

The Enduring Value of **Military-to-Military**

Cooperation in Southeast Asia



U.S. Navy (Chad McNeeley)

**Above: Incoming Chairman, ADM Mike Mullen, inspects Vietnamese sailors in Hai Phong
Below: Gen Pace and Chinese General Guo Boxiong discuss ways to improve military-to-military relations**

It is difficult to imagine a region blessed with more diversity and promise than Southeast Asia. Eleven nations with an aggregate population in excess of 550 million straddle the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. These nations possess an incredibly rich array of cultural traditions and an expansive religious heritage. Moreover, the market dynamics of the 21st century are empowering vibrant economies. Centuries-old sultanates work hand-in-hand with young secular governments to flourish in a globally connected world. Democracies continue to modernize and prosper, casting aside their colonial legacies and politically tumultuous histories.

Diversity and positive economic trends are reasons for optimism, but Southeast Asia's geography and economic potential carry numerous intrinsic challenges as well. The sheer distance between several of the nations' capitals and their most distant islands has historically made it difficult to extend government presence to every quarter. Long associated with piracy and other criminal enterprises, these remote locations still invite terrorists and their support networks to exploit them as safe havens.¹ Another driver of conflict is the growing competition for scarce resources and products, in particular oil and steel, both necessary to fuel the region's continued economic expansion. Estimates vary, but most agree that emerging Asia will one day rival or surpass the developed West's appetite for the building blocks of modern industry.² If effective mechanisms to manage this demand are not established and entrenched, the competition for resources may transition from a purely economic matter into the world's diplomatic and military arenas.³

Undoubtedly, the world economy depends on maritime security in Southeast Asia. The area's geography channels commercial traffic into a few narrow lanes. Over 80 percent of the world's

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Ships from USS *Ronald Reagan* Strike Group and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force under way in South Pacific

U.S. Navy (Spike Call)

except in the case of failed states. The agency primarily responsible for aiding the overall development of other nations is the Department of State, with the main role played by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The financial and human resources brought to bear by these organizations assist nations broadly, building agricultural and industrial capacity, supporting health and educational initiatives, and providing advice in a variety of governmental policies. This assistance strengthens governmental institutions and spurs economic development. Providing economic opportunity and hope for a better future is an important factor in defeating the underlying causes of terrorism. While the combat arms of the U.S. Services train partner militaries to pursue terrorists and attack their networks, the Department of State and other supporting agencies lead the main effort in the overall battle against terrorism.

USPACOM's role in building capacity is primarily accomplished through a military-to-military engagement framework. Guided by U.S. national policy, the National Military Strategy, and Security Cooperation Guidance, the Southeast Asia Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) program relies on a three-vector

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cargo is moved by sea, including much of its oil supply.⁴ In Southeast Asia, almost all commerce is compressed to flow into the Strait of Malacca, Lombok Strait, or Sunda Strait. Over 25 percent of the world's cargo and 50 percent of its oil pass through the Strait of Malacca alone,⁵ including 80 percent of Northeast Asia's oil.⁶ Any restriction of that commerce, whether due to a maritime attack or other means, would gravely affect the global economy.⁷

In Southeast Asia, America's aim is to preserve security and facilitate an environment that fosters the development of stable, prosperous nations that are positive actors in the international community. The United States hopes to cultivate an ever-widening partnership of culturally diverse but like-minded nations—nations that value security, stability, good governance, accountability, and respect for the rule of law.

Activities

The U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) role in achieving the overarching objectives of the Nation can be captured broadly by three

fundamental tasks: providing security to the region, enhancing the capacity of the region's nations to provide their own security, and improving bilateral and multilateral cooperation and coordination. While this article focuses on the latter two tasks, USPACOM, as the unified command for the Pacific area of responsibility, never loses sight of its primary responsibility of maintaining regional security through ready and capable military forces. The command is prepared to defeat all traditional threats. It is also postured to work with its regional partners to counter myriad nontraditional threats, including terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and other transnational dangers.

Building Security Capacity

Nontraditional threats thrive in at-risk environments. Where such environments exist in Southeast Asia, USPACOM attempts to augment the regional nations' organic capacity to address threats directly and to reduce and eliminate the conditions that allow them to take root. USPACOM and the Department of Defense play a supporting role in this goal,

approach, working to improve equipment, training activities, and resources. Equipment assistance is intended to address physical capacity shortfalls and gaps—items such as radios, boats, radar towers, and other hardware requirements. American Embassy staffs and Country Teams draft proposals describing the desired capabilities and equipment sets that they believe best fill those requirements. When approved, the proposals can be funded through a variety of programs including foreign military financing and foreign military sales. More recently, initiatives such as the National Defense Authorization Act, Section 1206, "train and equip" authority have allowed the fast-tracking of needed hardware and systems to provide interoperable military-to-military capabilities that address specific regional capacity gaps. The improved capabilities offered by the new equipment allow these sovereign nations to enforce their laws and provide security, which in turn contributes to overall regional security and stability.

