



CRS Report for Congress

Guam: U.S. Defense Deployments

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Summary

The U.S. military is building up forces on the U.S. territory of Guam to maintain deterrence and warfighting capabilities for possible responses to crises and disasters, counter-terrorism, and contingencies in support of South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, or elsewhere in Asia. At the same time, U.S. policies seek a peaceful resolution of the crisis over North Korea's nuclear weapons programs and cooperative ties with China and other countries. Guam's role has increased with plans to withdraw some U.S. forces from Japan and South Korea. The purpose of this CRS Report is to discuss developments and issues in Guam's defense build-up in terms of policy considerations, rather than budgetary issues. This CRS Report will not be updated.

Strategic Significance of Guam

Guam is a U.S. territory long considered to be strategically significant to U.S. defense deployments in the Western Pacific. In the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii is about 2,400 miles west of California, and Guam is about 3,800 miles further west of Hawaii. Guam has two important U.S. military bases: Apra Naval Base and Andersen Air Force Base. The island, three times the size of Washington, DC, is home to about 171,000 residents. As the Defense Department has faced increased tensions on the Korean peninsula and requirements to fight the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Pacific Command (PACOM), since 2000, has built up air and naval forces on Guam to maintain U.S. deterrence and warfighting capabilities against possible threats in Asia. Concerns include crisis response, counter-terrorism, and contingencies in possible support of South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, or elsewhere. Still, U.S. policies seek a peaceful resolution of the crisis over North Korea's nuclear weapons programs and cooperation with China and others. Guam's role has risen as some U.S. forces withdraw from South Korea and Japan.

U.S. Force Relocations from the U.S. Mainland

In 2000, the press reported that the Air Force wanted to base elements of an Air Expeditionary Force in Guam and had sent B-2 stealth bombers to Guam to broaden the range of U.S. options for possible contingencies involving North Korea. As PACOM's

Commander, Admiral Dennis Blair acquired approval to forward deploy air-launched cruise missiles on Guam for the first time in August 2000. The Air Force moved precision munitions to be stockpiled on Guam, including Joint Direct Attack Munitions and Joint Standoff Weapons.¹

In early 2001, the Navy announced that it would station up to three nuclear attack submarines at Guam, in order to shorten the transit time compared to traveling from homeports in Hawaii or California to the western Pacific and to shorten deployments for sailors. The first sub to be based in Guam arrived in October 2002.²

In 2002, the Commander of Pacific Air Forces publicly detailed his request for basing aircraft in Guam. In addition to munition stockpiles and jet fuel, he reportedly requested F-22 stealth fighters, 767 tankers, C-17 transports, bombers, and Global Hawk reconnaissance drones.³ In March 2003, after a new Air Expeditionary Wing was activated at Guam's Andersen Air Force Base, B-1 and B-52 bombers deployed temporarily on a rotational basis from air bases in Texas and Louisiana as U.S. forces prepared for war against Iraq.⁴ Beyond rotation of aircraft, the Air Force began continuous deployment of aircraft into Guam. As part of this build-up, the first B-52 bombers (stationed out of Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota) to deploy to Andersen arrived in February 2004.⁵ In April 2005, Commander of Pacific Air Forces, General Paul Hester, said that B-2 bombers started to fly out of Andersen, and he hoped to permanently deploy a Global Hawk squadron there by 2010.⁶ In April 2005, F-15 fighters temporarily deployed to Andersen from Idaho.⁷ An Air Force official said in 2006 that the Air Force plans to station KC-135 tankers on Guam.⁸

Since 2004, there has been a debate about whether to homeport an aircraft carrier at Guam, Hawaii, or the U.S. west coast at Puget Sound or San Diego. The Secretary of Defense's Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) issued in February 2006 specified the

¹ Thomas Ricks, "For Pentagon, Asia Moving to Forefront," *Washington Post*, May 26, 2000; Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough, "Inside the Ring," *Washington Times*, August 25, 2000; Robert Burns, "Air Force Plan Could Place Bombers Closer to Targets," *Seattle Times*, November 30, 2000.

² Christian Bohmfalk, "Navy Decides to Homeport Up to Three Attack Submarines in Guam," *Inside the Navy*, January 29, 2001; Nathan Hodge, "Navy Basing Subs in Guam," *Defense Week*, October 1, 2002.

³ Jim Wolf, "U.S. General Urges Warplanes Be Sent to Guam," *Reuters*, August 23, 2002.

