**14. ABSTRACT**

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**15. SUBJECT TERMS**

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FUTURE WAR PAPER

TITLE: U.S. Marine Corps Force Posture in the Pacific 2025

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES

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I: INTRODUCTION

The ongoing “Pivot to Asia” will require the U.S. Marine Corps to reconsider how it intends to position forces throughout the Asia Pacific. Marine Corps planners must consider repositioning forces from Japan, Australia, and Guam to more operationally advantageous locations in Southeast Asia in order to fully nest with U.S. Pacific Command’s strategic goals in the region. This repositioning allows the United States and its regional allies to prevent potential crises from developing as the People’s Republic of China (PRC) continues its ascent as a world power. Just as the anxieties of traditional allies, such as Japan, the Philippines, and Singapore, continue to grow, countries that maintained politically sensitive relationships with the U.S., such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and India, are growing increasingly alarmed at the PRC’s actions and perceived intentions. In order to sustain a credible response that counters destabilizing threats in Southeast Asia, the U.S. Marine Corps must position forces that foster a timely response to crises. Forces arrayed in Southeast Asia reassures regional allies of U.S. commitment to stability in the region and deters Beijing from conducting activities that may intimidate its neighbors. While operating in an environment of limited resources and fiscal constraints, the U.S. Marine Corps must incorporate Southeast Asia in its future force laydown plans and its regional engagement through Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) exercises in the Pacific in order to effectively respond to any potential belligerency from the PRC in the region.

Efforts to increase U.S. military presence in Asia represent just one aspect of the Obama administration’s Pacific strategy. Currently, this strategy attempts to “rebalance” America’s global economic, diplomatic, and military resources to prevent the PRC from dominating the region’s geo-political institutions. By skillfully blending economic policies with diplomacy, the United States seeks to expand its influence among Southeast Asian countries through trade
agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, and influence multilateral institutions such as ASEAN and the East Asian Summit (EAS). Increasing U.S. military presence in the region serves as a supporting effort to economic and diplomatic plans. Former National Security Advisor Tom Donilon maintains that America's military presence in the region “will be strengthened and be made ‘more broadly distributed, more flexible, and more politically sustainable.’”

Despite these claims, recent cuts to the Department of Defense’s budget challenge Mr. Donilon’s assertions. As the United States conducts its “Pivot to Asia,” U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM), and more specifically the U.S. Marine Corps, foresees the PRC’s potential to disrupt Washington’s strategic goals. The growth of the People’s Liberation Army’s capabilities, the weakening of U.S. credibility as a global and economic leader, and the downsizing of the U.S. military all present significant challenges to America’s pivot and highlight major obstacles to attaining its strategic interests.

II: EXPANDING U.S. PRESENCE IN THE REGION

Washington must continue to enlarge its diplomatic, economic, and military presence in the region in order to ease the concerns of key allies and serve as a hedge against Beijing’s perceived expansion in Southeast Asia. Over the past fifteen years, the PRC’s economic boom has furnished its military with ever increasing budgets, enabling the PLA to obtain military technology that greatly improved its operational capabilities. America’s ability to curtail PRC military excursions in the Pacific similar to that of the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996 has vastly diminished. According to a report from the Center for Strategic & International Studies, “Ballistic missiles are posing increased risk to U.S. bases... in terms of quantity, range, and accuracy.” The risks associated with the PRC’s extensive anti-access/area-denial (A2AD) capability will continue to grow throughout the next decade, thereby limiting America’s ability to maintain Sea Lines of
Communication (SLOCs) and project military force. In assessing areas throughout Southeast Asia that satisfy staging, training, and sustainment requirements, U.S. Marine Corps planners must balance the timeliness of responding to threats with the PLA’s expanding operational reach. While the U.S. seeks to avoid a direct confrontation with the PRC, it must properly position U.S. military assets in a way that persuades China to abide by international norms with respect to freedom of navigation. Projecting military force in a nuanced fashion that allows for the cultivation of partnerships between the U.S. and key Southeast Asian nations may deter the PRC from engaging in activities that have the potential to cause instability in the region. These partnerships, however, are dependent upon the willingness and cooperation of Southeast Asian nations, many of whom, such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia, do not wish to antagonize Beijing by provocatively developing closer relations with Washington. Meanwhile, China continues to insist on defining its Economic Exclusion Zone in such a manner that enables it to secure additional natural resources. The PRC’s so called “nine-dash line” may force Southeast Asian nations to seek closer relations with the U.S. China’s military build-up and diplomatic pressure “seeks to divide and conquer, insisting on bilateral talks with individual claimants rather than appealing to international law and forums.” Its neighbors increasingly look towards the U.S. as a stabilizing entity and view the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps as a key means to maintain the region’s economic and political status quo.

