

Pentagon sees no threat of hostilities in Taiwan Strait

by Marsha Freeman

On Feb. 25, the Congress released an unclassified version of the Defense Department's recent report, "The Security Situation in the Taiwan Strait." The report was required by the fiscal year 1999 Defense Appropriations Bill, which stated that the report "shall include an analysis of the military forces facing Taiwan of the People's Republic of China," and assess "new challenges to Taiwan's deterrent forces, consistent with the commitments made by the United States in the Taiwan Relations Act, Public Law 96-8." The report provides a comparison of military forces, within the context of the defense strategies and political relationship between China and Taiwan.

The Defense Department's overall evaluation of the security situation in the Taiwan Strait is that "nearly three years after the People's Republic of China conducted provocative military exercises opposite Taiwan on the eve of that island's first popular presidential election, the security situation in the Taiwan Strait remains calm with no threat of imminent hostilities."

The government of China has made clear that its security policy does not pose a threat to Taiwan. As stated by Defense Minister Chi Haotian in February 1998, "China believes a new security concept should be set so as to win a lasting peace." Chi said that "common development" is the key to peace and every nation's security, and must be developed through nation-to-nation relations.

Over the last three years, the Pentagon report states, "there has been little change in the military balance," but rather, restraint on both sides. "Beijing has limited its military activity in the region to routine training; Taipei has reduced the size and scope of its military exercises and played down other activities which Beijing might misconstrue as provocative and destabilizing."

This de-escalation of tension is evidenced, the report states, in the political arena. "Senior negotiators from the two quasi-official organizations responsible for managing cross-Strait relations . . . met in China in mid-October 1998 and resumed direct contacts—suspended since 1995—aimed at reducing tensions and improving bilateral relations."

China shifts strategic focus

The Pentagon report states that there has been a shift, over the past decade, in China's "defense strategy and force

planning priorities." Previously, the focus of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) strategy had been to prepare to fight a large-scale "total war," or that of "land-based guerrilla warfare of Mao's classic 'People's War,'" the report states. This has shifted toward preparing to fight limited, or "local wars," preparing for "contingencies along its southeastern flank, especially in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea."

The report states that this shift in strategy was sharpened by "the military success of the U.S.-led coalition in the Persian Gulf War; Beijing's perception of an unfolding revolution in military affairs; Chinese suspicions over perceived U.S. efforts to 'contain' and militarily 'encircle' China; the deployment of two U.S. naval aircraft carrier battle groups near Taiwan during the 1996 missile crisis; and, China's fear that Taiwan was moving toward *de jure* independence."

Although the PLA, according to the report, is "still decades from possessing a comprehensive capability to engage and defeat a modern adversary beyond China's boundaries," Beijing believes that it can develop "asymmetric" capabilities in areas "such as advanced cruise missiles and conventional short-range ballistic missiles," taking advantage of a stronger foe's vulnerability "using unexpected or innovative means, while avoiding the adversary's strength." The focus on land-attack and anti-ship cruise missiles, as well as short-range conventional ballistic missiles (SRBMs) by China, "would be useful in countering potential adversaries operating on naval platforms or from bases in the East and South China Seas."

The Pentagon states that "within the next several years, the size of China's SRBM force is expected to grow substantially." China now has one CSS-6 (DF-15/M-9) unit of solid-propellant mobile missiles deployed in southeastern China. These missiles can deliver a 1,200 pound conventional payload a maximum range of about 500 miles. The shorter-range M-11 missile is expected to enter the PLA's inventory, and a "longer range version may be under development." The report points out that Taiwan's "most significant vulnerability is its limited capacity to defend against the growing arsenal of Chinese ballistic missiles."

While Taiwan's air defense early warning network, and surface-to-air missiles, "appear to pose a credible deterrent against an air attack from the mainland," the report states, "Beijing probably could establish a fully operational national Integrated Air Defense System within the next twenty years, but clearly not by 2005."

The dynamic balance

The Pentagon report states that while China's more than 2.5 million man PLA dwarfs Taiwan's defense force of about 400,000, "only a portion of this overall strength could be brought to bear against Taiwan at any one time." It draws the conclusion that across the Taiwan Strait, the "greatest change has occurred in the political and diplomatic arenas," in both Beijing and Taipei. "The dynamic equilibrium of those forces

in the Taiwan Strait has not changed dramatically over the last two decades,” it states, “except in a few niche areas like China’s deployment of SRBMs.”

The report says that beyond 2005, China’s national priorities will remain “development of a modern military force capable of exerting military influence within the region, achieving deterrence against potential enemies, preserving independence of action in domestic and foreign affairs, protecting the nation’s economic resources and maritime areas, and defending the sovereignty of the nation’s territory.”

