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Suggestions are encouraged.

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RUSI VI

To Promote Canadian National Defence and Security
Issues through discussion and engagement.

**Newsletter of the Royal United Services Institute
of Vancouver Island**

The Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island is a member of the Conference of Defence Associations. The CDA is the oldest and most influential advocacy group in Canada's defence community, consisting of associations from all parts of the country.

The CDA expresses its ideas and opinions with a view to influencing government security and defence policy. It is a non-partisan, independent, and non-profit organization.



Mark Your Calendar!

See last page, please.

President's Message (April/May, 2019)

This edition of the RUSI-VI Newsletter looks at several topics, but two that stand out are on Russian meddling in elections across the EU and also the general cyber threat anticipated against our upcoming federal election. The purpose of meddling by a foreign power is to promote specific policies, but also through misinformation, to exploit internal divisions and create distrust in institutions and the democratic process. We certainly live in interesting times.

We have two intriguing articles on China in this issue, the first covers the increasing concern within the NATO alliance over the need to develop a strategic response to the rise of Chinese influence in Europe. We also have the first of two-parts on the expansion of the Chinese Marine Corps. The Marines are responsible for the conduct of amphibious ops, but also the defence of China's new island outposts in the South China Sea. The Chinese Marine Corps is relatively new (founded 1953), so this promises to be an enlightening two-part article on a poorly understood capability.

Finally, as May will be our last meeting until September, members can look forward to an interesting and varied roster of speakers for the upcoming year. Members can also anticipate that additionally there may be one, or two Special Events, where we host a subject-matter expert who is only available to speak outside our normal RUSI-VI schedule. Enjoy the Spring and Summer weather and we will see you next September.

Scott Osborne

President

New Members

LCdr (Ret'd) Paul Seguna

Mr. Peter Sosnkowski

Military Cooperation Concerning the Space Domain Vital to Nations' Interests



Related Links

[Government of Canada News Article / April 10, 2019](#)

Senior international leaders in Space are meeting for the annual Space Symposium in Colorado Springs, Colorado, from April 8 to 11, 2019. Air chiefs and their senior space representatives from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States are attending, including Lieutenant-General Al Meininger, commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force. This morning the seven nations released the following statement.

As defence leaders in our respective nations, we unequivocally recognize the strategic importance the space domain has on our economy, technology, national security and defense. To that end, we collectively share the view that military cooperation concerning the space domain is vital to our countries' interests. Our respective nations are actively working together to address threats and shared interests in space; and to preserve access to the space domain for the future of humankind. We are actively coordinating to further our national interests through the Combined Space Operations (CSpO) initiative. In part, CSpO collaboration includes enhanced Space Situational Awareness and data sharing among all partner nations to support space activities. To enhance our space collaboration, we are also discussing operational concepts, personnel needs and infrastructure requirements to enhance multinational command and control of space forces in and through the Combined Space Operations Center and the other national Space Operations Centers. We recognize tangible advances in space cooperation and capabilities have been achieved through the CSpO initiative and we are dedicated to identifying future capabilities to support our countries' common interests in and through space.

Russia may launch information warfare campaign targeting CAN as well as EU. Methods & tactics would likely match those Russia employed against Ukraine, Brexit referendum & US election. This threatens our security directly.

Russia Trying to Meddle in EU Elections : Report

Cristina Burack Deutsche Welle Date 14.04.2019

Russia is reportedly trying to give euroskeptic parties a boost ahead of the EU parliamentary vote in May. The EU's eastern neighbor has a track record of interfering in foreign elections.



European Union security services are monitoring Russian attempts to interfere in the EU's parliamentary elections in May, German news agency DPA reported Saturday, citing a security progress report.

According to the report, Russia's efforts are aimed at boosting support for parties that are either euroskeptic or friendly to Russia. Its messaging also questioned the significance of the European Parliament to try to lower voter turnout.

The efforts were primarily targeting young voters on social media and through state-backed media outlets, the report found.