While the cultivation of partnerships depends upon the credibility of the U.S. as the preeminent economic and military power, alliances in the region may also develop as a result of a growing perception that China represents a threat to the status quo. Whatever the impetus for fostering and expanding partnerships in the region, U.S. economic and military clout must grow in order to assure Southeast Asian nations of U.S. resolve in its pivot. Unfortunately, this is be-
ing called into question. America’s main source of strength—its economic might—has failed to influence the region over the last few years. One former Singaporean Foreign Ministry official suggests that the U.S. is failing to achieve regional goals because the country is “not exerting sufficient countervailing economic influence.” 5 The lack of economic incentives and investments needed to encourage partnerships limits the ability of USPACOM to project power and influence throughout the Pacific. Slow economic growth negates America’s ability to leverage the assistance of key Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Rizal Sukma, the Executive Director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, argues, “Like many other East Asian countries, Indonesia has been in doubt regarding America’s ability to sustain the pivot strategy, with the huge cuts in the defense budget over the next five years.” 6 Military leaders share this concern. Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral James A. Winnefeld voiced concerns that additional defense cuts can adversely impact America’s military activities in the region. 7 Kori Schake, a fellow at the Hoover Institution, argues that fiscal constraints threaten to transform the U.S. military into a hollow force and suggests that future budget cuts represents a “bomb that is about to go off.” 8 Nations in the region may look elsewhere for security arrangements, rather than risk their future on a U.S. military with limited capabilities and resolve.

Deep cuts to the defense budget, combined with the erosion of confidence regarding America’s ability to operate effectively in the region, are major obstacles facing the U.S. military’s rebalancing efforts in the Asia Pacific. These problems place limits on the U.S. Marine Corps’ effectiveness in serving as a “force in readiness.” While these issues can be resolved by senior leaders in the executive and legislative branches of government, the failure to make significant corrections at the strategic level will have operational impacts throughout the next decade.
and jeopardizes close ties with key allies. As a 2012 Center for Strategic and International Studies assessment of force posture in the Asia-Pacific warns, "Defections by any ally or partner could undermine efforts for dissuasion and possibly undermine operational planning as well."9 Failure to present a united front in the region empowers the PRC and enables Beijing to exert greater influence in Southeast Asia. Maintaining America’s commitment to the peace and prosperity of the region through favorable trade agreements and expanding the forward presence of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps forces will strengthen the credibility of the Obama administration’s rebalancing efforts.

To counter the anxieties of Southeast Asian nations, USPACOM must expand military-to-military engagement and Theater Security Cooperation exercises throughout the region to maintain the forward presence of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps forces. Discreetly repositioning forces from Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia enables USPACOM to serve as a stabilizing element in an area of supreme economic importance.10 The commander of USPACOM, Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, testified to the House Armed Services Committee that "China’s rapid development of advanced military capabilities, combined with its unclear intentions, certainly raises strategic and security concerns for the U.S. and the region."11 Expanding upon existing engagement and strengthening military partnerships is a cornerstone in the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific’s Campaign Plan FY13-20: "Uncertainty regarding how China will use its growing military, political, and economic capabilities makes it imperative to work with allies and partners across Asia to foster a regional environment in which China’s rise is a source of stability."12

