

## NAVY NEWS WEEK 20-1

13 May 2018

### **ReCAAP Warns of Abu Sayyaf Kidnapping Threat in Malaysia**

Asian piracy watchdog ReCAAP ISC issued a warning on May 1st to seafarers over crew abduction threat posed by members of Abu Sayyaf in Malaysia. Abu Sayyaf is one of the most violent jihadist groups in the southern Philippines, notorious for kidnappings for ransom. "The group will be using a blue 3-Engine speedboat and is expected to be underway to Sabah within the next 24 hours," ReCAAP said, citing information from Philippine Focal Point. As informed, the group is planning to kidnap mariners operating in the area. "All vessels transiting the area are advised to exercise extreme caution when transiting in the waters of Lahad Datu and surrounding waters in Sabah," the warning further reads. Since October 2016, the perpetrators have begun to target ships of larger tonnage, such as **Dong Bang Giant 2**, **Royal 16**, **Southern Falcon** and **Kumiai Shagang**. Once in their hands, mariners are often subject to months of captivity and sometimes even execution. This is in particular due to the fact that the Philippine government has adopted a no-ransom policy when dealing with the militant group. In an incident dating November 2016, six men were taken by the militants from the bulk carrier ROYAL 16. Bodies of two decapitated seafarers were found by the Philippine military in July 2017, while one seafarer was allegedly killed in a gunbattle in the same month. Two seafarers have been rescued from the group, while the fate of one more mariner remains unknown.

Source : worldmaritimeneews

### **How To Avoid A Naval Cold War In The High North**

May 4, 2018 by [Bloomberg](#)



Adm. James G. Stavridis, USN, commander, U.S. European Command and NATO Supreme Allied commander, speaks during the launch of the book "[Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World's Oceans](#)" at National Defense University. Photo by Rachel Larue.

By [James Stavridis](#) (Bloomberg)

In the classic [Cold War novel](#) (and fine [1965 film](#)) "[The Bedford Incident](#)," a U.S. destroyer on a NATO mission tangles with a Soviet submarine in the frigid waters near the Arctic Circle. Mayhem ensues in a tautly described set of interactions that lead the world to the brink of nuclear war. Today, as we watch U.S. and Russia continue to confront each other around the world — from Syria to Ukraine to the cyber sphere — the High North is no exception. "Our goal is to make it a truly global and competitive transport route," Putin said of the Arctic in a March address to the Russian Federal Assembly. China may also be getting into the game: President Xi Jinping recently met with Putin to discuss collaborating on a kind of "[frozen Silk Road](#)." Clearly, the Arctic is dangerously close to becoming a zone of conflict. How can we achieve what our Canadian allies wistfully call "*high north but low tension*"? Let's begin with the geopolitics, which are tailor-made for competition. Russia enjoys the largest "*front porch*" along the Arctic Ocean. Across the ice are five NATO nations: Canada, Denmark (by virtue of its Greenland territory), Iceland, Norway and the U.S. Two other very close European friends of the alliance, Sweden and Finland, also have territory abutting the Arctic. On the NATO side, there are a variety of views as to how to regard the Arctic. Several years ago, as the alliance's military commander, I was struck by the differing positions among the allies as to NATO's role in the north — from Canada believing it should avoid any militarization to Norway advocating significant NATO patrols and surveillance in the region. The other friends and allies fall somewhere between the two views, while the U.S. (after years of essentially ignoring everything except Alaska's hydrocarbon production) is increasingly focusing on the region, beginning with appropriating funds for long-needed icebreakers and patrolling more aggressively in the air and beneath the polar ice. Putin has taken an aggressive stance by ramping up the level of forces allocated to the region, adding both land and air units north of the Arctic Circle, while using his large fleet of icebreakers aggressively at sea (Russia has 25-plus while the U.S. today has only a single truly all-year capable vessel). China, while not an Arctic nation by virtue of geography, is building icebreakers and preparing to be deeply engaged — hence the nascent partnership with the Russian Federation. All of this is complicated by the effects of climate change, which are rapidly melting the icecap. This is opening up important sea lanes of communications (shipping routes) and increasing the flow of both commercial and military ships and aircraft. While it will be a decade or more before shipping truly burgeons in the Arctic, China and Russia are planning and building infrastructure to dominate the trade routes. Meanwhile, under the ice, submarines operate continually, replaying at times the Cold War games of "[Hunt for Red October](#)" fame. Finally, there is also a great deal of oil and natural gas below the sea floor that will become more accessible over time in the region. So, how can we avoid a truly cold

