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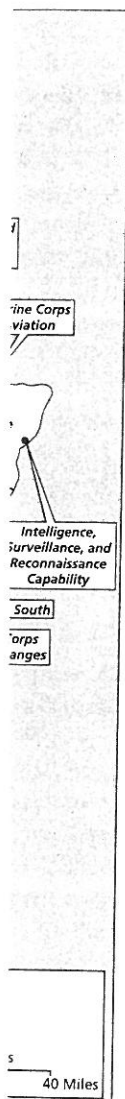
Guam and American Security in the Pacific

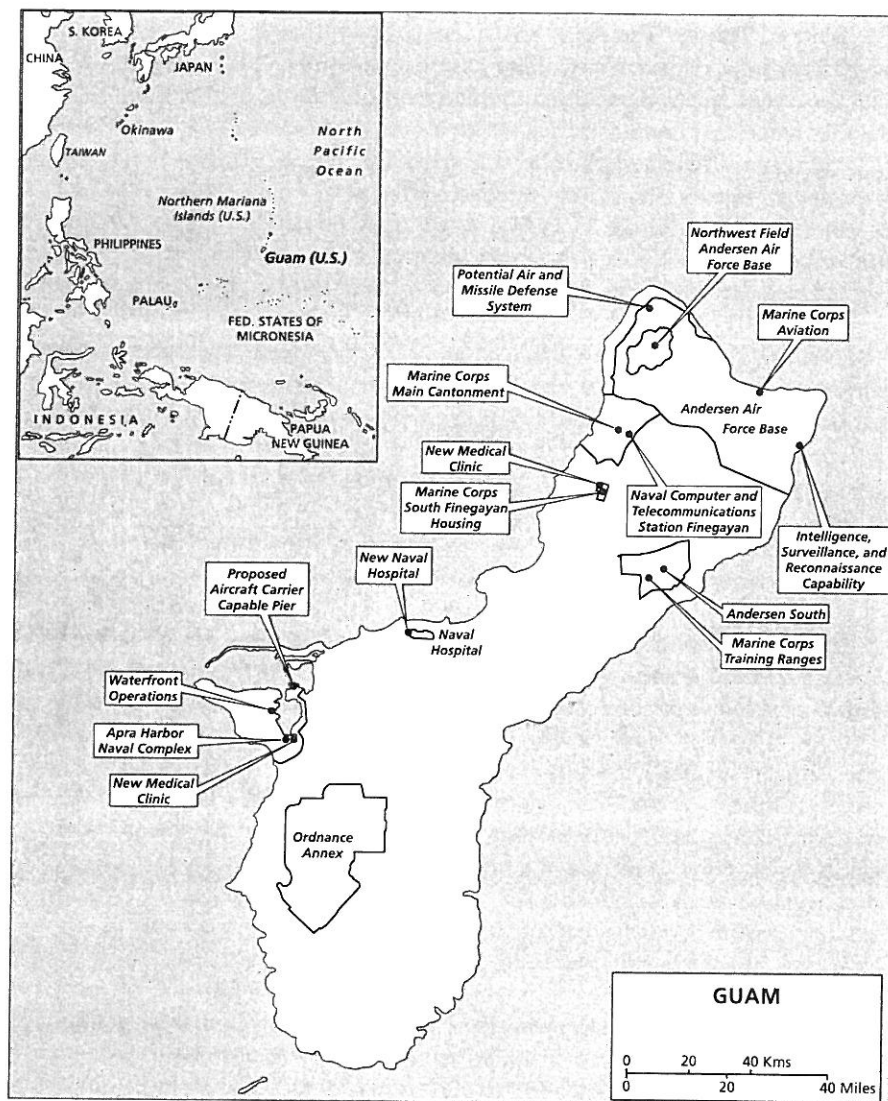
Andrew S. Erickson and Justin D. Mikolay

The United States' plans to enhance Guam's military capabilities represent an important part of its larger strategy to sustain U.S. strength across the Asia-Pacific region in the twenty-first century.¹ The island of Guam is the nearest sovereign U.S. territory to Asia-Pacific nations. It is a concrete element, and in many respects a microcosm, of the American rebalancing effort to the Asia-Pacific region. Long-term budget constraints and rising security challenges in the Asia-Pacific have driven the United States to emphasize the Asia-Pacific in its defense strategy and to "rebalance" its forces to that region. Continued U.S. military presence across the Asia-Pacific, and on Guam in particular, is challenged by infrastructure costs, local politics, and larger regional dynamics. Among these regional dynamics are Japan's political challenges in hosting U.S. forces in Okinawa and China's determination to hold the bases of potential opponents at risk with increasingly sophisticated long-range precision weapons, including ballistic and cruise missiles. The balance that the United States strikes in further developing Guam's military capabilities will be an important indicator of how Washington plans to retain its Asia-Pacific leadership in the future. See map 1 for a graphic depiction of Guam's position and military facilities.