Stability in the region has been and will continue to be sustained through persistent U.S. presence.13 Two of the key the lines of operations that USPACOM plans on implementing to ensure the success of the rebalancing to the Pacific are "strengthening alliances and partnerships"
and “improving posture and presence.” In determining its strategy over the next decade, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) contends that its strategic center of gravity is its ability to sustain an “expeditionary response force” that is “forward deployed” and “optimally postured” to conduct “high value engagement, deterrence, and war-fighting capabilities that are uniquely suited to the region.” The operational center of gravity is the “operational mobility provided through partnership with the U.S. Navy and support from U.S. Transportation Command” that enables Marine forces to “…meet USPACOM engagement requirements while projecting forces from the sea in the event of crises and contingencies.” To meet operational mobility challenges, the U.S. Marine Corps force laydown must cultivate military engagement, foster better training opportunities, and enable a timely response to regional crises. Unfortunately, MARFORPAC’s campaign plan fails to adequately address force posture in a way that facilitates rapid response times.

MARFORPAC’s campaign plan claims that over the next ten years, U.S. Marine Corps forces “…will operate from sites in Hawaii, Okinawa, and Guam; and on a rotational basis from Australia...[with plans] to establish tactical commands in Australia, Okinawa, Guam, and Hawaii to... to conduct security cooperation activities [and] respond to small-scale contingencies...” While basing forces on Hawaii, Okinawa, Guam, and Australia may appear to be sufficient on a short term basis, this current positioning of forces lacks the credible deterrence needed to dissuade the PRC from serving as a destabilizing element in Southeast Asia. MARFORPAC, under the direction and guidance of USPACOM, must use the next several years to cultivate stronger relationships with other partners so that by 2025, U.S. Marine Corps Forces are not limited to four locations whose distance from the South China Sea fails to provide a timely response to an international crisis in Southeast Asia. Maintaining close proximity to regional
hotspots through persistent engagement and presence enables USPACOM to deter China from interfering with critical Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) and threatening U.S. interests. A March 2012 Congressional Research Service Report for Congress titled, *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's 'Rebalancing' Toward Asia* asserts that permanent bases, such as those located in Japan and South Korea, will not be politically viable in Southeast Asia; instead, U.S. forces “will carry out operations mainly through rotational deployments” facilitated by “a substantially expanded and widely varied range of naval access agreements; expanded training exercises; and other, diverse means if engagement with foreign militaries.”  

TSC engagements and exercises offer a fiscally sound and politically acceptable method of repositioning forces in Southeast Asia. TSCs are the cornerstone of military partnerships and take on numerous forms based on the maturity of military relations. It can range from key leader engagements to bilateral combined arms exercises. Exchanges of subject matter experts, conferences that address military issues and challenges, command post exercises, and ship visits also represent the wide array of TSC activities that a geographic combatant commander can employ to build partnerships with key nations.

**III: U.S. MARINE CORPS MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS AND FORCE POSTURE:**

Theater Security Cooperation Exercises (TSCX) can function as a means in which to close the gap between the current and future positioning of forces. Exercises with regional partners translate to presence because they expand trust, reinforce partnerships, demonstrate commitment to regional stability, and provide credible force projection in a relatively non-threatening manner. As stated in the campaign plan, COMMARFORPAC’s “primary focus is to posture Marine Corps forces within the Asia-Pacific region to effectively support the USPACOM Theater Campaign Plan, respond to crises, and meet Combatant Commander operation-
MARFORPAC acknowledges that TSC engagements are vital in determining the success of phase zero operations; the Deputy Commanding General, Brigadier General Richard L. Simcock asserts that phase zero operations are designed to “dissuade or deter potential adversaries, solidify relationships with friends and allies, develop partner nation and friendly military capabilities, improve information exchange and intelligence sharing, and secure access.” Securing access through leading and participating in regional TSC exercises and engagements must remain a long-term goal for MARFORPAC as it negotiates a pathway towards repositioning forces in Southeast Asia.