war in a part of the world where we have — at least to date — avoided combat? First, the U.S. should invest in the international institutions that provide forums for dialog between Russia and the rest of the Arctic nations. At the top of the list is the Arctic Council, a loosely organized but bureaucratically functional international organization with all the Arctic nations (and many observer states as well, notably China). The council brings together both the foreign ministers and military chiefs from the member nations, and uniquely could hold a summit and convene the heads of state from every state with either geographic or economic interest. Second, the Pentagon must increase its ability to monitor and operate militarily in Arctic. Congress must allocate financing for at least half a dozen significant icebreakers, and joint private-public partnering could help develop a strategic plan for constructing appropriate infrastructure — from airfields to ports to offshore platforms. Third, Washington should seek zones of cooperation with Russia (and eventually China if it becomes a regional player). These could include using “science diplomacy” to jointly sponsor missions to measure environmental issues from warming sea temperatures to melting ice; conducting exercises to test our ability to respond to ecological disasters (including oil spills); practice search-and-rescue operations over wide areas (Canada has invested heavily in this); and so on. Finally, Americans simply need to pay more attention to the vast stretches of ocean and ice at the top of the world. The stakes — geopolitical competition, hydrocarbons, a fragile environment with global effects, the emergence over time of important shipping lanes — are enormous. We can avoid a real world Bedford Incident, but it will require attention, resources and imagination applied to the High North.

*This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners or gCaptain.*

Source: <http://gcaptain.com>

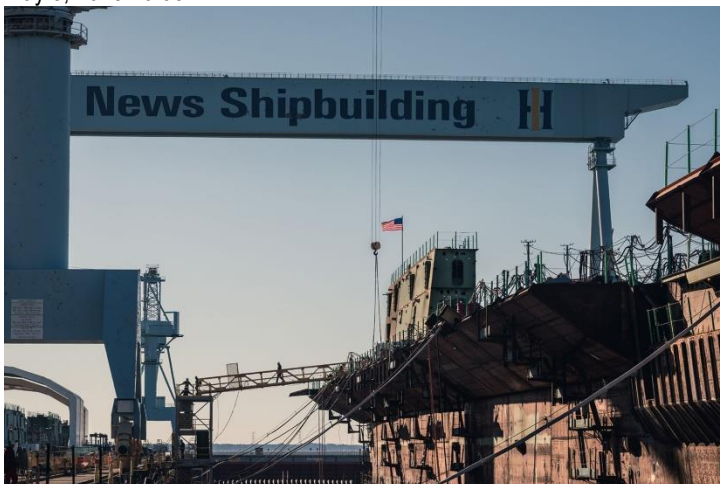


The Swedish Navy Visby class stealth corvette **Karlstad** – the last to be built. A sixth hull was cancelled. Photo: Celeste Scheepers

## Top Navy Acquisitions Official Wants Changes in Acquisition Process to Match New Threats

By: [Otto Kreisher](#)

May 3, 2018 10:05 AM



Ongoing construction of the aircraft carrier **John F Kennedy (CVN-79)**. Newport News Shipbuilding photo

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Defense Department has about two years to make some “*fundamental changes*” in acquisition to match the new National Defense Strategy, and buying the same things in the same way will not be acceptable, the Navy’s top acquisition official said on Wednesday. “*We in the acquisition community, that’s all of us, we actually have to deliver. It’s not about the processes, it’s output. We actually have to deliver lethal capacity to the force.*” James Geurts, the Assistant Navy Secretary for Research, Development and Acquisition told the Wednesday audience at the Defense Daily forum on Modular Open Systems. “*From a Navy perspective, the big challenge is, how do we build a Navy that can compete and win,*” he said. “*If you look at the future fight, you might quickly surmise the Navy and the Marine Corps, in*

particular, are going to have a leading role in that.” “That’s going to be a challenging fight,” with the threats in the Pacific, and the Marine Corps commandant talking about having to fight to get to the fight, Geurts said. “You hear us talk about do we have enough force structure, the right force structure, the right capabilities on that force structure?” “If the only way we’re going to do it is just to buy more of what we always bought, in the way we always bought it... I know we’re not going to get there.” “Maybe in the last 10 to 15 years, we could afford to be risk-averse, to be very methodical. I don’t believe we have that luxury anymore.” Geurts challenged the audience, mainly comprised of defense industry representatives, to help the department decide, “in a relatively short amount of time, how are we going to effectively change the trajectory to continue to put us on a path to compete and win as a nation.” The idea of open systems architecture and open standards that allow improvements in the capability of platforms and systems quickly without major structural changes “is one of the ways we can fundamentally change the direction,” he said. Geurts said he thinks of naval power as a combination of three factors: “Capacity, how much stuff do you have; capability, how capable is the stuff you have, and availability, how available is it... We could build a lot of ships but if they’re not available, it’s not going to do us any good. If 50 percent of our airplanes are sitting on the ramp, broken, that’s no good. We have to make sure we are attacking availability.” The secretary, who came to the Navy job after working acquisition for the Special Operations Command, which he said is very quick in pivoting to meet new situations, said he has pushed decentralization of acquisition authority down to the program manager level to speed up decisions and was trying to increase digitization of the process. Open standards and giving the government more control over the software and details of new systems, “will drive affordability... and allow competition at multiple levels,” he said. Geurts said he also was concerned about the shrinking size of the defense industry workforce and the fact that 50 percent of shipbuilding workers have less than five years of experience. Geurts said he was “a velocity guy. It’s all about speed,” but moving “in the right direction, not off the cliff. We’ve lost a lot of our speed, as a nation. We need to get it back.” “No one can accurately predict the future. I just don’t want to be really wrong.” A member of the audience complained that the problem with acquisition was that the amount of money devoted to defense has declined. But Geurts said when the Defense Department has \$600 billion, the idea that it does not have enough money, “hurts my head.” “It’s not a case of not enough money,” he said, but the high sustainment cost for weapons, because they spend a lot of time deciding requirements for new systems but little time thinking about how to reduce the cost to support them.