As an example, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have partnered in recent years in the Malacca Strait Patrols Initiative,⁸ involving air and maritime patrols to reduce the threat of piracy⁹ and contributing greatly to the reduced rate of violent incidents in that vital commercial conduit. USPACOM has coordinated with those nations to build maritime domain awareness, through the acquisition of coastal surveillance radars and communications equipment and their interdiction ability. Ensuring that these nations have the equipment necessary to execute operations addresses international problems such as piracy, terrorism, and economic vulnerability of shipping while avoiding infringements on sovereignty.

The second vector of USPACOM's TSC program—training activities—focuses on sharing tactics, techniques, and procedures with Southeast Asian militaries and improving their interoperability. Military-to-military activity levels have been steadily rising over the last few years between the United States and most Southeast Asian nations. Bilateral engagements have resulted in increasingly strong military relationships between many of the region's nations—as well as improved capability. For example, TSC programs have helped the Armed Forces of the Philippines to increase their ability to sustain long-duration patrols, conduct effective combined arms doctrine, and operate at night. These capabilities, combined with dramatically improved combat lifesaving and medical evacuation skills, have contributed to a string of combat successes in the Sulu Peninsula, with a corresponding uptick in troop discipline and morale.

USPACOM engagement strategies include Service-to-Service activities, joint and combined multilateral exercises, subject matter expert exchanges, and other training venues. Bilateral exercises are historically among the most successful exchange opportunities. Among the many that USPACOM is involved in are Exercise Balikatan in the Philippines, Pacific Fleet's Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, Marine Force Pacific's Incremental Training Exercises, and U.S. Army Pacific's Garuda Shield with Indonesia and Keris Strike with Malaysia. USPACOM is increasingly encouraging multilateral ventures by inviting partner nations to participate in traditionally U.S.-only exercises. Cope Tiger, Red Flag, and Cobra Gold¹⁰ are among the most visible military-to-military exercises, but they represent only a fraction of the actual participation of Southeast Asian nations' militaries in U.S. or regional exercises.

The final vector of USPACOM's TSC program focuses on using nonmaterial resources to facilitate partner nation military development. One instance is the use of Title 10 funds to enable military personnel from resource-strapped countries to attend conferences or participate in exercises. Carefully applied, a relatively small level of funding can

as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or European Union, the region's increasingly active cooperation can only lead to stronger ties and a more robust ability to work together to resolve common issues.

Some of the most influential military-to-military activities, particularly in regard to fostering cooperation, involve USPACOM

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bring a far broader level of participation to events. Participants take home knowledge, procedures, and ideas, imparting them in turn to their own militaries and internally driving development and improvement.

Toward More Cooperation

TSC is the cornerstone of facilitating increased cooperation and coordination among nations. USPACOM represents the Department of Defense at numerous international organization events. In concert with the Department of State, USPACOM hopes to encourage increased multilateral engagements through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum and similar groups. In 2006, the forum held its first-ever exercise addressing maritime security in Singapore and plans to hold capacity-building exercises for disaster relief in 2008 and 2009, the former cosponsored by Indonesia and Australia and the latter by the United States and the Philippines.¹¹ Although not as mature an alliance

interaction and training with regional partners in peacekeeping operations. The Global Peace Operations Initiative, a U.S.-funded program, has trained and equipped 75,000 peacekeepers globally, with 15,000 of them from Southeast Asia. Trained to United Nations (UN) standards through a series of workshops, modules, and exercises, these peacekeepers represent far more to their parent nations than an elite military force; they return home understanding international norms and standard procedures and provide global recognition and influence. Whether trained by the Global Peace Operations Initiative or not, many Southeast Asian nations contribute to UN peacekeeping operations. For instance, Indonesia and Malaysia sent forces to Lebanon, Liberia, and Sudan as a part of UN contingents; Philippine troops have deployed to East Timor, Sudan, Haiti, and Liberia; and troops from Singapore have served in East Timor and Nepal.¹²

Peacekeeping's international nature allows these relationships to achieve synergies that



Team from USS *Preble* departs coalition ship in Persian Gulf

U.S. Navy (Ron Reeves)



NDU Joint Symposium

The Changing Character of War and Conflict:

Implications for U.S. Military Forces



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The strategic guidance offered by the National Defense Strategy and National Military Strategy of the United States is founded on assumptions regarding the global security environment, nature of conflict, and resources available. The conflict in Iraq and war in Afghanistan continue to occupy the attention and greatest level of American military efforts several years after the outbreak of hostilities. As we approach the 5-year mark in Iraq and 6-year mark in Afghanistan, it is fitting to examine and assess some of the foundations of U.S. military strategy.