The elections take place May 23-26, with citizens from the bloc's member states casting their ballots for national representatives to serve in the pan-European legislative body. Analysts have warned of a potential increase in the number of seats held by right-wing populist parties.

Russia dismisses allegations

In a statement to DPA, the Russian Foreign Ministry said it was not interfering in the EU parliamentary election and was not planning to do so in other elections, either.

US intelligence agencies found that [Russia interfered in the 2016 US presidential election](#) to sway the vote in Donald Trump's favor.

In the run-up to 2017 French presidential elections, the right-wing populist and pro-Russian candidate [Marine Le Pen received Russian financial support](#).



Russia was found to have interfered in the 2016 presidential campaign in Trump's favor

Expulsion effects

High-ranking security officials told DPA that Russia's actions ahead of this year's EU elections have been markedly less visible than its previous meddling attempts.

The officials said the 2018 expulsion of more than 150 workers from Russian embassies in the EU and US could have weakened Moscow's spy network, reducing its ability to carry out an interference campaign.

However, the security services do not know exactly who is behind the attempted meddling. They said various Russian groups are carrying out the attempts with relatively little coordination.

2019 Update: Cyber Threats to Canada's Democratic Process

<https://cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/2019-update-cyber-threats-canadas-democratic-process>

This is an update of Communications Security Establishment's 2017 report on the cyber threats to Canada. Almost every major Canadian media outlet commented on the update this week, but this commentary will rely on the actual report itself. It is short and very well explained.

Its central findings are that it very likely that Canadian voters will encounter some form of foreign cyber interference related to the 2019 federal election. While the paper-based election machinery is safe we should expect attempts to sway voters' decisions, with a particular emphasis on polarizing issues. The report contains some excellent examples of past bizarre Russian misinformation efforts: One campaign in September 2017 attempted to replicate the political discord surrounding protests in the American National Football League in a Canadian context by promoting headlines such as "The Canadian Football League is Protesting THEIR OWN National Anthem!" and "Canadian NHL Player CONSIDERING 'Taking a Knee' During U.S. Anthem."

In 2016, false information appeared on social media about a "failed Canadian raid" on Russian separatist positions in Ukraine, alleging that 11 Canadian military personnel had been killed. Users shared an English language version of this fictional report over 3,000 times on Facebook. A similar false report about three Canadian soldiers dying after their vehicle hit a landmine in Ukraine spread on pro-Russian websites in May 2018. The authors of the false reports likely intended to portray Canadian troops – who are present in Ukraine in non-combat roles – as reckless and ineffective in their operations.

There was, regrettably, no mention of Chinese activities nor does CSE propose the more aggressive responses undertaken by our allies such as cyber counterattacking election meddlers or ordering social media to actively cull misinformation. The report remains an excellent short read, nevertheless.

The CSE 2017 report, for comparison purposes, is found at:

<https://cyber.gc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/cse-cyber-threat-assessment-e.pdf>

The Chinese Navy's Marine Corps

Part 1: Expansion and Reorganization

Publication: China Brief Volume: 19 Issue: 3, The Jamestown Foundation

By: [Dennis J. Blasko](#), [Roderick Lee](#)

February 1, 2019 04:27 PM



PLAN Marine Corps personnel conducting winter training at a base in Xinjiang, January 2016.

Editor's Note: This is the first part of a two-part article discussing organizational reforms and evolving missions for the PLA Navy (PLAN) Marine Corps. The first part focuses on the growing order of battle for the PLAN Marines. The second part, which will appear in our next issue, will focus on the creation of a service headquarters for the PLAN Marines, and their expanding training for expeditionary warfare and other missions. Taken as a whole, this two-part article provides significant new information and analysis to update the December 3, 2010 China Brief article titled "[China's Marines: Less is More](#)."