Source: <https://news.usni.org>

### Largest military drill in Black Sea kicks off



The Romanian Navy Type 22 frigate **Regele Ferdinand** (ex HMS Coventry). Photo: Romanian Navy

21 military ships, 10 combat aircraft and a submarine are taking part in **Sea Shield 18** from May 4 to 11. Sea Shield is an annual, Romania-led multinational exercise in the

Black Sea designed to improve interoperability and combat proficiency of participating units. As informed by the Romanian Navy, more than 2,300 troops from Bulgaria, Greece, the United Kingdom, Romania, Spain, the United States, Turkey and Ukraine will implement NATO standard procedures to combat asymmetric, aerial, submarine and maritime threats according to a scenario based on a fictional geopolitical situation. *Sea Shield 18* is the largest exercise on the southern and eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance this year and is part of the Naval Forces Master Plan in 2018. The exercise was officially launched at Terminal Passagere in the Port of Constanța on May 4.

Source: Naval Today

### South Korea to launch 2nd Dokdo-class ship this month

Photo: DAPA

The Republic of Korea Navy’s second Dokdo-class amphibious assault ship will be launched this month, the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) said. The launching



ceremony for the new ship, named **ROKS Marado**, will be held at Hanjin Heavy Industries & Construction shipyard in Busan on May 14. South Korea started building the vessel at the Hanjin shipyard in April 2017. Featuring a length of 199 meters and a width of 31 meters, **Marado** is expected to be commissioned in 2020, following tests and evaluations, according to DAPA. The first Dokdo-class vessel, **ROKS Dokdo**, was launched in 2015 and commissioned two years later. It is said to be one of the largest amphibious assault ships in Asia. Compared to the previous Dokdo-class ship, **ROKS Marado** was designed to incorporate improvements and upgrades as well as new technology, DAPA explained. **Source: Naval Today**

## **Of US, Russia & India's arms bazar**

[Abhijit Bhattacharyya](#)

The writer is an advocate practising in the Supreme Court. The views expressed here are personal.

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**India needs to be able to take its own sovereign decisions on what it considers best for its national security.**



America's defence secretary James Mattis (Photo: AP)

