the task that it was ordered to accomplish—the neutralization of the Taiwan Strait—arguably continues to this day. The U.S. Navy does not now operate ships on a daily basis in the strait, but during 1995–96 a number of USN warships, including the aircraft carriers *Nimitz* and *Independence,* conducted patrols near Taiwan.[28] It is widely believed that American intervention may have "closed out the option" of PLA escalation.[29]

The U.S. Navy also signaled Washington's opposition to PRC missile tests. The Chinese certainly interpreted the decision to send *Independence* once again as a political signal that the Americans supported Taiwan's independence from China. According to Admiral Prueher's later recollection, *Independence* just happened to be nearby and available—it just "happened to be that ship. I tell the Chinese [that they] give us better credit for planning" than we deserve. "It was just there in the Philippines."[30] The *Nimitz* carrier group, for its part, did not reappear in the vicinity of Taiwan until the Chinese missile tests were almost over, on 21 March 1996.[31] The U.S. government reportedly delayed *Nimitz*'s arrival when the PLA began to ratchet down the demonstration.[32]

As in the Taiwan Strait crises during the 1950s, the decision in 1995–96 to send in aircraft carriers clearly had a profound effect on Chinese strategic thinking. According to Vice Admiral Bien, who was embarked in *Nimitz* during the events of 1996, the Chinese were "very embarrassed by their inability to respond to our presence and so

much of their antiaccess capability developed since 1996 is precisely in response to this event."[33] Rear Adm. James P. Wisecup, in 1996 the commanding officer of the guided-missile destroyer USS *Callaghan* (DDG 994) and later President of the Naval War College, imagines the meeting that might have occurred in Beijing after the incident, with China's leaders demanding of the PLAN's commanders, "I want to know what you are doing to make sure that never happens again."[34]

The PRC's failure to halt American intervention in the Taiwan Strait in 1995–96 has almost certainly contributed to the PLAN's subsequent program of buying and building a formidable arsenal of area-denial capabilities. These include ballistic missiles, conventional submarines, modern combat aircraft, and guided-missile destroyers equipped with supersonic antiship missiles. These high-tech sea-denial weapons have increased the risk to USN forces, and the U.S. Navy has arguably been used more selectively since the mid-1990s. It was not incidental that no aircraft carrier was called in during the 2001 EP-3 standoff: there were legitimate fears that doing so might backfire. Prueher, after achieving a successful diplomatic outcome, concluded that negotiating with the PRC is really a job of "building ladders for Chinese to climb down"; he was careful not to make China "lose face."[35] Later, during March 2009, the U.S. Navy responded more forcefully to the *Impeccable* incident, deploying *Chung-Hoon.* This sent a potent political signal to China, since to fire on a U.S. warship named after a famous Chinese American could easily reverberate among overseas Chinese groups still wary of the PRC.

The Taiwan Patrol Force, then, has enjoyed an existence—if sporadic, and if in spirit rather than in name—ever since the mid-1990s. So long as the PRC's goals include reunification with Taiwan by force, the underlying conditions for the patrol remain.[36] It is mainly the presence of the U.S. Navy that reminds Beijing of Washington's commitment to defend Taiwan.[37] Considering the large number of times USN vessels have been sent either to the Taiwan Strait or to adjacent East Asian waters since the mid-1990s, it could be argued that the Taiwan Patrol Force never ended. In fact, the U.S. Navy remains the primary tool for American military, economic, and political policies aimed at the goals of retaining manageable military relations with the PRC government while promoting China's economic integration with the rest of the world and its gradual transition to Western-style democracy. These goals are as important to American national security today as they were when the Taiwan Patrol Force was created in June 1950.

Notes

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2. Ibid., 6 March 1956, 94964, reel 212/213.
3. Ibid., 22 November 1955, 94355.

