

China Task Force on Defense

China is rapidly developing a military force capable of winning regional conflicts and is expanding its military footprint globally. China has set benchmarks for completing military modernization by 2035 and becoming a world class military by 2049. While the U.S. for years assumed that it has, and will continue to retain, an overall military advantage over China, that gap is closing. The U.S. must make necessary defense investments and modernize force structure, posture, operational concepts, and acquisitions in order to deter Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world.

Republican leaders in the U.S. House of Representatives set out to develop a policy action plan for Congress and the Administration to combat the China challenge. Several of these recommendations reinforce provisions included in the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act and others are new. For the U.S. to compete and maintain an advantage militarily, the China Task Force recommends the following, which are a few examples from the CTF report:

Military Modernization Investments

- Work with the Department of Defense (DoD) to close capability gaps with the PLA. This will require steady investments in the capabilities required for a joint campaign and joint warfighting operations along with supporting infrastructure. Examples include modernizing sea and air power, procuring long range precision fires and strategic fires, building contested logistics capabilities, acquiring more air lift and sea lift, pursuing joint all-domain command and control, and investing in the Space Force.
- Fund the modernization of all three legs of the nuclear triad and the development and fielding of conventional ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles critical to countering the CCP in the Indo-Pacific.
- Prioritize the development of emerging technologies. This includes substantial investments to maintain anti-access/area denial capabilities and investment in AI, lethal autonomous weapons, long-range strike weapons, directed energy weapons, biotechnology, and quantum technology to achieve air, space, and maritime superiority early in a conflict. Pass the National Artificial Intelligence Act of 2020.
- Develop innovative space architectures and secure dynamic edge processed networks in space, which will be essential for the U.S. to anticipate, deter, and ultimately respond, counter, and defeat China in a future conflict. DoD must move faster in acquiring space capabilities and develop more distributed satellite architectures and small class rockets. DoD must also normalize space warfare as a key joint competency and develop operational intelligence to support space operations.
- Direct DoD to perform a Cyber Mission Force structure assessment and define authorities for cyber operations as well as require DoD to annually present a plan to assess major weapons system cyber vulnerabilities.

Predictable Strategy-Based Defense Budget

- Pass a stable, strategy-based defense budget that is on time to allow the military to make deliberate funding choices and plan programmatically. Minimum three to five percent real growth in the defense budget per year is required for DoD to deter and defeat the PLA and other key adversaries.
- Ensure DoD's investments and capabilities align with operational challenges. The Joint Force, comprised of the relevant services and combatant commands, must develop joint, modernized operating concepts to overcome the challenges posed by the PLA, such as gray-zone aggression, hybrid warfare efforts, and the potential for rapid escalation in the nuclear, space, and cyber areas. Logistics should be a core element of military strategy and operational concept development.

Right-Sized Posture and Funding for the Indo-Pacific

- Congress and DoD should implement an initiative for the Indo-Pacific aimed at deterring China, similar to the European Deterrence Initiative to deter Russia. This initiative would require DoD to submit to Congress a future years defense plan and budgeted funding for fiscal years 2022 and beyond. The initiative would aim to increase rotational and forward presence, defend U.S. bases such as Guam, improve military capabilities, defense infrastructure, basing, and logistics, enhance the storage and prepositioning of equipment and munitions, and increase bilateral and multilateral military training and exercises with regional allies and partners.
- Maintain hardened military bases and forward-deployed troops in the First Island Chain and find new areas to operate in the Second Island Chain in the Indo-Pacific to bolster deterrence and signal U.S. resolve and commitment. DoD should develop and/or maintain expeditionary airfields and ports in order to bolster deterrence as well as improve the United States' ability to counter the PLA during a potential conflict. Congress should support this effort by sufficiently funding military construction, prepositioning, strategic airlift, tanker support, and surge capacity in the Indo-Pacific.

Supporting Allies and Partners Against Chinese Aggression

- Clarify and reassert the United States' longstanding security commitments to Taiwan including through arm sales, bilateral military exercises with Taiwan, and utilizing ship visits.
- Build a coalition of partners and allies around the world to share knowledge on key strategic locations where China is seeking to secure military footholds. The Administration should direct the Secretaries of Defense and State to work with this coalition and provide options to host nations that may be considering Chinese military infrastructure projects such as naval ports and airfields that may be sovereign debt traps.
- Support security cooperation programs with U.S. allies and partners, which are critical to deterring and, if necessary, defeating the PLA. Continue to support professional military education for foreign partners carried out by DoD.
- Expand forward presence and improve interoperability with allied and partner nations through the use of joint training and exercises, including by bringing together and regularizing multilateral exercises with Australia, Japan, India, and other interested nations.

Defense Industrial Base

- Extend the public reporting requirement of Chinese military companies operating in the U.S., including a list of each entity determined to be directly or indirectly owned, controlled, or beneficially owned by the PLA, or a military-civil fusion contributor to the Chinese defense industrial base.
- Consider legislative proposals to effectively cut off material support for Chinese military industrial base companies and direct a federally funded research and development center to conduct a study on the defense industrial base of the People's Republic of China.
- Limit funds until DoD develops a national security strategy for the defense industrial base in order to assess gaps and vulnerabilities to the national technology and industrial base.
- Expand the prohibition on acquiring certain sensitive materials from China.

Research Security

- Require DoD to maintain a public list of "foreign talent programs" that pose a threat to national security interests; require any individual applying for federal research grants or funds to disclose all sources of foreign funding.
- Limit all federal funds to institutions of higher education that house Confucius Institutes unless such institutions impose policies to protect academic freedom, prohibit the application of any foreign law on campus, and grant full managerial authority of the Confucius Institute to the institution.