An additional incentive for countries participating in TSC exercises is the confidence it builds and sustains by providing the means in which they can take the lead in operations such as humanitarian missions or raids against terrorist camps. The Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned conducted numerous interviews with TSCX leaders, planners, and participants, many of whom concluded that exercises and engagements enable MARFORPAC and USPACOM to “…leverage relationships with regional partners to encourage burden sharing.” The notions of self-sufficiency and sovereignty are important in a post-colonial world; while the U.S. has the ability to lead from the front, at times it is more beneficial to remain engaged in a supporting role while other nations assume the burden of ensuring regional stability. Cooperative defense tends to limit territorial power-grabs, thereby fostering regional stability. As Admiral Locklear contends, TSC engagements directed by USPACOM remain “…key to maintaining a credible defense posture, strengthening relationships with our allies, expanding our partnership networks, and preparing to accomplish the full range of military contingencies.” Properly deployed Marine Corps forces can increase the number and complexity of bi-lateral and multilateral training
exercises. These exercises keep U.S. forces forward and deter the disruption of regional stability.\textsuperscript{23}

In order to conduct military engagements with key allies and maintain launching sites that facilitate the timely arrival of Marine Corps forces responding to regional crises, Marine Corps planners must relocate forces and sustainment nodes to more advantageous positions. To maintain the region's geo-political status quo, Admiral Locklear claims that USPACOM is “exploring innovative ways to expand cooperation through more effective strategic partnerships...”\textsuperscript{24} A method in which Admiral Locklear envisions the growth of these strategic partnerships “is a transition from a heavily-concentrated Marine force in Northeast Asia region to four Marine Air Ground Task Forces geographically distributed across the Pacific providing a more flexible and balanced capability throughout the entire Western Pacific.”\textsuperscript{25} The shift of Marine forces from countries that increased their capacity to handle external threats, such as Japan, to the nations of Southeast Asia that must contend with a growing China is an important aspect of the Asian Pivot. In positioning U.S. Marine Forces, USPACOM and MARFORPAC must concentrate on increasing the number and intensity of engagements and exercises in Indonesia, the Philippines, and possibly Vietnam or Malaysia. While the perception of the PRC's actions in the region increasingly make this politically feasible, attempts to posture U.S. Marine Corps forces in the region will undoubtedly be met with skepticism in numerous political circles.

Post-colonial attitudes and political sensitivities throughout the region may restrict the U.S. Marine Corps from increasing the number of troops operating throughout Southeast Asia. One way in which the Marine Corps can expand its presence throughout Asia in a politically sensitive manner is to establish what several Marine logistics officers call Regional Pockets of Excellence. In a recent \textit{Marine Corps Gazette} article, Lieutenant Colonels Michael Oppenheim and
Virgilio Arcega, and Major Randall Risher envision the employment of small 12-man detachments consisting of logisticians, contractors, Foreign Area Officers, and combat-arms operators to establish enduring relationships with their military counterparts throughout Southeast Asia.\(^26\) The authors urge the U.S. Marine Corps to deploy the teams to obtain “bilateral or even multilateral military-to-military training opportunities.”\(^27\) The countries the authors list as potential participants include Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and Burma.\(^28\) The vital aspect to this arrangement is that the detachment “would maintain a permanent footprint to ensure presence and build enduring institutional relationships.”\(^29\) Incremental steps soften political fears and build trust; this model may serve as a starting point to increase U.S. Marine Corps presence in Indonesia and the Philippines. Officials from the U.S. Department of State, military advisory groups at the embassies, and host nation representatives would undoubtedly need to approve these detachments, offer guidance, and levy certain caveats on their operations. This is particularly true in a nation like Indonesia where U.S. government efforts proved quite effective in establishing closer ties in recent years.

Indonesia’s political, economic, and military reforms during the past decade give Admiral Locklear an optimistic outlook on U.S.-Indonesia relations.\(^30\) With its proficient military, strategic location, spacious training areas, and relative political stability, Indonesia offers the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps a valuable launching pad in which to secure SLOCs and respond to crises in Southeast Asia. Its military has become a capable, well-seasoned force whose experience in peace-support operations has made it adept at handling complex, civil-military issues. Currently, Indonesian military personnel represent the largest contingent of UN peacekeeping forces from Southeast Asia.\(^31\) Commander of the U.S. Army’s 82d Airborne Division, Major General John W. Nicholson, asserts that Indonesian military’s efforts in these types of op-
erations are “making tremendous contributions to stability around the globe.”