A Sovereign Base for American Force Projection

Rising threats to international security in East Asia coincide with growing uncertainty concerning U.S. basing access in that strategically vital region. China's





Map 1. Military Facilities in Guam

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growing comprehensive national strength, coupled with political changes in host countries Japan and South Korea, calls into question the long-term utility of local American bases. Meanwhile, the United States has vital national-security interests in East Asia, including the ongoing North Korean nuclear crisis, periodic Taiwan Strait tension, and potential disruption of strategic sea-lanes by terrorism or conflict in the East Sea and the South China Sea. But as People's Republic of China (PRC) military assessments emphasize, "dependence on foreign-hosted bases and extended lines of logistical support for sustained combat operations in the West Pacific" represent a major American vulnerability.²

The U.S. Navy has a critical role to play in East Asia, given the region's extensive coastlines, islands, land barriers, and consequent susceptibility to maritime force projection. As a great air and sea power, the United States does not need the capacity to win land wars in East Asia in order to maintain strong military influence there. The key to America's power projection in the region is control of the air and sea. To exercise that control, the United States must maintain a global forward naval presence without succumbing to the Pacific's "tyranny of distance." The area of operations of the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) covers half the globe, or about 169 million square kilometers, over sixteen time zones. The Asia-Pacific region encompasses more than 50 percent of the world's population, contains the world's six largest armed forces and the three largest economies, and accounts for 35 percent of U.S. trade (over \$550 billion), slightly more than the potential \$500 billion in potential cuts to U.S. defense spending. It includes thirty-six of the world's most diverse and powerful nations, including five of the United States' seven treaty allies—Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. The United States maintains significant capabilities in this area, including 330,000 civilian and military personnel (one-fifth of U.S. forces overall); 5 aircraft carrier strike groups, containing 180 ships and 1,500 aircraft; two-thirds of the Marine Corps' combat strength, including 2 Marine expeditionary forces; and 5 U.S. Army Stryker brigades. The U.S. Coast Guard has 27,000 personnel in the region.³ Excluding expenditures on equipment or U.S. Navy fleet operations, the Department of Defense has spent \$36 billion on U.S. military presence in PACOM during fiscal years 2010 and 2013.⁴

Maintaining strong alliances is imperative for the United States to respond to security and humanitarian challenges in the region. PACOM's response to the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in Japan demonstrated the capabilities of its interoperable military systems to react to large-scale catastrophe and crisis. Guam, as America's closest major sovereign territory to these critical allies—and to the major flashpoints that helped to catalyze the treaties with them in the first place—is central to the support of its military presence in the region.

As part of a strategic rebalancing toward Asia-Pacific, the U.S. Navy is shifting its proportion of assets in that theater from 50 to 60 percent. As part of

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that shift, the United States is seeking to develop Guam as a sovereign anchor of American force posture in East Asia to protect the common security of the international community. The U.S. military is developing Guam as a forward logistics hub to support a complex constellation of both allied cooperation and access rights, on one hand, and American sea basing and crew rotation, on the other. Guam is positioned to play a key supporting role in military operations across the region. It lies between Northeast Asia, where the majority of existing American basing infrastructure is located, and Southeast Asia, where the majority of new security challenges are unfolding.

As the United States' only sovereign overseas base as well as its nearest port to East Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, Guam combines foreign proximity—with attendant savings in time, fuel, and operational budgets—with domestic reliability and flexibility. It is closer by fourteen hours' flight time and five to seven days' sea-transit time to East Asia than is any other U.S.-based facility. It offers the region's only live-fire bombing range; an excellent deepwater port with significant room for wharf expansion; ample facilities for the U.S. Air Force, including its largest aviation fuel storage depots (66 million gallons) and its largest Pacific weaponry storage (100,000 bombs); and a naval magazine capable of holding considerable amounts of conventional and nuclear munitions. Guam's population produces more military recruits per capita than any other American jurisdiction, and 80 percent of registered voters support the future homeporting of an aircraft carrier battle group. Clearly, the U.S. military can depend on Guam.⁵

Enhancing U.S. naval presence in the Pacific Rim requires more time on station without a proportionate increase in operational tempo for an already strained Pacific Fleet. Therefore, Guam will be used to decrease transit times to strategic areas of operation. Routine deployments of U.S. bombers initiated in 2004 will "thoroughly integrate bombers into [the] Pacific Command's joint and coalition exercises from a forward operating base."⁶ Adm. Thomas Fargo, a previous commander of the U.S. PACOM, emphasizes that Guam is "key to our military operations across the full spectrum of our capability."⁷ As a forward logistics hub, Guam can also be used in innovative ways—the island was used, for example, to screen Kurdish refugees during Operation Iraqi Freedom.⁸

Crossroads of the Pacific

Guam is set to reclaim its historical position as a strategic American naval hub in the western Pacific. Acquired following the Spanish-American War of 1898, Guam served as a coaling stop on the great circle route to the west until World War I. Undefended at the outset of World War II, Guam was invaded by Japanese forces in 1941 and recaptured only in 1944. The Guam Organic Act of 1950 established Guam as an unincorporated organized territory and its people as

citizens of the United States. Guam has hosted substantial U.S. military facilities ever since.

Guam's situation is not without its problems. It is farther from all strategic areas in Northeast Asia than are Japan, Korea, Vietnam, or the Philippines. Guam is three times farther from the Taiwan Strait than Okinawa; ships cruising at twenty-five knots from Guam would take a good two and a half days to reach the strait, as opposed to one day from the Philippines. (However, by the same token, the island is slightly less vulnerable than other points to Chinese missiles, several hundred of which are positioned in Fujian Province opposite Taiwan, or, especially, to North Korean missiles, including the Taepodong 2.) The island is often affected by adverse weather, including typhoons, which sometimes disrupt operations and damage infrastructure. (Korea and Japan are equally—if not more—vulnerable in this regard.)