Topics will include:

- counterinsurgency and capacity-building
- effects-based approaches to operations
- impact of long-term combat on forces
- network-centric operations in environments dominated by clans and sects
- precision-guided munitions/precision strike
- role of democratic allies and partners in conflict and combat.

extend beyond peacekeeping as such. Participating nations are often amenable to military-to-military activities related to defense reform and professional development, including non-commissioned officer development programs and international military education and training. Many Southeast Asian nations have also become further involved in multilateral forums, including the Multinational Planning and Augmentation Team, a deployable, standardized, multilateral group that refines standard operating procedures, attends staff and command post exercises, and serves as a military task force for coalition and combined operations.

USPACOM's military-to-military engagement with Southeast Asia is a significant enabler, providing the region with capacity, training, resources, and a framework from which local and regional security and stability can grow. Military-to-military activities and capacity-building are not sufficient to address all of the region's challenges in and of themselves. The military must embrace a supporting role in cases where the Department of State or other agencies have resources and programs better designed to solve regional issues. Common challenges often benefit from a collective approach, and only when we harness the capabilities of all U.S. Government agencies do we have the tools necessary to attempt the task at hand.

In the future, U.S. Pacific Command will continue to build on successful military-to-military relationships and to broaden interagency cooperation within Southeast Asia. Whether by providing security assistance to partner nations, exercising with other militaries bilaterally or multilaterally, or helping in relief and development efforts, the command will work with partner nations to build a stronger, more secure, and stable foundation for the region's continued growth and prosperity. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Gregory Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and The Indirect Approach," The U.S. Army Professional Writing Collection, November-December 2006, available at <www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume5/january_2007/1_07_1.html>.

² Worldwatch Institute, "Chinese Steel Production and Consumption Increases Sharply, Affect Economies Globally," available at <www.worldwatch.org/node/114>.

³ Kari Huus, "China's Desperate Quest for Oil," MSNBC, May 4, 2006, available at <www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12501039/>.

⁴ Gal Luft and Anne Korin, "Terrorism Goes to Sea," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2004), available at <www.foreignaffairs.org/20041101faessay83606/gal-luft-anne-korin/terrorism-goes-to-sea.html>.

⁵ Zachary Abuza, "Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Keeping Al-Qaeda at Bay," *World News*, available at <www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=400&issue_id=2945&article_id+236669>.

⁶ Conrad Raj, "Relief as War-Risk Rating for Malacca Strait is Scrapped," *Business Times* (Singapore), August 9, 2006, available at <www.acheh-eye.org/a-eye_news_files/a-eye_news_english/news_item.asp?NewsID=4075>.

⁷ When Lloyds of London listed the Strait of Malacca as an area at risk of "war, strike, terrorism and related perils" in June of 2005 due to escalating piracy and sea robbery incidents, the resulting insurance premium hikes imposed on carriers raised oil prices around the world. A reduction of piracy incidents has since allowed the "war risk" rating to be rescinded, but the episode serves as a clear demonstration of the interlinked nature of the global economy and the need for effective maritime security in the region. See Zurich Financial Services, "Taking cover—and joint action," available at <www.zurich.com/main/productsandsolutions/industry-insight/2006/march2006/industryinsight20060301_003.htm>; and Nazery Khalid, "Revocation of the Straits of Malacca as a War Risk Zone Long Overdue," Maritime Institute of Malaysia, accessed at <www.mima.gov.my/mima/htmls/papers/pdf/nazery/nazery%20-%20JWC%20revocation.pdf>.

⁸ David Boey, "Indonesia: S'Pore, KL, Jakarta sign anti-piracy pact," *Straits Times* (Singapore), April 22, 2006, available at <www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=43899>.

⁹ Rajeev Sawhney, "Redefining the Limits of the Straits: A Composite Malacca Straits Security System," Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (Singapore), May 18, 2006, available at <www.ntu.edu.sg/rsis/publications/Perspective/IDS0372006.pdf>.

¹⁰ Access to a comprehensive picture of military activities in the Southeast Asia region is available at <<https://www1.apan-info.net/>>. The Asia-Pacific Area Network is an online portal offering information resources and a collaborative planning environment as a means to greater defense interaction, confidence-building, and enhanced security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. USPACOM established and maintains an unclassified Web-based information-sharing and collaboration network as a means of enhancing interoperability and multilateral cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

¹¹ Co-Chairs' Summary Report of the Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum Intersessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventative Diplomacy, March 28–30, 2007.

¹² See the United Nations Peacekeeping Web site at <www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko>.