⁴ PACOM, "B-1Bs, B-52Hs Arrive in Guam," March 6, 2003; Robert Burns, "Air Force Wants to Put Fighters and Bombers Back on Guam in Pacific," *AP*, January 13, 2004; Michael Sirak, "U.S. Considers Bomber Presence on Guam," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, January 21, 2004.

⁵ PACOM, "Bomber Deployment to Guam," February 2, 2004; "Bombers Arrive At Andersen," *AFN*; and Katie Worth, "B-52 Bombers Arrive," *Pacific Daily News*, February 23, 2004.

⁶ Martin Matishak, "Hester: Air Force to Bolster Presence in Asia-Pacific Region," *Inside the Air Force*, April 29, 2005.

⁷ Natalie Quinata, "Fighter Squadron Arrives on Guam," *Pacific Daily News*, April 30, 2005.

⁸ Gregg Kakesako, "U.S. Military to Beef Up Its Presence on Guam," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, June 21, 2006.

target of basing six carriers and 60% of submarines in the Pacific. As the Commander of PACOM, Admiral William Fallon, testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee at a hearing in March 2006, PACOM is studying “forward basing” on Guam, and the Navy will increase the number of aircraft carriers based in the Pacific from five to six.⁹

U.S. Force Relocations from Japan

In May 2006, the United States and Japan signed a detailed “roadmap” agreement to broaden military cooperation, mostly dealing with changes and additions to U.S. forces in Japan. It provides for the relocation of the headquarters of the III Marine Expeditionary Force and 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam by 2014. Approximately 7,000 Marines will remain on Okinawa. The cost of the relocation is estimated at \$10.27 billion. Of this amount, Japan has pledged to contribute \$6.09 billion, including direct financing of facilities and infrastructure on Guam.¹⁰

U.S. Force Relocations from South Korea

The Pentagon plans to restructure U.S. forces in South Korea by reducing troop strength from 37,000 to 25,000 by September 2008. No decisions have been announced regarding further withdrawals after September 2008, but U.S. officials have indicated that further withdrawals of Army forces are likely. The Pentagon indicates that the primary reason for these troop withdrawals is to cope with the strain on Army and Marine Corps manpower needed for the active theaters of Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the two combat brigades of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division in South Korea deployed to Iraq in 2004.¹¹

Concerns and Issues for Congress

Rationales. One rationale for the military build-up on Guam is its status as a U.S. territory. Thus, the United States is not required to negotiate with sovereign countries on force deployments or face the risks of losing bases or access. As Commander of Pacific Air Forces, General William Begert reportedly pointed out in April 2004, “Guam, first of all, is U.S. territory. I don’t need overflight rights. I don’t need landing rights. I always have permission to go to Guam. It might as well be California or New Jersey.” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld visited Guam in November 2003 and indicated an interest in building up Guam as he considered a new round of base closings.¹² In contrast, the United States had to close Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines in 1992, and countries like South Korea could restrict the use of U.S. forces

⁹ Senate Armed Services Committee, Defense Department’s FY 2007 Budget, March 7, 2006.

¹⁰ Linda Sieg, “U.S.-Japan Security Overhaul Gives Tokyo Bigger Role,” *Reuters News*, May 16, 2006; Karl Eiselberg, “Finalized U.S.-Japan Defense Accord Masks Some Deeper Concerns in Security Alliance,” *Daily Report*, May 5, 2006.

¹¹ “U.S. officials Raise Possibility of Further Troop Cut in S. Korea,” *Yonhap News Agency*, March 10, 2006; Bill Gertz, “S. Korea to Get War Control Over U.S. Troops in 3 Years,” *Washington Times*, August 4, 2006; Richard Halloran, “U.S. Turning Out Lights in S. Korea,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, July 30, 2006.

¹² James Brooke, “Looking for Friendly Overseas Base, Pentagon Finds it Already Has One,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2004.

based there. U.S. forces based in Guam also do not have to contend with political sensitivities over nuclear powered vessels. Moreover, some countries, including allies, have raised questions about their support for U.S. forces in a possible conflict between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC). For example, while in Beijing in August 2004, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer reportedly expressed doubts about whether any U.S. military help for Taiwan's defense against China would involve invoking Australia's defense treaty with the United States.¹³

Another rationale is the expansion of options that Guam offers to the evolving U.S. force structure. Admiral Fallon expressed his vision for Guam as a staging area from which ships, aircraft, and troops can "surge" to the Asian theater. He stressed "flexibility," saying "we need to have forces ready to react," and we must have built-in flexibility" to meet emergencies (including disaster relief).¹⁴ In 2004, the Navy held "Summer Pulse 04," its first exercise of a plan to increase readiness to "surge" operations in response to a crisis or emergency. The Navy simultaneously deployed seven carrier strike groups in five theaters around the world. In June 2006, PACOM held the "Valiant Shield" exercise that brought three aircraft carriers to waters off Guam.