America's defence secretary James Mattis understands military hardware well. A retired Marine general who commanded US troops in southern Afghanistan in the opening weeks of the war in 2001, Mr Mattis sees India as one of the most lucrative and attractive destinations for his country's defence contractors as he gleefully advised members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He is clearly trying to reshape the psyche and policy of his country's political masters when he comments: "*India... we probably have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to find more common ground*" ... "*I think it's there... We don't have to search hard for it in the sense of creating it. We just have to get an understanding of each other's interests*". A profound observation indeed. For Western arms manufacturers, particularly those from the United States, India is just "*waiting to be lapped up*". The country seems a readymade and tailored market. The arms manufacturers just have to land, in the manner of Vasco da Gama or Robert Clive, and things will immediately fall into place. Mr Mattis appears to be a practical, wise and thinking general. His advisory comes as a forewarning to his political colleagues, who more often than not have shown propensity to pass laws which later came back to harm, and not help, their own cause. Mr Mattis' diagnosis is near perfect and precise. He urges that US legislators should allow the government "*flexible waiver authority*" pertaining to Russia-related sanctions that seek to punish Third World countries, like India, for making "*significant transactions*" like arms purchase from Russia. He has clearly seen through the US fault line; he says "*it is likely to prevent ourselves (US) from acting in our own best interests and place an undue burden on our allies/partners*". The waiver he seeks is from punitive actions under the "**Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)**", passed by the US Congress in January last year. So what's the status of the Indo-Russian relationship? The answer is that it's solid. Despite the volatile and changing international scenario, India's reliance on Russia, even today, is peerless. Russia supplied 68 per cent of India's imports in 2012-2016, compared to the US' 14 per cent and Israel's 7.2 per cent. Imports from Russia are often in the form of assembly or licensed production of major weapons by India's state-owned arms industry. If we look at the contemporary order list and long-term planning, it will be clear that Russia will continue to be India's main supplier of major arms and equipment in the foreseeable future. Hence, it is necessary to make everyone understand, and particularly the United States, that there is no point even in trying to think of imposing sanctions on India for buying Russian arms. Despite its chaotic polity and its endlessly quarrelling and squabbling leaders, India can't be cajoled or compelled to "*fall in line*". No one doubts Russia's loyalty towards India; what Russia has been doing for India in the armaments industry since 1950s no other country has done! No doubt Russia too has made money and at times did not play fair financially, yet in the overarching scenario, despite being a virtual monopoly stakeholder in the Indian arms bazar, Russia has always given whatever India has asked for and it never pulled strings or imposed conditions on the "*end-use*" of weapons that it supplied to this country. A cursory glance at the inventory of India's Army, Navy and Air Force reveals this reality. According to Military Balance 2018 (published in February 2018 by International Institute for Strategic Studies, London), apart from 122 (India-made) Arjun tanks, all 1,950 T-72M1 and 1,025 T-90S main battle tanks (MBTs) are of Russian origin. Further, infantry fighting vehicles, armoured personnel carriers, armoured engineering vehicles, recovery vehicles, anti-tank infrastructure and surface-to-air missiles are also from Russia. The Indian Navy's dependence on Russia goes back to the 1960s when the first Foxtrot-class diesel electric patrol submarine was inducted into its fleet on December 8, 1967. Today, the lone nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN) **INS Chakra** (ex-Russian Akula II) is on lease from Moscow. So is the case with nine imported Kilo-class submarines. The Navy's long-range lethality originated with five Rajput (Kashin) class destroyers on September 30, 1980. The sole aircraft-carrier **INS Vikramaditya** today is of Russia's Kiev class. All the indigenous surface shipbuilding programme of India, like those of

the Delhi, Kolkata and Shivalik class destroyers and Brahmaputra, Godavari, Talwar class frigates are either designed by Russia or derived heavily from it. In naval aviation too, there is the MiG-29K/KUB Fulcrum; Ilyushin-38SD and Ka-28 helicopter. The Indian Air Force too has banked heavily on various types MiGs — MiG-21, 23, 25R, 27 and 29 — for more than 50 years. Although MiG-25R and 27 are retired, according to Military Balance 2018, there are “62 MiG-29 fighters” and over 250 operational MiG-21 and 23 “fighter ground attack” aircraft in the Indian fleet. The IAF also flies Mi-25, 35 and 17 helicopters. So the relationship between the Indian military and Russia just cannot be wished away by anyone. I am no supporter of Russia, or for that matter anyone else, other than our own enterprises. However, realpolitik and real-time “situations” became a compulsion for India from 1962 onwards to seek assistance. That was the time when the West did not feel it necessary to give us the “latest and the best”. When late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had complained over the arming of Pakistan with the F-86 Sabre jet, Lockheed F-104 and (then) General Dynamics F-16, the situation indeed looked grim and gloomy for the Indian armed forces. Her fault was that she had waged a war in 1971 to break what some in the West felt was perhaps the strongest bulwark against “hegemonic India”. It was during those dark hours that the Russians came to New Delhi’s rescue. Of course, the Russians too had their own motives — to counter their Cold War rivals on Indian soil. However, it was a blessing in disguise for India. The point to make today is that the American establishment — both the administration and Congress — should heed what Mr Mattis says, and desist from trying to impose sanctions on India for purchasing arms or collaborating with Russians in matters related to India’s national security. The Americans’ fight with Russia can’t be carried out on, or from, Indian soil the way 18th and 19th century Europe’s Anglo-French wars were waged from Wandiwash and Arcot to Plassey and Bharatpur to Seringapatnam. India needs to be able to take its own sovereign decisions on what it considers best for its national security. Other nations need to stay out and not try to interfere, just as the Indian Parliament does not try to exercise jurisdiction over foreign lands!

Source: <http://www.asianage.com>

### **Indo-French naval exercise Varuna reaches its final phase**

Indian and French navies are conducting the last phase of the 2018 Varuna naval exercise in the vicinity of Reunion Island, French Embassy in New Delhi said. The third session is being held from May 1 to 7 after two successive phases.

The first phase involved joint anti-submarine combat training off the Indian coast in Goa, with the participation of both the French nuclear submarine **Perle** and the Indian Kalvari Scorpene-class submarine. The second phase was focused on



amphibious operations off Chennai’s coast, with the French landing helicopter dock **LHD Dixmude**.