4. Foreign Office, telegram to UK Embassy, Washington, 22 October 1958, PREM 11/3738, TNA/UK.
5. Dulles Papers, 5 April 1957, 97367, reel 216.
6. "Record of a Conversation between the Foreign Secretary and Mr. Dean Rusk on Monday, June 25, 1962," PREM 11/3738, TNA/UK.
7. UK Consulate, Tamsui, report to Foreign Office (Confidential), 24 February 1955, PREM 11/879, TNA/UK.
8. Dulles Papers, 11 October 1956, 96227, reel 214/215.
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23. Selwyn Lloyd to John Foster Dulles (Top Secret), 11 September 1958, CAB 21/3272, TNA/UK.
24. "Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State," n.d., *FRUS,* vol. 19, *China: 1958–1960,* pp. 627–28.
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30. See Bruce A. Elleman, "The Right Skill Set: Joseph Wilson Prueher (1941–)," in *Nineteen-Gun Salute: Case Studies of Operational, Strategic, and Diplomatic Naval Leadership during the 20th and Early 21st Centuries,* ed. John B. Hattendorf and Bruce A. Elleman (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press / Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2010), p. 237.
31. Jonathan Drake, "*Nimitz* Battle Group Ploughs Past Singapore," Reuters, 21 March 1996.
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33. Vice Adm. Lyle Bien, USN (Ret.), e-mail, 23 March 2011.
34. Rear Adm. James P. Wisecup, interview by author, 8 March 2011.
35. See Elleman, "Right Skill Set," p. 242.

36. Chen Ming-tong, *The China Threat Crosses the Strait: Challenges and Strategies for Taiwan's National Security,* trans. Kiel Downey (Taipei: Dong Fan, 2007), p. 39.

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Appendix A: U.S. Taiwan Defense Command Commanders

Vice Adm. A. M. Pride, 11 December 1953–December 1955

Vice Adm. Stuart H. Ingersoll, December 1955–July 1957

Vice Adm. Austin K. Doyle, July 1957–July 1958

Vice Adm. Roland N. Smoot, July 1958–May 1962

Vice Adm. Charles L. Melson, May 1962–July 1964

Vice Adm. William E. Gentner, Jr., July 1964–July 1967

Vice Adm. John L. Chew, July 1967–August 1970

Vice Adm. Walter H. Baumberger, August 1970–September 1972

Vice Adm. Philip A. Beshany, September 1972–August 1974

Vice Adm. Edwin K. Snyder, August 1974–August 1977

Rear Adm. James B. Linder, August 1977–April 1979

Source: US Taiwan Defense Command (blog), 8 November 2010, ustdc.blogspot.com/.

Appendix B: Commanders of the Taiwan Patrol Force, 1950–1979

Rear Adm. Thomas Binford, 4 August 1950–March 1953

Rear Adm. Thomas B. Williamson, March 1953–July 1953

Rear Adm. Truman J. Hedding, July 1953–July 1954

Rear Adm. Frederick N. Kivette, July 1954–August 1955

Rear Adm. George W. Anderson, August 1955–July 1956

Rear Adm. Robert E. Dixon, July 1956–April 1957

Rear Adm. Paul D. Stroop, April 1957–February 1958

Rear Adm. Paul P. Blackburn, Jr., February 1958–July 1959

Rear Adm. John W. Gannon, July 1959–February 1961

Rear Adm. Bernard M. Strean, February 1961–December 1962

Rear Adm. Robert A. Macpherson, December 1962–September 1964

Rear Adm. Roy M. Isaman, September 1964–December 1966

Rear Adm. Damon W. Cooper, December 1966–August 1968

Rear Adm. William T. Rapp, August 1968–July 1970

Rear Adm. Richard E. Fowler, Jr., July 1970–July 1973

Rear Adm. Wycliffe D. Toole, Jr., July 1973–June 1975

Rear Adm. Gordon J. Schuller, June 1975–July 1977

Capt. Gerald W. Mackay, July 1977–1 January 1979

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