Situation and Advantages

Vice Adm. Al Konetzni Jr., while commander, Submarine Force Pacific (1998–2001), reversed the decline of U.S. military capability on Guam. To reduce the strain of long deployments on both personnel and submarines, Vice Admiral Konetzni reestablished Submarine Squadron 15, which had been disbanded two decades before.⁹ In September 2002 his lobbying succeeded: the *Los Angeles*-class attack submarines USS *City of Corpus Christi* (SSN 705), then homeported in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and USS *San Francisco* (SSN 711), then based in Norfolk, Virginia, left for their new home port in Guam, the sovereign American territory 1,200 nautical miles east of the Taiwan Strait—to which it is more than 6,000 miles closer than Norfolk. USS *Houston* (SSN 713) joined them in January 2004.

The overriding goal of this change was to increase the total number of mission days for each U.S. naval platform in-theater and to improve response times. Submarines operating at twenty knots would take 5 days to reach the East Asian littoral from Guam, as opposed to 15.4 days from San Diego.¹⁰ A Guam-based Stryker brigade combat team could deploy by air or sea to key PACOM areas in between 5 and 14 days.¹¹

Stationing more submarines in Guam minimizes effective utilization hours for naval nuclear reactors and other sensitive and expensive components. A major reason for Guam deployment, thereby reducing transit times, is to keep submarine reactors from burning out their cores in Pacific transits.¹² In recent congressional testimony, Adm. Vern Clark, then chief of naval operations, cited forward-basing of ships in Guam as a key factor in maximizing use of naval assets.¹³

In addition, basing ships in Guam reduces “personnel tempo,” or the frequency and duration of military deployments. A larger, better-supported Navy community on Guam would encourage more personnel to bring their dependents

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along and to stay on the island or in the region during periods of leave. Navy officials contend that submarines based in Guam will be in the theater 88 to 123 days per year, the latter figure being three times the 36-day average of submarines based in the continental United States (CONUS).¹⁴

Guam is also a major global support and logistics hub. The Military Sealift Command maintains afloat stocks for PACOM forces forward deployed out of Diego Garcia and Guam/Saipan, with the latter hosting Maritime Prepositioned Stock Squadron 3. Army Prepositioning Stock 3 likewise stations unit equipment, port-opening capabilities, and sustainment stocks in Guam/Saipan.¹⁵

To allow for flexible deployment of critical assets, however, Guam needs infrastructure modernization to improve the condition of schools, barracks, hangars, dry docks, ports, and maintenance activities. The expense of improving Guam's deteriorating infrastructure would be offset by the resulting decreased personnel tempo, reduced deployment time, and more persistent presence. Total infrastructure improvement costs to homeport additional ships at the island would probably come to around \$200 million, far below expected procurement costs for U.S.-based ships with less access to this critical operating theater.

Together with Hawaii, Guam has been under consideration as a potential alternative base for a carrier battle group and its 5,500 personnel.¹⁶ An aircraft carrier nuclear reactor requires large and expensive maintenance infrastructure and a shore facility to store low-level nuclear waste. For that reason, forward-basing a carrier in Guam seems unlikely at present because of both the additional "human footprint" burden and the estimated \$6.5 billion cost of establishing the relevant nuclear-capable facilities (vice \$1 billion for Mayport, Florida).¹⁷

Apart from that consideration, preparation for antisubmarine warfare would not necessarily require a full battle group. Additionally, Washington could station ships capable of theater missile defense (TMD) there as a politically acceptable means of protecting American interests in the region. Ongoing U.S. troop reductions in South Korea may facilitate the long-term goal of moving U.S. assets from more vulnerable foreign bases to Guam.

The most important U.S. capabilities to allow rapid response to regional contingencies would be at-sea prepositioning and air defense. Military commanders need airlift capabilities and tankers ready and in sufficient numbers to deploy into a theater quickly from Guam. For these missions, the United States needs a secure airfield from which it cannot be denied access; political area denial could allow China to push American forces out of the region before or during a crisis. Guam has a promilitary population, and its people suffer from a nearly 8 percent unemployment rate—and those economic challenges may reduce the political difficulty of building and operating assets on the island.¹⁸ Support for additional military presence on Guam is increasing among residents, and 80 percent of registered voters support troop increases.¹⁹ Guam is capable of significant physical expansion in addition to its deepwater port, revitalized repair dry dock, and

proximity to the region's only live-fire bombing range. U.S. aircraft carriers are capable of entering and docking at Apra Harbor without encountering bridges over harbor entrances that might elsewhere block two-hundred-foot island and mast structures. Extra pier space could be engineered if necessary.

Like the Navy, the U.S. Air Force has a potentially important role to play in Guam's future. The Air Force envisions using Guam, with three-thousand-meter runways capable of accommodating any of its planes, as a "main operating base for tactical missions into the region."²⁰ Robert Kaplan has argued that "Andersen Air Force Base, on Guam's northern tip, represents the future of U.S. strategy in the Pacific. It is the most potent platform anywhere in the world for the projection of American military power."²¹

A contingent of B-52s could be retained at Andersen, perhaps rotated in small groups from CONUS. In addition to operational assets, Guam needs increased support resources. Existing Air Force infrastructure and support personnel would require upgrading to sustain newer-generation bombers and strike aircraft; stealth aircraft, for instance, require special hangars. Repair and maintenance shelters could be augmented the better to service carrier strike groups, and training centers would allow personnel to remain on station longer. As early as spring 2005, twelve F-15E fighter jets were rotated to Andersen from CONUS for training.²² B-1, B-2, and B-52 bombers are also rotating through;²³ it was noted in 2005 that "Guam-based bombers have carried out missions against targets in Iraq."²⁴