French submarine **Perle** took part in Varuna 2018.  
Photo: Indian Defence

The current exercise includes the participation of two major vessels of the Indian Navy, the destroyer **INS Mumbai** and the frigate **INS Trikand**, and the maiden deployment of a multi-

mission maritime aircraft, P-8I Neptune. They will interact with French ships — including the frigate **Nivose** — permanently deployed at Reunion Island, a French administrative department. The seven-day exercise sees the sailors simulating different scenarios, including air defense, firing, manoeuvres, asymmetric warfare and embarkation. Helicopters embarked on board navy ships are also training for touch-and-go landings. Underscoring the relevance of Varuna, the Ambassador of France to India, Alexandre Ziegler, said: “*This exercise illustrates the strong interest France and India share concerning maritime security issues in this region.*” The Varuna exercise is part of a long-term bilateral cooperation with India, illustrated by the regular port visits of French ships in India, and recently reinforced by the document on the Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region. The document was signed during the state visit of President Emmanuel Macron on March 10, 2018.

Source: Naval Today

### **Former Fitzgerald skipper’s Article 32 hearing slated for late May**

An Article 32 hearing for the former commander of a guided-missile destroyer involved in a deadly collision last year has been scheduled for May 21, the Navy said Wednesday. Cmdr. Bryce Benson — who helmed the **USS Fitzgerald** on June 17 when it ran into a container ship off the coast of Japan, killing seven sailors — faces charges that include negligent homicide, hazarding a ship and dereliction of duty. His hearing, which was originally slated for early March, was postponed after defense attorneys asked for more time. On May 8, an unidentified **Fitzgerald** officer is scheduled for arraignment and to enter a plea on a charge of negligent dereliction of duty resulting in death. The following day, a joint Article 32 hearing will take place for two junior **Fitzgerald** officers. All hearings will be held at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. Navy investigations said both “avoidable” collisions were caused by failures in planning, training, procedures and operations. Part of that, the service found, was because of the intense operational pace the fleet has been maintaining in recent years. The

accidents left the Pacific Fleet reeling and led to firings, forced retirements and nonjudicial punishments conducted by Adm. Frank Caldwell, who was tapped in October to oversee disciplinary actions for the accidents. The Navy relieved the commanders of both ships, along with the head of 7th Fleet and the leaders of Task Force 70 and Destroyer Squadron 15, which oversee the fleet's destroyers and cruisers. Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Scott Swift announced his retirement in September, and Vice Adm. Thomas Rowden – the former Surface Force head – retired in January ahead of schedule after the recommendation of disciplinary actions against him. **Source : Stars & Stripes**

## **Greek Naval And Turkish Cargo Ship Collide**

May 4, 2018 by [Reuters](#)



Image of Turkish cargo ship Karmate by [Dogruyollar5](#), Marine Traffic

by Michele Kambas (Reuters) – A Greek gunboat was nudged by a Turkish cargo vessel early on Friday while on patrol for unauthorized migrant crossings in the Aegean Sea, the Greek navy said. The gunboat “**Armatolos**” was on patrol off the island of Lesbos as part of a NATO operation when the

incident occurred at 4 a.m. local time (0100 GMT). The Turkish-flagged vessel “*approached and touched*” the Greek gunboat, the navy said in a statement. It then accelerated toward Turkish shores and did not respond to subsequent radio calls from the Greek gunboat, according to the statement. The Greek navy said NATO authorities had been informed, adding that there were no injuries or any serious damage to the ship. Turkey’s transport ministry later confirmed that there were no casualties on either side following the collision. The Greek island of Lesbos, which lies close to Turkey, was on the frontline of a migration influx in 2015, when hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing conflict found sanctuary there. The number of arrivals has since eased considerably after an agreement between the European Union and Turkey to allow migrants to be sent back. **Source: <http://gcaptain.com>**

## **US Navy wants future ship-killing missile for its new frigate, Raytheon says**



A Kongsberg Naval Strike Missile is launched from the littoral combat ship **Coronado** during missile testing operations off the coast of Southern California. **Photo: MC2 Zachary Bell / US Navy**

WASHINGTON — A competition for a new over-the-horizon missile destined to give the Navy’s littoral combat ship some teeth is being looked at for the FFG(X) program,