Introduction

On August 16, 2018, the Department of Defense Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018, reported that "One of the most significant PLAN structural changes in 2017 was the expansion of the PLAN Marine Corps (PLANMC)." The PLA Marine Corps historically been limited in terms of personnel, geography, and mission—with a primary service focus on amphibious assault, and the defense of outposts in the South China Sea. However, under currently estimated plans for service expansion, "by 2020,

the PLANMC will consist of 7 brigades, may have more than 30,000 personnel, and will expand its mission to include expeditionary operations on foreign soil.” [1]

The expansion of the PLANMC, which commenced in April 2017, is an important element of reforms to the PLA’s operational forces. For the past two decades, the Marine Corps consisted of only two brigades, the 1st and 164th Marine Brigades (each estimated to number from 5,000 – 6,000 personnel) assigned to the South Sea Fleet stationed in Zhanjiang, Guangdong. After recent reforms, the number of brigades now amounts to a total of eight, with four new Marine combined arms brigades, a Special Operations Forces (SOF) brigade, and the core of a shipborne aviation (helicopter) brigade added to the previously existing two brigades. The four new combined arms brigades were formed out of units transferred from the Army, while the SOF and helicopter brigades were created from standing Navy units. A corps-level headquarters for the Marine Corps also has been identified. Though the Chinese government has not officially explained these developments, this new structure probably amounts to a total of up to approximately 40,000 personnel distributed among eight brigades at full strength.

The expanded Marine Corps, supported by Navy long-range sealift, likely will become the core of the PLA’s future expeditionary force. Training that began in 2014 further indicates that the eventual objective for the Marine Corps is to be capable of conducting operations in many types of terrain and climates – ranging beyond the PLANMC’s former, and continuing, focus on islands and reefs in the South China Sea. The manner by which the force has expanded, however, suggests that the PLA leadership was not motivated by an immediate need for a larger amphibious capability; rather, it appears to be consistent with several new missions undertaken by the Chinese military over past decade that have provided impetus for the addition of new Marine units. It will likely take several years for all of the Marine Corps’ new units to reach full operational readiness as measured by personnel, equipment, and training.

Expanded Order of Battle

After “below the neck” reforms and restructuring implemented throughout PLA in 2017, Marine units are now found along China’s eastern seaboard from Shandong in the north, to Fujian and Guangdong in the east opposite Taiwan, to Hainan in the South China Sea. In northern Shandong, a former Army motorized infantry brigade of the old 26th Group Army has been transformed into a new Marine brigade ([Jiefangjun Bao Online](#), September 30 2017). On Shandong’s southern coast, a second new brigade has been formed from what likely was a former Army coastal defense regiment located near Qingdao ([Qingdao Television](#), February 12 2018). Further south, an Army coastal defense division stationed around Jinjiang, Fujian was the basis for a third new brigade that remains in that same locale; and may also have provided manpower and resources for a fourth new brigade that recently moved to Jiayang in eastern Guangdong province ([Anxi, Fujian Government website](#), August 1 2017; [Jieyang News](#), August 17 2018). Although the PLA has not widely publicized either the creation of these new brigades or their true unit designators, the emergence of photos and new military unit cover designators associated with the Marine brigades both suggest a 1st through 6th brigade numbering scheme. [2]

As the new Marine brigades are being organized and equipped for their new missions, the two previously existing brigades also appear to have been reorganized. Most significantly, to streamline their chain of command, the former amphibious armored regiment headquarters appear to have been eliminated: command is now passed directly from brigade level to the newly established combined arms battalions (similar to the Army’s brigade command structure). Marine combined arms battalions are distinguished between amphibious mechanized and light mechanized combined arms battalions. Some, if not all, marine brigades also have, or will likely

have, units trained for air assault operations ([Jiefangjun Bao Online](#), December 10 2017), and will be reinforced by operational support battalions [3].