Andersen has become an intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) and strike Air Force hub—including two tactical aviation squadrons, bomber rotations, and a Global Hawk detachment—with "critical capabilities for most operations in the PACOM AOR [area of responsibility]" including "a China-Taiwan conflict."²⁵ Moving assets from CONUS to Guam "permits more persistent ISR coverage, peacetime intelligence gathering/tracking and prompt strike capability."²⁶ By contrast, crisis deployment of CONUS-based assets "would not only require scarce airlift sorties to deploy squadron support packages but could also be viewed as provocative and complicate crisis management."²⁷

Additional Assets and Infrastructure: Developments and Challenges

Guam's new role will clearly require significant infrastructure and equipment upgrades.²⁸ Even as deliberations proceed, Guam is already preparing for a military buildup and attendant civilian-infrastructure enhancement. During his July 2012 trip across the Asia-Pacific, Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter declared that "Guam has become an important strategic hub for the U.S. military in the Western Pacific."²⁹

According to the Department of Defense, "the overarching purpose . . . is to locate U.S. military forces to meet international agreement and treaty obligations

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and to fulfill U.S. national security policy requirements to provide mutual defense, deter aggression, and dissuade coercion in the western Pacific region. . . . Guam [offers] the flexibility and proximity to the region to ensure the USMC capabilities [are] ready and effective, while contributing to regional deterrence, assurance, and crisis response.”³⁰ Major new assets will include U.S. Marine Corps units previously based in Okinawa, such as a Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) and part of the III Marine Expeditionary Force, an Army air missile defense task force, and the building of a wharf for a transient nuclear-powered aircraft carrier.

The Marine relocation hinges on United States–Japan negotiations. On 27 April 2012 the United States–Japan Security Consultative Committee, together with the American secretaries of state and defense and their respective Japanese counterparts, unveiled a new plan with several important components. Roughly 9,000 Marines and their dependents, or nearly half those currently stationed in Okinawa, will be transferred to Guam (to absorb approximately 4,700 Marines, based on current planning estimates), Hawaii, and Australia.³¹ Some of this may be in the form of innovative “rotational unit deployments,” as opposed to formal restationing. Of the estimated \$8.6 billion required to fund the move, Japan will contribute \$3.1 billion in cash, in a departure from its previous types of contributions (e.g., long-term, low-interest loans). The U.S. military and Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) will develop shared-use joint training ranges and facilities in Guam and in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)—an approach that might facilitate joint access to a greater variety of JSDF and civilian facilities, airports, and ports in Japan in the future. This is part of a larger effort to enhance multilateral training and capabilities with other nations as well. To move beyond sensitive issues that have complicated bilateral efforts in the past, the relocation of Marines and the return of land from U.S. military use at Kadena Air Force Base have been formally delinked from resolution of the future of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. On 27 December 2013, in a move that generated immediate protest, Okinawa Prefecture’s governor Hirokazu Nakaima approved relocating the Futenma facility to reclaimed land off the coast of Henoko.³²

Already, as noted, a squadron of three nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSN) has been stationed in Guam. In the future, between three and six additional submarines may join it, including “both SSNs and soon-to-be-converted nuclear-powered cruise missile boats.”³³ A high-end approach would make Guam home to roughly one-fifth of the entire U.S. submarine fleet, giving it the platforms “required to track China’s emerging SSBN capability.”³⁴ Forward-deploying SSNs in Guam represents a particularly productive approach, as a recent study explains: “Given the increased size and operational reach of attack submarines from China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy, the U.S. Navy faces an imbalance in its own submarine fleet in the Asia-Pacific region. This

imbalance will grow rapidly in the mid-2020s as DoD [the Department of Defense] prepares to retire U.S. nuclear attack submarines at a rate twice that of new construction for replacements."³⁵

The U.S. Air Force is considering the construction of a concrete hangar facility for two B-2 bombers, in addition to two ongoing construction projects: an \$85 million air refueling facility and a \$12.8 million effort to refurbish housing at Andersen Air Force Base.³⁶ In 1999 the U.S. Navy selected the Raytheon Corporation to upgrade and maintain support facilities, awarding it a \$328.4 million contract over the following seven years.³⁷

Further asset additions could prove advantageous, though they come with challenges. Andersen Air Base has room for assets in addition to the four B-52s or two B-2s currently deployable there, even an entire B-52 squadron. Global Hawk unmanned aerial systems have been deployed to Guam;³⁸ Andersen could also accommodate more of them as well as the MC-12W Liberty aircraft.³⁹ Options to increase operational survivability include stationing Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) and PAC-3 (upgraded Patriot) missile defenses in Guam, although they would likely not provide complete protection against a Chinese attack. Hardening facilities and building an improved fuel pipeline could provide further protection.⁴⁰ Increasing runway repair capability and dispersing tanker aircraft represent lower-cost approaches. The assets of Andersen's Contingency Response Group could be augmented as well.⁴¹ Additional port capacity is available to host more vessels, although such an expansion would result in greater congestion.