Raytheon’s top executive said April 26. The new missile program, which the Navy is looking to award by the end of the summer, is part of an effort to make the Navy’s littoral combat ship more survivable against high-end competitors such as Russia and China. Thomas Kennedy, Raytheon’s chief executive officer, said in an earnings call that the Raytheon/Kongsberg submission known as the Naval Strike Missile is in a strong position for both LCS and for the future frigate. “*This is a program where, Raytheon and Kongsberg, as a team, we submitted a proposal for something we called The Naval Strike Missile, which is the Navy’s over-the-horizon weapon system that they need to put on the LCS. But turns out they’re also going to put them on all the future frigates,*” Kennedy said. “*We think we’re in a very good position there,*” he continued. “*We have a system that requires minimum development. Some small changes we’ll make, but we can go into production very quickly, which is something the United States Navy needs. We are anticipating an award here in Q2 with significant more funds placed against it in the fiscal year 2019 budget to move forward with that program.*” The bidding for

the over-the-horizon missile has been fraught with hurdles, with two major competitors dropping from the process leaving Raytheon and Kongsberg's Naval Strike Missile as the team to beat. Boeing's Harpoon missile and Lockheed Martin's Long-range Anti-Surface Missile both were pulled from the competition. The companies felt the competition was skewed towards the Raytheon/Kongsberg offering, Defense News reported in May. The Naval Strike Missile has a range of more than 100 nautical miles and has target-recognition capabilities that in some cases limit the need for another ship or aircraft to hold a track on the target. If the Navy is indeed planning to add the over-the-horizon missile to the FFG(X), it gives some insight into how the ship's concept is coming together. The Naval Strike Missile is launched from canisters on deck similar to the Navy's current anti-surface weapon, the Harpoon missile. That frees up the planned vertical launch cells for other missions. Next summer will see a major milestone in the Navy's new frigate competition as the Navy looks to accept proposals due in June 2019. The Navy awarded \$15 million contracts to Huntington Ingalls, Lockheed Martin, Austal USA, General Dynamics Bath Iron Works, and Italian shipbuilder Fincantieri to gin up mature designs before the Navy drops down to a single detailed design and construction contract. All the contracts contain options that could grow the value to between \$22 million and \$23 million, according to the contract announcement. Both Austal and Lockheed Martin are competing amped up versions of their littoral combat ships. Huntington Ingalls is likely offering a version of the Coast Guard's National Security Cutter. Fincantieri is offering its FREMM design. General Dynamics is offering a partnership with Spanish shipbuilding Navantia, for its F100 frigate.

Source: Defense News

### **Pak Navy Ship ALAMGIR Provides Logistic Assistance To Portuguese Sailing Yacht**



Pakistan Navy Ship **Alangir** (Oliver Hazard Perry Class Frigate) while on counter piracy mission under Task Force-151 provided logistic assistance to sailing yacht **Benyleo 2**, which was in dire need of fuel in area about 180 NM North East of Somalia. Sailing yacht **Benyleo 2** is owned by Joao Armindo Furtado of Azores Island Portugal, who is currently on round the world sailing trip with his wife Joana Amen and two children aged eight and five. It is the first family from Azores Island to embark on round the world sailing expedition, said a statement issued here by directorate of public relations of Pakistan Navy on Wednesday. **Benyleo 2** left Port of Galle, Sri

Lanka for Eritrea with necessary logistics. However due to unexpected adverse weather, the expedition exhausted its entire stock of fuel. The out of fuel yacht was transiting with slow speed through piracy risk area. The logistic supplies onboard yacht were also short. **PNS Alangir** not only provided fuel but also provided edibles to the family. The Portuguese family was very thankful to Pakistan and Pakistan Navy for providing timely and generous assistance, which enabled them to sail safely in piracy affected area. Pakistan Navy ships actively participate in Task Force-150 and Task Force 151 which are mandated to conduct Maritime Security Operations and Anti-Piracy respectively. Assistance to **Benyleo 2** is another manifestation of Pakistan Navy's strong history of providing humanitarian assistance at high seas and is in line with finest traditions of Pakistan Navy.

Source: urdupoint

**And I always thought that humanitarian support on the high seas was part of ALL Navies tasks while patrolling.**

### **U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA Step Up Efforts to Protect the North Atlantic Right Whales**

May 2, 2018 by [gCaptain](#)



Photo: Mariano Jedrzejewski / Shutterstock

U.S. Coast Guard units in the Northeast and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Law Enforcement personnel are increasing

focus this year on the enforcement of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP), to detect and deter illegally placed fishing gear and reduce the likelihood of fatal whale entanglements from occurring. Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and in alignment with whale migration patterns, increased operations will run May 1 through June 30 and comprise of more frequent air and sea patrols in seasonal gear closure areas by NOAA law enforcement personnel and Coast Guard patrol boats, cutter crews, and air assets. Additionally, Coast Guard units across the First District will engage in an operation taking aim on at-sea inspections of unattended lobster and gillnet gear. The goal is to identify and affect the removal of illegally rigged and improperly marked gear in an effort to decrease whale entanglements within New England's

waters. Each spring, as nutrient rich waters yield large planktonic blooms, the North Atlantic right whale migrates to feed in these productive areas off New England's coast. A variety of species, like humpback and fin whales, also display a strong presence throughout the spring and summer months. The right whale is of particular interest due to its status as an endangered species. In 2017, NOAA documented the fatalities of 17 right whales within U.S. and Canadian waters. With an estimated population of 450 right whales remaining in existence, only 25 percent identified as breeding females, the impact of these fatalities is a major blow to conservation efforts and vitality of the species. Whale fatalities are often the result of human interference such as ship strikes or fishing gear entanglements. In at least seven of these documented whale fatality cases, fishing gear entanglements and ship strikes were deemed to be the main causes of death.