It is likely that in coming years older equipment will be retired and all Marine units will be issued new amphibious vehicles—such as the tracked ZBD05 Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV), tracked ZTD05 Assault Vehicle, PLZ07 122mm Self-Propelled Howitzer, the eight-wheeled ZBL09 IFV, the eight-wheeled ZTL11 assault vehicle, and the Mengshi Assault Vehicle. (The latter three vehicles have been observed deployed to the Djibouti Support Base). Some reconnaissance units are also receiving light 8×8 all-terrain-vehicles for terrain that is inaccessible to larger vehicles ([Chinaso.com](#), April 9 2018).

In total, the Army probably transferred over 20,000 personnel to the Navy's new Marine units, while retaining its own amphibious capability. The Army's two former amphibious infantry divisions—one previously stationed in the Nanjing Military Region near Hangzhou and the other in the Guangdong Military Region near Huizhou—were both transformed into two combined arms brigades each, while keeping their amphibious weapons and capabilities. A fifth former amphibious armored brigade also was converted into a new Army combined arms brigade located in Fujian. The decision to maintain these amphibious units in the Army reflects that service's continued role in building capabilities to deter further steps toward Taiwan independence—one of the missions of foremost importance to the PLA.

Had the senior PLA leadership perceived the need to increase rapidly the Navy's amphibious capacity, it could have decided to transfer to the Marine Corps those existing Army amphibious units, all of which were equipped and trained for assault from the sea. But by transforming a motorized infantry brigade and multiple coastal defense units—none of which were outfitted with amphibious equipment, nor trained extensively in amphibious operations—the PLA leadership understood that it would take multiple years for these units to be equipped, and even more annual training cycles before they would be fully trained to undertake amphibious operations. So, while the Marine Corps has been expanded in size, its actual amphibious capabilities will increase gradually over the next several years.

The new Marine special operations force (SOF) brigade has been formed out of the Navy's existing SOF Regiment stationed in Hainan, which includes the Jiaolong (“Dragon”) commando unit ([China Central Television](#), December 12 2017). The former Navy SOF Regiment's missions and capabilities overlapped with that of the Marine Corps, and therefore their transfer is a logical evolution as the Marine Corps expands. Eventually, the new brigade will likely number approximately one thousand personnel more than the old regiment (estimated to have been about 2,000 strong). Some of those personnel may have been transferred from the 1st and 164th Marine Brigades' structure, each of which probably included SOF elements in their former reconnaissance battalions. Of all the new Marine units within the expanded force structure, the SOF Brigade currently is the most combat ready.

The 2018 DOD report on the Chinese military also noted the creation of an independent aviation capability for the PLA Marines, stating that the expanding PLANMC “may also incorporate an aviation brigade, which could provide an organic helicopter transport and attack capability, increasing its amphibious and expeditionary warfare capabilities.” [4] The new Marine Shipborne Aviation (helicopter) Brigade apparently has been built out of elements from all three PLAN independent air regiments ([Weibo](#), January 27 2018). These regiments have been busy since 2009, provided the aircraft for 15 of 30 of the Navy's deployments to the Gulf of Aden escort mission ([PLA Daily](#), July 16 2018).

Currently, the new Marine helicopter unit likely has considerably less than a full contingent of aircraft compared to an Army Aviation Brigade, which when fully equipped probably consists of over 70 helicopters. The Military Balance 2018 estimates the Navy's entire helicopter fleet at slightly over 100 aircraft, with about half being transport helicopters—while the others are anti-submarine warfare, early warning, and search and rescue aircraft needed to support the rest of the Navy's operations [5]. Heretofore the Navy apparently has experimented with only a few armed Z-9 helicopters ([People's Navy](#), July 31 2012). Until additional attack helicopters are added to the force, as a stop gap measure it would be possible for the Army to temporarily assign a few of its attack helicopters to the Marines to assist in training and doctrine development for amphibious operations. Thus, it is likely that it will take several more years to add additional transport and attack helicopters and train the pilots and crews before the new Marine helicopter brigade is at full strength and combat ready.

This article will continue in the next issue of China Brief, with “The Chinese Navy's Marine Corps, Part 2: Chain-of-Command Reforms and Evolving Training.”