A partnership between the U.S. Marine Corps and the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) offers benefits to both nations; the Indonesians would gain a better understanding of amphibious operations while Marines would gain invaluable training in a jungle environment, as well as learn from Indonesia’s experience in peacekeeping operations.

The Department of Defense took note of Indonesia’s contributions to UN peacekeeping operations over the past few years and paved the way for increasing U.S. funding and participation in exercises. In 2008, the U.S. government furnished the Indonesian military with funds from the Foreign Military Financing Program to assist in building what would become the Indonesian Peace and Security Centre (IPSC). From 2006-2011 the U.S. increased funds to enhance Indonesia’s peacekeeping forces. The Jakarta Post reports that these monetary allocations assisted the IPSC in becoming “Southeast Asia’s largest international training facility for UN peacekeeping forces;” the IPSC plans to build an additional disaster management training center at the site. U.S. financial assistance to the TNI demonstrates the emergence of a stronger partnership. This past September, the U.S. and Indonesia served as the executive agents of a multilateral Counterterrorism Exercise at the IPSC. The exercise included elements of the Kopassus, the Indonesian National Armed Forces Special Forces unit, who observed the training. This marked the first time that the Kopassus attended a multilateral exercise signifying a clear break from the 1999 East Timor conflict. Admiral Locklear suggests that increasing discussions, exchanges, and eventually interoperability exercises with the Kopassus highlights its growing professionalism and potential use in combined operations.

Military exercises and engagements with Indonesia expanded in 2013. In June, the U.S. and Indonesia held a key bilateral exercise called Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange
(DREE) at IPSC, marking the U.S. Army Pacific’s “seventh...Pacific resilience Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange with Indonesia.38 Since 2011, the U.S. and Indonesia have been “designated co-chairs of the Asia Pacific Intelligence Chiefs Conference” and are developing Counterterrorism Exercises with the defense ministers of various ASEAN nations.39 Disaster response exercises and counterterrorism drills serve as non-hostile ways in which to build interoperability. They act as stepping stones to widen U.S.-Indonesian military exercises to other areas such as amphibious operations, maritime patrolling, and combined-arms training. Indonesia’s economy depends on open SLOCs; as such, the TNI maintains an interest in securing its maritime domain and littorals; the U.S. Marine Corps and the TNI must build upon the work that U.S. Army Pacific initiated and construct a partnership that focuses on emerging threats as well as Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) missions.

Continued participation in military exercises and increasing military sales, such as the sale of AH-64E Apache attack helicopters for $500 million, have brought the U.S. and Indonesia closer together as tensions between the PRC and its neighbors continue to rise.40 Increasing tensions are one reason why Indonesia’s defense budget more than tripled since 2009.41 Over the past decade the U.S. and South Korea led the world in foreign military sales to Indonesia with sales totaling $1.07 and $1.5 billion dollars respectively.42 Admiral Locklear affirms that a stronger relationship between the U.S. military and TNI, juxtaposed with increasing trade and diplomatic interactions, will undoubtedly “bolster our engagement with Southeast Asia and the region as a whole.”43

While some analysts argue that Indonesia is better served by increasing ties with Beijing or at least remaining neutral, this approach has certain drawbacks. Jakarta does not want to risk alienating other ASEAN countries or risk future economic growth.44 Furthermore, by foregoing
any alliances, Indonesia risks having its SLOCs threatened by larger powers. Bruce Vaughn, a specialist in Asian affairs at the Congressional Research Service, contends that Indonesia’s military relationship with China over the last decade reflects “a desire to diversify its defense and arms procurement relationships at a time when the United States was sanctioning Indonesia for past human rights abuses...” Now that the U.S. has eliminated the punitive sanctions, increasing military sales and participation in additional training and military engagements has set the stage for a closer partnership that will enhance the stability and prosperity of the region. Indonesia offers attractive opportunities for the U.S. Marine Corps, but so does another nation that has served as a long-standing regional ally.