Source: <http://gcaptain.com>

## **The Growing Dragon: The Radical Reorganization of the PLA**

[May 3, 2018 Guest Author](#)



Chinese marines (Xinhua)

*By Pawel Behrendt*

Two years ago, President Xi Jinping announced the reorganization of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the implementation is gaining momentum. The changes, which go far beyond administrative restructuring

and equipment modernization, will make the world's most massive fighting force more modern and flexible. The reorganization gives Xi and his team an opportunity to purge political opponents within the military and address many of the problems that have plagued the military for decades. During his [speech](#) to the National People Congress in 2012, Hu Jintao [announced](#) the modernization of the PLA, seeking a modern armed force, able to "win local wars under informationized/hi-tech conditions." Under Xi Jinping, these modernizations began to materialize. The first noticeable change was the restoration of political officers in the PLA, a clear sign of turbulent relations between the new leadership and the generals. Next, Xi [announced](#) a wide-reaching anti-corruption campaign. Most notably, former deputy chairmen of the Central Military Commission, Generals Xu Caihou, and Guo Boxiong, were among those accused of corruption. Their fate was settled in 2016 – Xu died of cancer while under arrest and Guo was sentenced to life in prison. With the backdrop of the anti-corruption campaign, a real military reform was afoot – in 2014, a [reorganization](#) of the command structure was announced. The number of military regions was reduced from 7 to 5, and a joint operation command was established to coordinate actions of ground, air, and naval forces in each area. There was also an increase in the role of the Air Force and Navy, both of which are more prominent in a state with global ambitions as opposed to an Army-dominated system that has long characterized China's military. In celebration of the 70th anniversary of World War II, Xi Jinping [announced](#) the reduction of the PLA by 300,000 soldiers to 2 million standing troops. On the last day of 2015, amid overall personnel reduction, new military branches were established – the Rocket Force and the Strategic Support Force. 2016 brought about important, but less flashy, changes. Specifically, the creation of a DARPA-equivalent research lab was [announced](#) in March 2016. The agency was [operational](#) in July 2017. In April 2016, military education reform was [announced](#) and, as a result, departments related to land forces reduced the number of freshmen by 24 percent and the departments of logistics and support shrunk by 45 percent. Conversely, the number of students admitted to courses related to aviation, Navy, and missile technologies was increased by 14 percent. An increase of 16 percent was planned for departments related to space technologies, radars, and drones. Further, closer cooperation between universities and training units was also announced. This was the result of increasingly louder complaints that soldiers cannot take full advantage of the increasingly modern equipment. Overcoming this gap is now considered one of the most critical tasks to the PLA. Xi Jinping [stressed](#) several times a great need for officers who have a broad knowledge of advanced technologies. Most concerning is the shortage of IT specialists. Like many other countries, Chinese IT companies offer much better compensation and work conditions, robbing the military of talent. Higher military income and attractive career paths are being implemented to prevent the talent bleed. Further, to attract talented college graduates, the draft was aligned with the college graduation season. In September 2016, the [activation](#) of the Joint Logistics Support Force was announced. This step aims to improve the decentralized PLA logistics system. Within each of the military regions, a Regional Joint Logistics Support Center was established with headquarters in Wuxi, Guilin, Xining, Shenyang, and Zhengzhou. Of note, the Joint Logistics Support Force is not subordinate to the PLA HQ, but to the Central Military Commission. Starting in 2017, even more radical changes were made. In mid-March, a five-fold increase in the size of the Marine Corps was [announced](#). The force now numbers 20,000 soldiers organized in two brigades, but the goal is as many as 100,000 troops in six brigades. The greatly expanded Marine Corps is dedicated primarily to the protection of the maritime thread of the One Belt, One Road, and defense of the overseas interests of the Middle Kingdom. The Chinese Marines will be permanently stationed in Gwadar, Pakistan, and in Djibouti. The African garrison is rumored to have as many as 10,000 soldiers. It is important to mention that, according to media sources, the first Type 075 amphibious assault ship was laid down in March 2017. Specifics on the ship design and numbers are still



unknown. The Chinese Admiralty wanted LHDs similar to the American WASP-class but opted for a smaller ship – based on the French Mistral-class – due to financial constraints. Recent information suggests that “[something in between](#)” has been chosen. Amphibious assault ships are necessary if China wants “*American style*” power-projection capability. The Chinese are well aware of the unique requirements of the Marines, and outdated PLAN Marine Corps equipment is discussed openly. The force has spent years preparing for an invasion of Taiwan and operations in the nearby waters of South and East China Seas requires a thorough reorganization. The marine brigades of the PLAN are not the only amphibious assault units of the PLA. There are also four amphibious mechanized infantry divisions (AMID) that are part of the PLA Ground Force. These units are essentially mechanized divisions equipped with more amphibious vehicles and river crossing equipment. In effect, the divisions are more suited to crossing rivers and lakes than in taking part in actual seaborne operations. Under the reorganization of the PLAN Marine Corps, the future of AMID is unclear.



