
Defense to offense: China unveils new military strategy to boost naval capability

26/05/2015



Beijing also slammed its neighbors for their “provocative actions” on its “reefs and islands.”

The white paper China’s military strategy was issued by the State Council on Tuesday, signaling ambitions for greater naval presence in the region where tensions are rising over disputed territories in the South China Sea.

“The [People’s Liberation Army] Navy (PLAN) will gradually shift its focus from “offshore waters defense” to the combination of “offshore waters defense” with “open seas protection,” and build a combined, multi-functional and efficient marine combat force structure,” [says](#) the document.

The white paper says that Chinese navy will also *“enhance its capabilities for strategic deterrence and counterattack, maritime maneuvers, joint operations at sea, comprehensive defense and comprehensive support.”*

In the document Beijing also stresses that it will shift its focus from territorial air defense to both defense and offense.

“The PLAAF will boost its capabilities for strategic early warning, air strike, air and missile defense, information countermeasures, airborne operations, strategic projection and comprehensive support.”

As tension are high in the region over disputed Spratly archipelago, China’s latest military white paper criticized its neighbors for their “provocative actions” on its “reefs and islands.”

Spratly Islands are a disputed group of more than 750 reef, islets and islands in South China Sea. While China claims a vast majority of the sea, it still has territorial disputes with the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Brunei and Malaysia.

[READ MORE: US mulls sending military ships, aircraft near South China Sea disputed islands – report](#)

“On the issues concerning China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, some of its offshore neighbors take provocative actions and reinforce their military presence on China's reefs and islands that they have illegally occupied,” Beijing said.

The document says that some “external” countries are also “busy meddling in South China Sea affairs; a tiny few maintain constant close-in air and sea surveillance and reconnaissance against China.”



Spokesperson of Chinese Ministry of National Defense Senior Colonel Yang Yujun holds a copy of the annual white paper on China's military strategy during a news conference in Beijing, China, May 26, 2015 (Reuters / Kim Kyung-Hoon)

US reconnaissance missions have led to increased tensions between Beijing and Washington as the latter continues to beef up its military presence in the Pacific.

On Monday, China lodged a complaint with the Washington over US spy aircraft which flew over the areas in the disputed South China Sea.

The islands also present concerns for US military. In March Washington accused Beijing of “unprecedented land reclamation,” saying China is “creating a great wall of sand” over 4 sq km, in the disputed area in the South China Sea.

[READ MORE: China building a 'great wall of sand' in South China Sea – US Navy](#)

Washington is bolstering its own military presence in the region. US navy fleet commander Harris said the United States is currently preparing to shift 60 percent of its fleet to the Pacific by 2020.

Australia is also concerned about the situation. In 2014 it agreed with Japan to increase military cooperation and exercises as a hedge against China's fast-growing military potential.

Chinese authorities insist their territorial claims have a historical basis and the US should not meddle in these disputes.

On Tuesday, China's Ministry of Transport hosted a ceremony for the construction of two lighthouses on Huayang Reef and Chigua Reef on largely disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying described the construction as an "important measure to implement its corresponding international responsibilities and duties," Reuters reports. She added that Beijing is planning to build more constructions on the disputed islands.

[READ MORE: 'US has no right': China responds to comments over its \\$1 billion rig in S. China Sea](#)