Guam faces present problems in addition to these potential ones. The island suffers from susceptibility to typhoon damage, from high construction costs (more than twice the U.S. military average), obsolete infrastructure, limitations in the scope and utilization of existing training ranges, and bureaucratic delays in completing environmental impact assessments and approvals.⁴²

Although numbers may be reduced slightly by a reduction of Marines headed to Guam from the full 9,000 originally envisioned, peak population growth on Guam may reach 41,000 during construction, later leveling off to 34,000 above today's level. Additional personnel include 4,700 permanent Marines and their dependents and as many as 2,000 transient individuals using training ranges on Guam, nearby Tinian, Saipan, Farallon de Medinilla, Pagan, and possibly other CNMI islands.⁴³ Construction may involve 21,000 workers by 2014, with roughly 18,400 from off-island.⁴⁴

To help support a resident population that may be 20 to 25 percent larger than it is now, water and power infrastructures are being strengthened. Guam's port has been upgraded with \$100 million in grant money. While the National Defense Authorization Act requires demonstration that Guam can support this buildup properly, section 2207 of that legislation limits federal loans for infrastructure; a supplemental bill in fiscal 2011 allowed the DoD to transfer \$50

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million for maritime administration, to be paired with an equivalent sum from the Department of Agriculture. Military construction money from the defense budget has funded improvements to defense access roads. For the past few years, despite its precarious budgetary and debt situation, the government of Guam has floated bonds for electrical and water improvements. Through a district court judge's ruling, the federal government has mandated legal changes, such as to mandate processing, as opposed to unregulated discharge, of raw sewage. Major water and sewer improvements remain aspirational, but Guam's only dump, once an Environmental Protection Agency Superfund site, has been shut down and replaced by a new one.⁴⁵

Guam Buildup: Operational Considerations

In remarks at the Shangri-La Security Summit in June 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said that plans to relocate Marines from Okinawa to Guam will "further develop Guam as a strategic hub for the United States military in the Western Pacific, improving our ability to respond to a wide range of contingencies in the Asia-Pacific region."⁴⁶

For the United States, the use of sovereign American territory and submarines will assume greater importance in coming years. Owen R. Coté Jr., observes that "it is unlikely that access to [foreign] bases will become more predictable in the future because it is unlikely that the United States will establish new military alliances as formal as those it established to prosecute the Cold War."⁴⁷ He also notes that "unlike in air warfare, the technical trends in antisubmarine warfare will likely continue to favor stealth. Thus quiet submarines, especially those that deploy in littoral waters, will retain a significant advantage over submarine hunters. Together, these trends will make it more dangerous for U.S. surface combatants, amphibious ships, and sealift vessels to close hostile coastlines early in a conflict when opposing submarines are still extant." Coté foresees "an accompanying U.S. shift toward submarines deploying both overland sensor networks and fast standoff strike weapons," in part because "U.S. submarines will be the most effective means of providing a persistent source of fast standoff weapons close to opposing targets early in a conflict."⁴⁸

Another critical factor is Guam's proximity to key commercial ports. American forces based in Guam are closer than any other U.S. troops to the deepwater ports known as "megahubs" in Southeast Asia. Those megahubs, which can accommodate the sixty-foot draft of the largest container ships, are central to the economic interests of America and its East Asian allies. With further investment, Guam could bring to life the current doctrinal focus on sea basing and its subcomponent known as "RSOI"—reception, staging, onward movement, and integration. Sea basing "replaces or augments [previous] fixed, in-theater airports and seaports . . . with . . . a mobile base of operations,

command center, logistics node and transportation hub" operating from a surface vessel.⁴⁹

The concept of RSOI is to transport troops rapidly into a crisis theater or area of operations and unite them with their equipment. First, in-theater ships would deploy equipment at sea or in Japan, or stage the equipment in Guam. Marines would then be flown in to assume control of the equipment. Finally, "the assembled units will either move over land to the operational area or be transported by sea to the [area of operations] or selected components of the force could move by air."⁵⁰ The process of assembling combat organizations in-theater depends on further transportation developments, mainly the transport of heavy (e.g., tanks) and light (e.g., mechanized infantry) equipment. It makes sense to preposition stocks in Guam and marry these stocks with troops using the RSOI process, rather than use a costly yet less dependable prestaged maritime option. All U.S. military services already preposition equipment; it is simply preferable to consolidate and then fly troops in to meet the vessels carrying it.

Guam also supports U.S. Navy operations in the region. The Navy has a critical role to play in East Asia, given the region's extensive coastlines, islands, land barriers, and consequent susceptibility to maritime force projection. In East Asia, naval forces collectively play a preventive role that is of equal importance to their offensive function. These dual processes can be categorized as "shape" and "respond."⁵¹ Forward presence enhances U.S. ability not only to respond to regional events but also to shape them before they occur. Ships on station are launch pads for counterterrorism operations, platforms for TMD, and barriers to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD); they are in themselves stabilizing political forces. The Navy plays a special role in safeguarding American interests in that, unlike the basing and staging-dependent Air Force or Army, "the Navy can establish a long-term presence without infringing on anyone's borders. It can be sent at a pace that allows diplomacy to cool a crisis even as the ships proceed."⁵² A further advantage of naval presence is that ships can remain indefinitely in international waters, as close as twelve miles to another nation's coastline, to conduct electronic surveillance and bathymetric surveying.

To maximize America's ability to gather information, deter hostility, and overcome aggression in East Asia, therefore, the U.S. Navy needs to arrange assets for highest availability in times of crisis. Such a strategy calls for forward presence of ships operating from bases that are not politically constrained.

Regional Developments

In the Asia-Pacific region, the United States has vital national security interests in three major developments: first, China's rising economic and military strength; second, the continued threat of terrorism; and third, North Korea's provocative posture.