A third rationale is the need to counter what commanders call the "tyranny of distance." PACOM, headquartered in Honolulu, has an area of responsibility that encompasses almost 60% of the world's population, over 50% of the earth's surface, the Pacific and Indian Oceans, 16 time zones, and five of seven U.S. defense treaties. U.S. forces on Guam are much closer to East Asia, where the United States has alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines. The United States also has concerns in Asia about threats to peace and stability in the Korean peninsula, East China Sea, South China Sea, and Taiwan Strait; terrorist threats in Southeast Asia; humanitarian crises; and security for sea lines of communication (SLOCs), particularly through the Straits of Malacca. For example, the Korean peninsula is about 2,000 miles from Guam but about 4,500 miles from Honolulu. Table 1 compares sailing distances and time from Guam, Honolulu, Seattle, and San Diego to the Philippines, an ally where the U.S. military closed bases in 1992 but subsequently has strengthened defense cooperation.

Table 1. Illustrative Sailing Distances and Time

To Manila, from:	statute miles	days at 20 knots	days at 30 knots
Guam	1,724	3.1	2.1
Honolulu	5,482	9.9	6.6
Seattle	6,853	12.4	8.3
San Diego	7,595	13.8	9.2

Notes: Sailing distances in statute miles were calculated using nautical miles reported by "Distances Between Ports," 2001, published by the National Imagery and Mapping Agency. Also, 1 nautical mile equals 1.15 statute miles, and 1 knot equals 1.15 mph.

¹³ Catherine Armitage, "Downer Assures China on Taiwan," *The Australian*, August 18, 2004.

¹⁴ Richard Halloran, "Guam Seen as Pivotal U.S. Base," *Washington Times*, March 11, 2006.

Concerns. As U.S. forces relocate to Guam, the state of its infrastructure has been of concern to some policymakers. Also, Guam's political leaders have expressed concerns about the impact of additional deployments on its infrastructure, including utilities, roads, and water supplies. Guam's location in the Western Pacific also requires construction of protection for U.S. forces and assets against typhoons. In July 2006, the Senate Appropriations Committee issued a report (S.Rept. 109-286) on the Military Construction and Veteran Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R. 5385), which expressed concerns about a construction program on Guam estimated to cost \$10.3 billion (with Japan paying approximately 60%) and expectations of a Guam master plan from the Defense Secretary. In the fall of 2006, PACOM officials briefed Guam on some aspects of an undisclosed plan for military expansion, the Integrated Military Development Plan.¹⁵ Guam's remoteness and conditions raise more questions about hosting military families, training with other units in Hawaii or the west coast, and costs for extended logistical support.

Guam's higher military profile could increase its potential as an American target for terrorists and adversaries during a possible conflict. China has a variety of ballistic missiles that could target Guam. North Korea reportedly has developed a new intermediate range ballistic missile (Taepodong-X) that could reach Guam. Any such vulnerabilities could raise requirements for both counter-terrorism measures and missile defense. Also, some say that Guam is still too distant from flash points in the Asia and advocate closer cooperation with countries such as Singapore, Australia, the Philippines, and Japan.¹⁶ Singapore, for one, has sought stronger security ties with the United States, hosting U.S. naval ships that visit Changi Naval Base since 2001 and signing a bilateral Strategic Framework Agreement in 2005. However, Singapore is limited in size, whereas Australia has more land. Building up the U.S. presence in such countries could enhance partnerships, deterrence, and interoperability, and reduce costs for the United States.