Increasing the presence of U.S. Marine Corps forces in the Republic of the Philippines (RP) appears more politically viable as China’s activities in the South China Sea fuel Manila’s suspicion of the PRC and strengthens its reliance upon its Mutual Defense Treaty with America. USPACOM continues to view the RP as an indispensable ally. The signing of “Manila Declaration” of 2011 “reaffirmed” the “shared obligations” of the Mutual Defense Treaty which seeks “...a robust, balanced, and responsive security partnership including cooperating to enhance the defense, interdiction, and apprehension capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).” By continuing its defense obligations to the Philippines, the United States, through USPACOM must increase the capabilities of the AFP. For the RP to maintain control of its SLOCs and smaller islands, the AFP, specifically the Philippine Marine Corps, must increase its interoperability with U.S. Marine forces. This requires “increased rotational access” and “more sharing of situational awareness in the maritime domain.”

To expand its presence in the RP, the U.S. Marine Corps can look towards U.S. Special Forces as a model for improving the abilities of the AFP. Since 2002, the U.S. Special Opera-
tions Command has garnered operational success by using small teams to advise the AFP in the Southern Islands in combating extremists; as a result the AFP marginalized terrorist networks throughout the country. The RP perceives its new threat in the form of the PRC’s perceived territorial ambitions. For the foreseeable future, American “security assistance [must be] primarily focused on supporting the AFP maritime domain awareness and maritime security capabilities.” The U.S. Marine Corps has the ability to play an enormous role in enhancing the latter by increasing the “rotational presence” of its forces to various islands in the RP. Although large exercises provide significant training opportunities, small detachments working with dedicated AFP units serve as a way to sustain a presence in the Philippines. These detachments can serve as an advance team to coordinate the arrival of various sized MAGTFs to train or stage for crises response. The nature of these bilateral training events must link future capabilities with future threats; this requires changing the prioritization of exercises from a focus on HA/DR to training that builds upon maritime security and amphibious operations.

Marine Corps forces in the Pacific have extensive experience in training with the AFP through its participation in annual exercises, the largest of which is the annual Balikatan Exercise. Previous exercise scenarios focused upon warfighting operations against both conventional and irregular threats, but the two most recent ones concentrated on HA/DR “at the request of the AFP.” Although HA/DR scenarios have taken center stage, the AFP and USMC planners have not eliminated warfighting skills training from the exercise completely. In 2013, the field training exercise (FTX) portion consisted of 7,000 U.S. and AFP troops in ten different locations focusing on combined arms, patrolling, and close air support training. This type of training is vital considering that the AFP would need these skills to conduct operations on its
smaller islands if the PLA attempted to occupy Philippine territory. It also provides the RP with a degree of credibility when discussing South China Sea claims with its neighbors.

Admiral Locklear argues that a close U.S.-Philippines partnership serves as a source of stability in the region.\textsuperscript{54} Enhancing an already solid partnership with a trusted ally, while strengthening ties with the TNI in Indonesia, enables the U.S. and its allies to peacefully manage the PRC’s rise in the region. Establishing closer trade and military relationships as a means to portray a united front presents a significant dilemma for nations that seek unilateral military action as a way to solidify South China Sea claims. USPACOM realizes the operational potential of these two Southeast Asian countries since “the Philippines and Indonesia were the top beneficiaries of USPACOM Foreign Military Financing aid in FY12.”\textsuperscript{55} Enlarging the rotational presence of the U.S. Marine Corps forces reassures other nations of U.S. resolve in the region, as they continue to remain skeptical over the PRC’s growth.