Dennis J. Blasko, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired), was an army attaché in Beijing and in Hong Kong from 1992-1996 and is the author of *The Chinese Army Today: Tradition and Transformation for the 21st Century*, second edition (Routledge, 2012).

Roderick Lee is an analyst with the United States Navy. His work focuses on Chinese maritime forces and strategy. He earned his Master of Arts degree from The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

The views and opinions expressed herein by the authors do not represent the policies or position of the U.S. Department of Defense or the U.S. Navy, and are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Notes:

[1] U.S. Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018, p. 28.
<https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/16/2001955282/-1/-1/1/2018-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT.PDF#page=11&zoom=auto,-85,733>.

[2] Military unit cover designators (MUCDs) are serial numbers (consisting of five digits) employed by the People's Liberation Army to identify specific military units, and are frequently employed in official communications in the place of the true unit designators.

[3] [People's Navy](#), January 23, 2018 and February 9, 2018.

[4] U.S. Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018, p. 28.
<https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/16/2001955282/-1/-1/1/2018-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT.PDF#page=11&zoom=auto,-85,733>.

[5] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2018*, p. 254.

For NATO, China is the new Russia

Beijing,

rather than Moscow, is the top concern as NATO gathers in Washington this week.

By MATTHEW KARNITSCHNIG, POLITICO 4/4/19, 4:00 AM CET, Updated 4/5/19, 4:18 AM CET

WASHINGTON — NATO has spent most of the past 70 years focusing on how to defend the Continent against Russia. To survive the decades ahead, it's beginning to think more about a threat farther east.

China is top of mind as NATO officials gather in the American capital this week to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Washington Treaty, which established the alliance on April 4, 1949. Questions about whether and to what extent alliance members should allow Chinese network supplier Huawei to operate in their countries, along with Italy's move to join Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, have put the question of how NATO should respond to the Asian power front and center.

"China is set to become the subject of the 21st century on both sides of the Atlantic," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in a speech in Washington on Wednesday. "China is a challenge on almost every topic. It is important to gain a better understanding of what that implies for NATO."

It's a fraught issue for much of Europe, which, like the U.S., has deep commercial ties with China.

"We are partners on one hand and competitors on the other — not only regarding the economy, but we also have very different political systems," German Chancellor Angela Merkel said at a European Council summit in Brussels last week. "We want relations on the basis of reciprocity. We also want good trade ties with China."

China is now Germany's largest trading partner, ahead of the U.S. For the EU as a whole, trade with China ranks a close second after the U.S. In addition, China has shown a willingness to invest substantial sums where others won't: in sorely-needed infrastructure projects in countries such as Greece, Hungary and Italy.

While the Trump administration has been focused on China from day 1, European leaders are only just beginning to confront increasing signs that China's largesse could pose a long-term strategic threat to the region. So far, Europe's China debate has been confined to the political realm. The European Union has vowed to take a harder line with China on cyber espionage and intellectual property theft, issues that are expected to top the agenda at an EU summit with China next week.

Some European military strategists believe the region's NATO members should prepare to take the lead in confronting Russia. What role NATO, with its geographic limitations, should play in the West's effort to protect against China isn't clear. Nonetheless, there's a growing conviction among security officials on both sides of the Atlantic that at a time of increased tension in the alliance over burden-sharing, China policy is an area of common interest between the U.S. and its European partners.

Questions on how to ensure open shipping channels in key trade corridors such as the South China Sea, for example, are every bit as important to Europe as they are to the U.S. The threat posed by China's cyberwarfare capability is another area of crucial strategic importance. All that's missing is a strategy.

"We could all benefit if we could develop joint approaches with the U.S.," said Wolfgang Ischinger, a former German ambassador who now heads the Munich Security Conference. "But we don't have an EU strategy yet, and you can't have a joint strategy if you don't have your own strategy."