Chinese marines storm a beachhead (AFP 2018 / Xinhua)

Around the same time that the PLAN Marine Corps reports emerged, PLA Ground Force restructuring was also announced. From 1949 through the mid-1980s, the Ground Force was organized into 70 corps. Then, during one of the previous reorganizations, the number was halved and later reduced to 24. At the same time, the corps were renamed “group armies.” During subsequent reductions in the 1990s and 2009, their number fell to 21 and, eventually, to 18 corps. Now, the group armies are returning to corps and further decreased in number to 13. This change, however, has a deeper meaning. Specifically, the 16th and 47th Group Armies will be disbanded. Both are large units and were closely [linked](#) to the aforementioned Generals Xu and Guo. According to social media, not all soldiers from disestablished units will leave the military – some may be reassigned, even to the Air Force, Navy or Rocket Force. Some of the other units that will be disbanded are the 14th, 20th, 27th and 40th group armies. In April 2017, further information was officially disclosed by the Ministry of Defense, when it revealed an even more drastic reorganization. The entire PLA will be divided into 84 corps that will comprise all military branches, as well as garrisons, reserves, military academies, and research units. This means an interruption of historical continuity, cultivated mainly in the Ground Force, in which new army corps will have numbered from 71 to 83. Most of them will be located in northern and western China, opposite the U.S. forces and Japan, but also Russia and North Korea. Airborne units have also undergone serious organizational [changes](#). Until 2017, there had been three airborne divisions (43rd, 44th, and 45th), organized into the 15th Airborne Corps, subordinate to the PLAAF. Each division consisted of two airborne regiments, a special forces group, an air transport regiment, and a helicopter group. After the recent reorganization, the PLA Airborne Corps was created, and separate divisions were disbanded. Airborne regiments were reclassified as brigades (127th, 128th, 130th, 131st, 133rd, and 134th), and special forces and transport groups were organized into separate brigades. Confusingly, signal, chemical and engineering troops have been assigned into a single brigade. This solution is perceived as the next step in the development of a robust Chinese airborne force and their transformation from light troops into heavily armed units modeled after Russian paratroops. The large-scale reorganization of the armed forces has also brought about some unexpected personnel problems. Public protests by active duty servicemen and veterans have become [common](#), and the primary cause of dissatisfaction is not only the reduction of posts. Unlike previous cuts, the severance pay program and employment efforts for former military personnel failed. In fact, pay and military pensions sometimes arrived late or in reduced sum. Veterans are particularly embittered, and they accuse the government of ignoring their needs and problems. In October 2017, more than 1,000 vets protested at the Ministry of Defense singing military songs and waving party flags. Police and security officers were confused and surrounded the protesters with buses and police vehicles. On October 11, another protest lasted late into the night, resulting in several arrests. According to human rights organizations, protests are not rare, with over 50 occurring in 2016 alone. As a result, a special Ministry of Veterans Affairs was established in March 2018. The new institution will help veterans to find jobs, lodging, and ensuring their status of “[revered members of society](#).”

### Conclusion

A reorganization of a structure as big and complex as the PLA is never an easy task and it is compounded by resistance from active and veteran military personnel. Unlike the USSR, there is no clear division between party, military, and security force. Further, the military has always had a strong influence on the state apparatus. During his second term, Hu Jintao warned about the negative consequences of this system. Despite [silencing](#) the most hostile officers whose status and influence were endangered by the reform, protests by lower ranks and veterans show that the Communist Party of China has to be very careful. From the military point of view, the reform aims to convert the force designed primarily to defend Chinese territory into one prepared for expeditionary operations.

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Source: <http://cimsec.org>

### Workhorses of the seas



Jan de Nul's *Vole au Vent* parked in the Eemshaven  
Photo : Gordon Priestley ©

### And the biggest workhorse of all



World's largest for the installation & removal of oil/gas platforms & pipelines *Pioneering Spirit* returns from 11 month Gazprom/Turkstream contract in Anapa & transits Med-bound Bosphorus en route to Rotterdam  
Photo's: Yoruk Isik via Twitter  
**Can you image - the Bosphorus having to close for this ship to pass through.**