China

The growing ambitions of the PRC depend on increasingly assertive naval power. As mainland China moves closer to developing blue-water naval capability, especially in relation to Taiwan's defensive capability, the U.S. Navy finds it necessary to be ready not only to respond quickly to a contingency in the Taiwan Strait but also to counterbalance Chinese regional military reach. China closely follows U.S. military deployments on its periphery and is observing with great interest, including at a tactical level, the American buildup of nuclear submarines and other assets on Guam.⁵³

Beijing may increase its nuclear targeting of the island's military installations (while recognizing that actual attack would invite a devastating U.S. response). Guam's facilities will need to be protected from ballistic missiles, submarine- and air-launched cruise missiles, and even sabotage. Hardened submarine moorings provide protection but are expensive. Avoiding overconcentration of Guam's assets during crises, particularly its growing submarine force, is essential to the island's military effectiveness. America's best strategy may be to disperse assets at sea, along the lines of the Cold War model: concentration of assets leaves them vulnerable to a strike, but dispersal based on strategic warning and—in a worst case scenario—the threat of nuclear retaliation mitigates risk.

A strong U.S. presence has regional advantages. The United States–Japan alliance helps to prevent destabilizing competition in a region that is still recovering from the horrors of World War II. Also, by guaranteeing the security of East Asian sea-lanes—a public good that even China does not yet have the capability to provide—the United States facilitates the flow of energy and trade in a region that depends on both to maintain its impressive economic growth.

Tension in the Taiwan Strait deserves separate consideration because it drives American basing strategy in the near and middle terms. The transit time to the strait for a carrier strike group stationed on the West Coast is 16.3 days, a week from the Indian Ocean, and 12.2 days from Hawaii.⁵⁴ If an additional aircraft carrier were forward deployed to Yokosuka, Japan, or on station in the Pacific or in port at Guam, the transit time would be reduced to between 3 and 5 days.

America's ability to respond to a Taiwan Strait crisis is also constrained by political forces in the region. Although many American analysts believe that Taiwan could still defend itself in a military engagement against mainland China, calamitous economic damage to the island would be a virtual certainty; if the United States failed to respond early and effectively, Taipei might sue for peace.

Based on past Chinese practice, the warnings of military action against Taiwan would be ambiguous, and collecting more detailed information would require close forward monitoring and presence. That, in turn, would require more robust permanent American presence in the region. Washington would thus improve its capacity to stabilize the Taiwan Strait and surrounding area by improving its rapid-response capabilities, thereby deterring Chinese offensives

in the first place. A strengthened U.S. position in Guam would also increase American leverage and be less provocative than selling additional armaments to Taiwan. A stronger American presence might even persuade Beijing to reduce the chance of naval incidents by signing a more effective military maritime agreement that specifies appropriate conduct for encounters in or near territorial waters or airspace.⁵⁵ In the longer term, the United States and China will have to reach an understanding concerning their respective roles in the region. As a step to that end, Secretary Panetta called for enhancing military-to-military contact between American and Chinese forces.⁵⁶

Terrorism

Localized Southeast Asian terrorist organizations—Jemaah Islamiah in Indonesia, among others—have demonstrated their capacity for regional violence. These organizations have to be uncovered and pursued, particularly where they are actively collaborating with al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups with global reach. The 12 October 2002 terrorist attack that killed 168 civilians in Bali, Indonesia, awakened American observers to the danger of terror cells in Southeast Asia. As yet, terrorists based in the Philippines and Indonesia have not demonstrated truly global reach. But this does not lessen the importance to the United States of a center in the region to monitor more closely such groups as Jemaah Islamiah and Abu Sayyaf, in the southern Philippines, and to assist in the training of friendly antiterrorist forces.

The U.S. Navy has an important role to play here, from special operations to construction battalions. U.S. special operations forces are currently helping to coordinate attacks on Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines. Construction battalions can be used in strategic, joint goodwill initiatives, such as helping the Philippine air force build a small airstrip on Mindanao. Guam is well suited to host joint military exercises, including those emphasizing special operations. The island has already been used in the 1990s as the premier training ground for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit's Exercise TRUE (training in an urban environment). Guam has hosted three Valiant Shield joint exercises. During the May 2012 Geiger Fury exercise, nearly a thousand Air Force and Marine Corps personnel traveled from Iwakuni, Japan, to train on Guam and Tinian.⁵⁷

North Korea

Pyongyang has revealed clandestine nuclear weapons production in spite of the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework by which North Korea rejoined the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in exchange for American delivery of heavy fuel oil.⁵⁸ This violation further destabilized the fragile political situation in Northeast Asia. In cooperation with South Korea, Japan, and others, Washington has led diplomatic efforts to deal with the threat posed by North Korea and its nuclear weapons capability.

The most pressing threat is North Korean aggression, should détente with the South fail. The North, in a time of rising tensions, could preempt major troop deployments, threatening Seoul with artillery or Japan with missiles. The United States could be restricted in its options to base a potential response force in South Korea. Indeed, South Koreans might well oppose even a defensive American military buildup on the peninsula. North Korea also has a greater potential to inflict a "sea of fire"—unacceptable mass casualties among American troops and allied civilians—which would greatly constrain U.S. military options in such a scenario. Military buildup on Guam could help alleviate some of these problems, especially if the United States were restricted for political reasons in its use of bases on Japanese soil.

For all these reasons, Washington needs to lay the groundwork for a flexible buildup designed not to support a bombing campaign or even an "Osirak style" operation (i.e., one modeled on Israel's 1981 preemptive attack on Iraq's developing nuclear facility) but rather to support proliferation containment. Targeted sanctions, for example, could involve diplomatic agreements or even a naval quarantine to prevent Pyongyang from exporting missiles (in violation of the Missile Technology Control Regime), nuclear material (in violation of the NPT), or related military technologies. Building up Guam as a home port for maritime-interdiction ships could greatly strengthen these promising initiatives.