Increasing amphibious training with these key allies also has the potential to demonstrate U.S. resolve in protecting the status quo in Southeast Asia. As the national leaders of Indonesia and the Philippines find themselves more concerned with external threats instead of internal ones, their respective militaries will look towards the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy to assist with developing capabilities that will aid in securing its SLOCs. Studies conducted by independent entities outside the realm of PACOM and MARFORPAC highlight the importance of increasing the presence of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps forces in Southeast Asia. A 2012 Center for Strategic and International Studies assessment, argues that the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy must “deploy an additional Amphibious Ready Group and enablers (e.g. Landing Craft Air Cushion) to the Pacific theater to provide necessary lift for the distributed MAGTFs...”\textsuperscript{56} As the Japanese Self Defense Force increases its capabilities over the next decade, the use of Unit De-
ployment Program Marines must be expanded "across the region" to correctly posture forces as a means to deter territorial threats and enhance regional engagements.\textsuperscript{57} Transporting Marines throughout Southeast Asia and increasing the capabilities of partner nations with regards to amphibious operations requires funding for additional amphibious ships. The partners that USPACOM seeks in the region want to expand upon their amphibious capabilities and look to the U.S. Marine Corps for this type of training. While some maintain that increasing amphibious shipping is cost-prohibitive, the risk of being edged out of a lucrative trading market and ceding control of the SLOCs to the PRC should compel Congress to fiscally support this build-up of shipping.\textsuperscript{58}

Besides Indonesia and the Philippines, there are other Southeast Asian countries whose strategic location offers operational advantages for the U.S. Marine Corps. However, overcoming significant political hurdles that countries, such as Vietnam and Malaysia, face may prove too daunting a task in the near future. These nations are reluctant to provoke China by overt partnerships with the U.S. While Malaysia derives its cautiousness from the political appeal of non-alignment, Vietnam's wariness comes from its shared border with China in which past regional disagreements with Beijing resulted in the 1979 war. Nevertheless, in September of 2011, Vietnam and the United States "agreed to cooperate in five priority areas: (1) establishment of regular high-level dialogue; (2) maritime security; (3) SAR; (4) studying and exchanging experiences on UN peacekeeping; and (5) HA/DR."\textsuperscript{59} Increasing the number of port calls in Vietnam may give Hanoi a clearer idea as to Beijing's reaction and possible response. Over the next decade, this partnership will move cautiously and slow. While Malaysia has increased the number of annual ship visits over the past decade, leaders in that country would rather wait for the region's geo-strategic situation to further develop before choosing between the U.S. and the PRC.\textsuperscript{60}
IV: CONCLUSION:

Expanding the size and complexity of TSCs remains crucial to the U.S. Marine Corps' future force posture in the Pacific. Nations such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and even Vietnam, respect the U.S. Marine Corps' warfighting capabilities and operational prowess; the U.S. Marine Corps' ability to project force and confront regional challenges serve as a stabilizing agent in the Pacific. While maintaining warfighting skills remains critical, the U.S. Marine Corps' “ability to engage, to build relationships, to gain trust, to enable partners, and to shape the environment” will eventually “support our Nation’s success in Asia.” Assisting key partners in expanding their amphibious operations capabilities through rigorous training exercises offers the U.S. an opportunity to demonstrate its resolve in the region. Investing in additional L-class shipping may serve as a way in which to entice fence-sitting nations to establish closer military ties with the U.S. as a means in which to strengthen their own capabilities and further dissuade the PRC from over-reaching in the region. By gaining launching sites and logistical nodes positioned at various training sites throughout Indonesia and the Philippines, U.S. Marine Corps forces will not only gain increasing interoperability with key allies but also position itself respond to crises in Southeast Asia.
ENDNOTES