Al Gore’s image is increasingly tarnished

Contrary to claims in much of the American, and also European media, there is no guarantee that Vice President Al Gore is the “sure winner” of the nomination to be the Democratic Party Presidential candidate in the 2000 elections. A number of Democratic Party sources told *EIR*, that there is a raging debate in the upper echelons of the party, over whether to go ahead with the Gore nomination. A recent secret poll reportedly showed that, in a two-way race between Gore and Bush, Gore would lose the Hispanic vote by nearly a 9:1 margin; and large numbers of African-American voters would stay away from the polls. According to the sources, the fear beginning to dawn on some top Democrats, is that a Gore nomination could throw into doubt the Democratic Party’s retaking of the House of Representatives.

Typical for the “Gore is a shoo-in” line in the media, was an article published in the London *Daily Telegraph* on Feb. 25. Its author, the *Telegraph*’s Washington bureau chief Hugh Gurdon, proclaimed that, for the first time in U.S. history, the outcome of the two major party nominations is known nearly two years before the Presidential elections. Texas Gov. George W. Bush is allegedly also a shoo-in for the Republican Party nomination, Gurdon wrote, because he has the endorsement of 31 Republican governors and a majority of Republican state legislators; he has his father’s money machine; and he has 27 current and former Republican members of Congress backing him.

The *Telegraph* newspapers, owned by Conrad Black, are flagship publications of the British-American-Commonwealth (BAC) grouping, which would like to see U.S. voters stuck with a choice between Bush and Gore. But reality is quite different, as even some press coverage is beginning to show.

The *National Review* of March 8 ran a cover story entitled “Apocalypse Gore: The Dark Vision of the Vice President,” which exposed Gore as a fanatical environmentalist and follower of existentialist philosopher and Nazi, Martin Heidegger.

The article, written by Adam Wolfson, focusses on Gore’s 1992 book *Earth in the Balance* to answer the question, “Who exactly is Gore, and what does he stand for?” Wolfson denounces Gore’s book for its incompetent bias against science and technology, and places him in the post-modernist tradition: “None of this invective against modernity . . . is especially original to Gore (although we should take him at his word that he wrote *Earth in the Balance* himself). Such postmodern critiques of our civilization took the academy by a storm decades ago, inspired by the philosopher Heidegger. That’s old news,” Wolfson writes. “What’s new is that a possible — even a probable — future President is aping these same arguments.”

Wolfson drives the point home, what a danger this constitutes for the nation: “When a tenured radical rails against the modern world, the principal harm is that his students will be cheated out of an education. But when our Vice President, and would-be President, puts forth these same arguments, one’s heart ought to skip a beat.”

While the American people are seeking answers to real issues, related to the economy, the notorious Dick Morris, who has put himself forward as Gore’s campaign adviser, has begun to agitate for Gore to pursue his environmentalist agenda, as the centerpiece of his campaign. Writing in the Washington publication *The Hill*, Morris (the “triangulator” and toe-sucker) urges Gore to “make environment the key issue for 2000,” not just dirty air, but “the new environmentalism” (see *Dossier*, elsewhere in this issue).

In addition to Gore, a couple of his campaign companions are also receiving rather unflattering press commentary. In its March 8 issue, the *Weekly Standard* of Rupert Murdoch ran a profile of Democratic Party fundraiser Nathan Landow, identified as a Gore man, not close to Clinton. Landow, who was Gore’s campaign finance chairman back in the 1988 campaign, is reportedly about to be indicted by independent counsel Kenneth Starr for witness-tampering and obstruction of justice, in the Kathleen Willey case. The article reviews several accounts in the public realm, of the connections of Landow to organized crime, in the 1970s and 1980s.

The LaRouche factor

To sum up the state of affairs Gore finds himself in, having surrounded himself with such “advisers,” the daily *Washington Times* carried a short article in its “Inside the Beltway” column on March 2, which testifies to the impact which Lyndon LaRouche and his supporters have had in exposing these and other connections of Gore. Entitled “Bad Boys,” it read: “Apparently Dick Morris is rubbing off on Al Gore. Political maverick Lyndon LaRouche says one reason he’s running for President in 2000 is to stop the ‘Dick Morris/Al Gore faction’ from turning the Democratic Party into a ‘second Republican Party.’ Mr. LaRouche, who in his 1996 Presidential campaign ran in 26 state Democratic Party primaries and garnered almost 600,000 votes, says Mr. Gore’s vision for the country is ‘infected with evil.’ ”