A large conventional conflict on the Korean Peninsula is a high-cost, low-probability prospect. For decades, the need for the United States to respond to a full-scale invasion kept a permanent land force near the demilitarized zone. But the Pentagon is now backing away from this "tripwire" approach, since U.S. forces stationed within range of North Korean artillery undermine the American threat of preemptive strike. Moreover, the more likely contingency of heightened tensions—as opposed to immediate, full-scale war—suggests the need for a rapid-response force. Here, as in much of East Asia, the bulk of American influence lies not on land but at sea.

Regional Threats to Guam and Asia-Pacific Bases

Guam itself faces a number of threats, including the risk of terrorist or missile attack. The risk of terrorist attacks against fixed bases has grown worldwide. That danger already applies to many existing land bases, particularly in the Middle East, for which—despite efforts to improve at-sea basing—there is no substitute.⁵⁹ Moreover, permanent land bases are important military tools during a conflict, and perhaps even more so for their political value.

Bases are also vulnerable to the growing danger of missile attack, a factor of special relevance in East Asia. Some analysts have cited a growing PRC missile threat as a reason *not* to establish new bases anywhere in East Asia. They argue that China's CSS-3 (DF-4) missiles were designed to destroy facilities on Guam

with a nuclear payload, and they point out that China is continuing to develop a wide range of nuclear and conventional ballistic missiles. Submarine-launched cruise missiles—with their potential for small radar cross sections, low-altitude flight, continually adjustable trajectories, and potential avoidance of global positioning system constraints through reliance on terrestrial imaging—could emerge as particularly lethal threats.

Irrespective “of the degree and nature of American military superiority,” Beijing might become “impossible to deter” in the event of a Taiwan declaration of independence.⁶⁰ In such a desperate situation, Beijing might view surprise attacks on U.S. forces in Okinawa or Guam as a credible means of disrupting and even restraining American operations.

China has made a concerted effort to acquire offensive capabilities that could be used against U.S. bases. But by this logic, American bases in Japan and Korea are even more vulnerable. Yet despite growing missile threats from North Korea and even China, Japan continues to value U.S. bases as key elements of its own defense. South Korean public opinion may be more easily manipulated by a North Korean aggressor, but U.S. forces are moving out of range of North Korean artillery, and Pyongyang’s missiles are insufficiently accurate to avoid risk to Korean civilians in South Korea if targeted against American bases there. For both operational and political reasons, South Korean bases would not likely play a major role in a Taiwan crisis and hence would not be a target of PRC missile coercion. As will be explained further, U.S. bases in Japan are more relevant to a Taiwan conflict, and hence a more likely target of PRC pressure, making it imperative that the United States not rely on unrestricted access to them in such a scenario.

As for Guam, while its target value would rise with infrastructure and asset improvement, Beijing knows that attacking a U.S. base—especially on sovereign territory such as Guam—would invite a devastating American response. As one analyst points out, “Presidents would not encounter major domestic opposition in reacting to aggression against U.S. forces or civilians at home. The question is not whether, but what form the response would take.”⁶¹

Several measures for reducing U.S. base vulnerabilities are particularly relevant to Guam, including dispersion and the use of missile defenses. Dispersion could entail a periodic rotation of such assets as nuclear submarines to sea, away from Guam, thereby exploiting the island’s potential as a useful hub while preventing a “Pearl Harbor”-style surprise scenario. At-sea dispersion might be augmented with specific access arrangements with nearby islands, such as Palau, to be used in time of crisis. While American ballistic-missile-defense architecture may not be able to neutralize fully a PRC missile attack, it could at least introduce uncertainty and thereby alter Beijing’s calculus. There are even cross-cutting factors, such as the potential for increased defensibility of concentrated assets under a TMD system: “Against a high level missile threat, concentration of assets at a few highly defended regional bases, such as Guam, may be a more survivable

posture than dispersing capabilities to a larger number of bases."⁶² SM-3 ships stationed in Guam could serve as both localized deterrents and, collectively, as prepositioned regional protection.

American "base structure is not merely a derivative of strategy," the Overseas Basing Commission has counseled; "it is a driver in its own right."⁶³ As the Military Facility Structure Report has acknowledged, while emerging threats are not fully predictable and may be addressed from out of area, they must be at least roughly anticipated in order to inform properly the architecture of the new U.S. global basing footprint.⁶⁴

Guam: A Strategic Hub

The United States must diversify its presence in the Asia-Pacific region by enhancing a chain of overlapping bases and access rights. A first step in that effort would be to move resources to Guam in order to establish a presence for strike and deterrence not wholly dependent on outside support. The United States must thus increase its capability to use existing access points and bases. One vehicle for such independent presence, though by no means a panacea, is the strategically located island of Guam.

Current basing arrangements and operating patterns in the Pacific Fleet seem to reflect excessive optimism about getting "more from less." Such arrangements strain U.S.-based naval assets, slow response time to the region, and rely too heavily on access rights that could evaporate during a crisis. These problems are hardly unique to East Asia; forces everywhere are stretched thin. But it would be a mistake to underestimate the growing need for increased presence in-theater or to keep asking for more from a burdened Pacific Fleet. American policy makers rightly conceptualize U.S. force posture in East Asia as a chain of overlapping bases and access rights. Fortunately, American planners have already committed themselves to reducing long-term dependence on these foreign bases through a significant expansion of Guam's facilities.