Europe's biggest worry is that in a world of great power competition between the U.S. and China, it will be left by the wayside. The recent decision by President Donald Trump to withdraw from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, a Cold War-era agreement designed to keep mid-range nuclear weapons out of Europe, stoked those fears.

The Trump administration took the decision without engaging Washington's European allies, even though Europe would be most exposed to the Russian nukes. U.S. officials say the decision was driven both by years of evidence that Russia had stopped complying with the treaty and concerns that China, which is not party to the INF and has deployed similar nuclear weapons in Asia, was gaining a strategic advantage.

What frustrated the Europeans was that they had virtually no voice on an issue of existential importance to them. "A strategic question of the highest order for Europeans was decided for reasons that lie outside of Europe, but have massive implications," said Jan Techau, director of the Europe program at the German Marshall Fund of the U.S., a think tank. "You can see that we're given secondary consideration at best."

Despite such frustrations, there's a consensus among senior European defense officials that notwithstanding recent rhetoric about a "European army," NATO remains absolutely essential for the region's security.

The question is how Europe can convince Washington it's worth the trouble. One way for Europe to show its value would be to start pulling more of its own weight in NATO, analysts say. The U.S. accounts for more than two-thirds of NATO defense spending, a source of deep aggravation for Trump. While a number of countries have made progress in fulfilling NATO's spending target of 2 percent of GDP, others, notably Germany, remain far off. A big risk for Europe would be a crisis in Asia that diverted U.S. resources away from NATO. Such a shift could come suddenly, as happened in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, when the U.S. redirected its focus almost overnight to the Middle East.

That's why some European military strategists believe the region's NATO members should prepare to take the lead in confronting Russia. A number of European countries, including the U.K. and Germany, already play a central role in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence operation in the Baltics and Poland, which is aimed at discouraging Russia from encroaching into the region.

For all the talk about Moscow's meddling in elections and incursions into its neighbors' territory, there's a growing consensus in the alliance that despite its considerable nuclear arsenal, Russia can be managed. Europe's NATO members dwarf Russia in terms of military spending and economic might.

Russia's energy-dependent economy is stagnating and is smaller than Canada's, for example. If Europe were to focus on Russia, it would free the U.S. to concentrate more on Asia (where European NATO allies have virtually no presence), a division of labor that would likely make NATO an easier sell in Washington in the long run. Trump's bluster and aggressive tweets have distracted from the fact that he's not the only one in Washington who would like to see NATO allies shoulder more of the burden in Europe.

The U.S. is very, very concerned about what's happening in the Pacific," Barry Posen, a professor of political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a prominent NATO critic, told a forum of Western defense officials in Washington on Wednesday. "It defies the imagination that the U.S. still has to provide such a tremendous weight of resources needed to secure [Europe]."

With or without Trump, the realities of confronting China are bound to force a reckoning about NATO's future. Whether the Europeans, given their growing economic reliance on China, can reach a consensus amongst themselves, much less with the U.S., is another question.

The eagerness of countries in Southern Europe to welcome Chinese investment is a worrying sign to those urging a unified approach. "China paralyzes decision-making in Europe," Techau said. "We should be making the kind of investments China has been making. But were not rich enough anymore to keep China out of our market."

[Mark Your Calendar](#)

RUSI-VI SPEAKER'S SCHEDULE May to November 2019

8 May, 2019

Topic: Counter Terrorism

Speaker: Staff Sergeant David Strachan, RCMP E Division's Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (Counter-Terrorism).

SSgt Strachan is a senior RCMP officer with both tactical and operational experience in the domestic terrorism arena.

11 Sep, 2019

Topic: Britain's Shield: Radar and the Defeat of the Luftwaffe

Speaker: Dr. David Zimmerman

9 Oct, 2019

Topic: The Information Front: The Canadian Army and News Management during WW II

Speaker: Dr. Tim Balzer

13 Nov, 2019

Topic: From Rinks to Regiments: Hockey Hall-of-Famers and the Great War

Speaker: - Alan MacLeod