2 Ibid.
6 Ibid. American trade has the ability to align another nation’s interest with our own; increasing trade with Southeast Asian nations catapults the importance of securing SLOCs and freedom of navigation issues. Thus, economics has the potential to align Southeast Asian and U.S. strategic interests, to include national security interests.
7 Robert Ackerman, “Budgetary Concerns Dominate Pacific Pivot.” Signal April 2013. 57.
http://www.afcea.org/content/?q=node/10869 In his article in Signal magazine, Robert Ackerman quotes the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and claims that he described the looming financial crisis as a ‘wolf,’ adding that it is becoming ‘increasingly apparent that this wolf is going to catch us.”
8 Ibid.
9 Berteau and Green 20.
10 Moving U.S. Marine Corps forces from South Korea and Japan to Southeast Asia involves certain risks. A breakout of hostilities on the Korean peninsula, as well as the potential for hostilities to occur over the Senkaku islands represent significant threats to the stability of Northeast Asia. The U.S. Marine Corps can project forces onto the Korean Peninsula just as quickly from Southeast Asia as Okinawa and Guam. Furthermore, the Japanese navy is expanding and may have the ability to delay hostile forces until the arrival of additional U.S. maritime and Marine Corps assets.
13 Statement of Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, U.S. Navy Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, Before the House Armed Services Committee on U.S. Pacific Command Posture, 5 March 2013, 16. According to Admiral Locklear, “The posturing and forward presence of our military force is key to USPACOM’s ability to rapidly respond to any crises or disaster.”
14 Ibid, 16.
16 Ibid.
18 Manyin, Daggert, and Dolven, 11.
19 U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific Campaign Plan FY13-20, 16.
20 Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, Theater Security Cooperation Exercises (TSCX) in Marine Corps Forces Pacific, 30 April 2013, 11.
21 Ibid, 12.
23 Edwin O. Rueda, “Engagement in Southeast Asia,” Marine Corps Gazette, (Aug 2012): 60. LtCol Rueda argues that the Marine Corps “should increase the number of high-impact bilateral exercises, civil action programs, commander and staff engagements, training evolutions, and exchange programs in Southeast Asia.” This increase in engagement should emphasize “…activities that increase regional military integration and joint and multinational engagements to augment cooperation among militaries in Southeast Asia.”
24 Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, 16.
25 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid, 49.
30 Ibid.
31 Admiral Locklear asserts, “Indonesia has surfaced as a vibrant democracy, with an emerging economy, and a strengthened USPACOM-Armed Forces of Indonesia (TNI) relationship.”
32 Wyatt Olson, “US-Backed Training Center Fuels Indonesia’s Peacekeeping Transformation.” Stars and Stripes,” July 29, 2013. Commander of the U.S. Army’s 82d Airborne Division, Major General John W. Nicholson states that “Indonesia is one of the most important contributors to peace-support operations around the world.”
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
38 Statement of Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, U.S. Navy Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, Before the House Armed Services Committee on U.S. Pacific Command Posture, 5 March 2013, 25. Admiral Locklear contends that partnership with Indonesia’s Special Forces “will gradually
expand at a pace commensurate with the demonstrated progress in the TNI’s transparency and institutional reform.”


41 Ibid. 72. In 2009, Indonesia allocated $3.4 billion dollars to defense spending and it is predicted that they will spend upwards of $11.5 billion dollars in 2014.

42 Ibid.


46 Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, 19. Admiral Locklear asserts that the U.S. alliance with the Philippines “remains key to our efforts to ensure stability and prosperity of the Western Pacific…”


50 Ibid, 20.

51 Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, 25. The Balikatan Exercise’s main purpose is to “promote U.S. and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) interoperability…”


53 Ibid, 26. Events included “combined arms training, battalion force-on-force, small unit tactics, air operations, close air support and Joint Tactical Air Control training, airborne operations, reconnaissance and small boat training, Counter Improvised Explosive Device…and military police training.”

54 Statement of Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, U.S. Navy Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, Before the House Armed Services Committee on U.S. Pacific Command Posture, 5 March 2013, 20. He claims that the U.S.-Philippine partnership “greatly enhances regional stability and helps the U.S. government guarantee an environment that will help prevent miscalculation, promote regional cooperation, and protect vital Sea Lanes of Communication for all parties.”

Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, 18. MCCLL’s report observes, “The L-class amphibious ship shortfall is especially troubling given that many partner nations have expressed interest in developing amphibious capabilities and that those desires represent a logical, mutually beneficial convergence of partner nation and Marine Corps interests.”

Berteau and Green, 37.

Rueda, 58.
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