Alliances. The Guam Integrated Military Development Plan, parts of which were reported in October 2006, indicates that U.S. Army units withdrawn from South Korea are not likely to be stationed on Guam.¹⁷ The Pentagon's restructuring plan reportedly intends to maintain U.S. air power in South Korea, particularly the three squadrons of F-16 fighters based at Osan Air Base. If most U.S. ground forces are withdrawn after September 2008, U.S. troop strength in South Korea would fall to around 10,000, based on Air Force units, including three F-16 squadrons. The Pentagon's apparent plan to retain U.S. air power in South Korea could face a challenge if South Korea puts into place a doctrine set forth by President Roh Moo-hyun in March 2005 that South Korea has the right to veto U.S. deployment of its forces in South Korea to any other conflict in Northeast Asia. Roh clearly had in mind possible scenarios involving the United States and China. Pentagon officials have stated that they seek maximum "strategic flexibility" in South Korea in order to deploy U.S. forces to other theaters. Thus, a serious threat of a South Korean veto conceivably could cause the Pentagon to reconsider keeping U.S. Air Force strength at present levels and possibly to withdraw Air Force combat units. If this were to happen, Guam and Okinawa likely would be relocation or rotational sites for these

¹⁵ *Pacific Daily News*, September 13, 2006; *Stars and Stripes*, September 17, 2006.

¹⁶ Thomas Donnelly, "Rebasing, Revisited," American Enterprise Institute, December 2004.

¹⁷ Murayama Kohei, "U.S. to Triple Troops in Guam, but No Earlier Than 2010 for Marines," *Kyodo News*, October 3, 2006.

units. The greater emphasis on U.S. offshore forces in South Korean security conceivably could affect decisions regarding the mix of U.S. forces based on Guam and rotated into Guam from other bases. This might especially be true of heavy bombers, which the Air Force rotates into Guam from bases in the United States. Concerns about maintaining deterrence after U.S. withdrawal of ground forces might lead PACOM to increase exercises of heavy bombers and/or aircraft carrier strike groups near Korea.¹⁸

Under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, U.S. concerns involve possible conflict between China and Japan over their competing claims to the Senkaku islands (called Diaoyu islands by China) in the East China Sea. The United States administered the islands after World War II and turned them over to Japanese administration in 1972. Clinton and Bush Administration officials have stated that the Senkakus fall under the scope of the U.S.-Japan alliance.¹⁹ In September 2005, the PLA Navy deployed five naval ships to the disputed area in the East China Sea with competing territorial and oil claims.

China. Commentators commonly assert that the U.S. defense build-up on Guam partly has been directed against the PRC, which has threatened to use the People's Liberation Army (PLA) against Taiwan. U.S. policy on helping Taiwan's self-defense is governed not by a defense treaty but by the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), P.L. 96-8. Some concerns about the PLA's accelerated modernization since the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995-1996 also have expanded beyond a focus on Taiwan to include PLA preparations for possible conflicts with the United States and Japan. In Southeast Asia, despite reduced tensions since the mid-1990s, China claims much of the South China Sea as well as the disputed Spratly and Paracel Islands in that sea as its "sovereign territory."

Still, a policy challenge has been to deter any aggression by China as well as to assure it that the U.S. goal is closer cooperation with this rising power as a "responsible stakeholder." In official media reports and discussions, some in China have expressed suspicions that Guam's build-up is aimed at China. The PLA has increased its attention to Guam, including sending a Han-class nuclear attack submarine to waters off Guam in late 2004.²⁰ Nevertheless, General Hester, Commander of Pacific Air Forces, said in May 2005 that the PLA's modernization gave him "pause for interest" but did not make a difference in significant force redeployment.²¹ Also, in 2006, Guam became a focal point for improving military-to-military relations with China, a policy area of concern to Congress. In an effort to blunt charges that Guam's build-up targets China, PACOM's Admiral Fallon invited PLA observers to the U.S. "Valiant Shield" exercise that brought three aircraft carriers to waters off Guam in June 2006. The PLA Navy sent a Deputy Chief of Staff and specialist in submarine operations to lead the observers, who also boarded a U.S. aircraft carrier and visited Guam's air and naval bases.²²

¹⁸ Bill Gertz, "More Muscle, With Eye on China," *Washington Times*, April 20, 2006; Robert Burns, "U.S. Air Power in East Asia Has Grown," *Associated Press*, October 11, 2006.

¹⁹ "U.S.-Japan Treaty Covers Disputed Isles," *Reuters*, November 28, 1996; and Yoichi Funabashi, "Maintain the Armitage Doctrine Quietly," *Asahi Shimbun*, February 2, 2004.

²⁰ *Kyodo World Service*, November 16, 2004.

²¹ Interview with *Inside the Air Force*, May 6, 2005.

²² *Xinhua [New China News Agency]*, June 23, 2006.