Aside from cosmetic and structural improvements on Guam, the United States needs to expand its portfolio of military assets in East Asia. U.S. force posture should reflect a capability not only to respond without delay to the Korean Peninsula, the Taiwan Strait, and critical sea-lanes in Southeast Asia but also to check the scourge of terrorism and the proliferation of WMD. These distinct but related tasks require a layered military strategy. In the event of a crisis on the Korean Peninsula, for instance, such a strategy would involve the use of bases in Korea as the front line, bases in Japan as the ready reserve, and a base in Guam as the deep reserve.

The United States needs a reliable center of operations—including supply, repair, logistics, and training—to "walk onstage" prepared to act. Deteriorating port facilities and infrastructure in Guam need to be transformed into the

furnishings of an ample and well-appointed "dressing room backstage." The recent homeporting of three *Los Angeles*-class attack submarines on the island is a good first step. Increasing power projection into this vital region, however, will require that the U.S. Navy continue to "move west," shifting operational and support assets from San Diego and Pearl Harbor closer to their main area of operations.

There are no new islands or new access points to be discovered in East Asia;⁶⁵ the U.S. capability to use existing access points and bases must be increased. Building up the American presence on Guam is the single most important step that can be taken to effect this crucial transition. To maximize its ability to deter hostility, gather information, and overcome aggression, the U.S. Navy should continue to develop Guam as a forward logistics hub. A diversified and expanded American military presence on Guam will offer maximum flexibility in times of crisis and help ensure that future scenarios—such as the rise of a belligerent China, a change in Japanese foreign policy, or a reunification of the Koreas—do not create "missing links" in the chain of U.S. capabilities. Moving assets westward across the Pacific and maintaining a flexible and growing constellation of facilities and access rights in East Asia would keep that chain strong—and even the most determined enemies would not be able to dislodge its anchor, Guam.

Clearly, the United States' national interests call for maintaining a strong East Asian presence. Both current conditions and emerging long-term trends underscore the importance of building up Guam as a sovereign forward logistics hub to ensure American regional influence. But this significant strategic move merits careful consideration because it has already triggered significant scrutiny by other regional powers such as China. As much as one-fifth of the U.S. submarine fleet could conceivably be stationed at Guam. What would this mean for the fleet? What level of forces on Guam would represent an overconcentration of assets? How defensible is Guam from surprise attack? How easy, for instance, would it be for the PRC to launch a surprise attack with cruise missiles? Could Chinese submarines hide to the west of Guam? Will the United States station P-3s in Guam to protect submarines? Given their responsibility to prepare for worst-case contingencies, American defense planners must address these challenging questions.



Guam's status as a strategic military hub is promising, but the prospect brings a wide range of challenges that could threaten the island's development and the U.S. military rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region. That rebalancing, in turn, is a cornerstone of the U.S. strategy to sustain military strength across a region vital to America's future interests.

China, challenged strategically by U.S. military buildup in Guam, is preparing "counterintervention" capabilities to hold at risk both the island and military

platforms based there in the event of conflict. These capabilities reportedly include a four-thousand-kilometer-range ballistic missile that may be "ready for service" by 2015 and able to strike Guam from land-based mobile launchers.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, near Guam, China is pursuing exploration of the Marianas Trench for minerals, scientific research, prestige, and possibly information collection, to include monitoring of underwater communications cables. On 15 June 2012 its *Jiaolong* submersible reached a depth of six kilometers, and there are plans to reach seven kilometers.⁶⁷

Efforts are under way to disperse military facilities (for example, to nearby CNMI islands), reduce some of Guam's vulnerabilities, and increase the number of stakeholders in key decisions.⁶⁸ However, Guam's buildup is complicated by decision making in Japan and by local sensitivities in Okinawa. Additionally, dispersal of MAGTFs previously based in Okinawa not only to Guam but also to Hawaii and Australia introduces a more complex equation.

There is currently a risk that Congress may not appropriate funding for Guam's military buildup because of significant budget challenges, specific concerns about actual versus estimated costs, and beliefs that insufficient information has been made available (for example, concerning actual costs of construction of training ranges).⁶⁹ One way to break the logjam, as the Center for Strategic and International Studies recommends, is to use limited military construction funding to upgrade roads and other infrastructure that will be required regardless of how many Marines arrive or when.⁷⁰ American personnel and infrastructure plans involving Guam must weigh the island's strategic value against its political and military challenges—and must find ways to maximize the strategic role of the island known as "Destiny's Landfall."⁷¹

Notes

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11. *Ibid.*, L4.
12. Nuclear submarines have to be recored every fifteen to twenty years, and now the Navy faces a costly decision concerning whether to recore some boats for the second time.
13. U.S. Senate, *Resource Implications of the Navy's Interim Report on Shipbuilding: Statement of Admiral Vern Clark before the Senate Armed Services Committee, February 10, 2005* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, April 25, 2005), <http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/63xx/doc6305/04-25-greggletter.pdf>.
14. See *Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Submarine Study* (Washington, D.C.: November 1999). Also, see U.S. General Accounting Office, *Force Structure: Options for Enhancing the Navy's Attack Submarine Force*, Report GAO-02-97 (Washington, D.C.: November 2001); and U.S. Congressional Budget Office, *Increasing the Mission Capability of the Attack Submarine Force* (Washington, D.C.: March 2002), table 6, p. 11, 33.
15. Berteau et al., *U.S. Force Posture Strategy*, 60.
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17. Berteau et al., *U.S. Force Posture Strategy*, 75.
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