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China's Naval Modernization and Its Implications for Moscow and Washington [redacted]

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An Intelligence Assessment

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China's Naval Modernization and Its Implications for Moscow and Washington [redacted]

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted] Office of East Asian Analysis, with a contribution from [redacted] Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, China Division, OEA, [redacted]

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China's Naval Modernization and Its Implications for Moscow and Washington

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Key Judgments

Information available as of 15 March 1986 was used in this report.

The Chinese Navy is adopting a strategy—first enunciated in 1983—of a more forward or "active" defense for China's 14,500-kilometer coastline. Whereas China's outer perimeter of naval defense traditionally reached only 500 kilometers from the coast, we believe that Beijing now envisions a defense that begins with submarines and long-range bombers some 900 kilometers from the Chinese landmass. Chinese Navy planners hope to extend this perimeter and speak of a Navy that, by the 1990s, would be capable of routine operations 2,000 kilometers off the coast.

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This new strategy, which allows greater depth to inflict losses, rests on new weapons, more aggressive patrolling by Chinese submarines, and an increased emphasis on professional training. Beijing is close to deploying two new antiship missiles—an Exocet-like, solid-propellant missile and an 80- to 100-kilometer-range, liquid-propellant, air-to-surface missile—that will allow Chinese crews to launch missiles at extended ranges. In addition, the Chinese are buying Italian deep-diving torpedoes, building new frigates, and refitting older destroyers for antisubmarine warfare (ASW) operations.

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Although the Chinese have made significant progress in obtaining new weapons for the Navy, Beijing lacks the advanced weapons to ensure a credible deterrent to Soviet naval attack. Serious deficiencies in antisubmarine warfare, air defense, and early warning are apparent:

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China's deficiencies in weapons development could translate into some new opportunities for the United States to build on the nascent US-PRC defense relationship.

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But any movement in this area is likely to stop short of strategic cooperation or close military coordination. In general, Beijing is still reluctant to take overt steps that would undercut its claim of pursuing an independent foreign policy or that would further complicate its relations with Moscow. And, in our view, the Chinese leadership remains divided over how far to go in forging direct military links to the United States.

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Beijing seeks technology rather than finished weapons and is often dismayed by the high costs—even with coproduction arrangements—and technological limits set by Washington on arms transfers. Beijing, therefore, will seek to exploit the rift between the United States and other Western nations on arms sales to China by luring the Governments of Israel, Britain, Italy, and France.

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China's severely limited defense budget will continue to be the paramount constraint on the pace of weapons acquisitions from the West and overall naval modernization. With economic modernization continuing to take precedence, China's armed services compete vigorously for shares of a relatively small military procurement budget. Navy Commander Liu apparently has fought successfully for some new weapons production for the Navy, but the equally pressing needs for modernization of ground and air forces are likely to keep naval imports restricted to a very few key areas for many years.

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Although Beijing's more aggressive naval strategy is primarily defensive, the weapons under development will improve China's ability to project power against the weaker nations on its periphery. Taiwan will feel especially threatened—particularly as Beijing's capability to successfully blockade the island improves—and Taipei will seek additional US assistance to restore the naval balance. Concern among other non-Communist states in East Asia is also certain to grow; both Indonesia and Malaysia are wary of Beijing's growing regional strength, and Japan already has expressed reservations in COCOM to the transfer of advanced naval systems—including US torpedoes—to China. They are certain to voice their concern to Washington and to seek assurances on how much the United States is willing to help China. In the case of Vietnam, Hanoi may press the Soviet Union for more advanced warships, which Moscow probably will attempt to parlay into greater access to Cam Ranh Bay.

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Although naval modernization somewhat improves Beijing's power projection options, China is in no position seriously to threaten US interests in the Pacific. Beijing appears to have no plans to build the large warships needed for distant power projection, and China's naval training is wholly defensive.

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Beijing has few illusions about 25X1
building a "blue water" navy and, although the Chinese Navy hopes to extend the range of its naval operations, its mission remains largely defensive.

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China: The Drive To Modernize Its Armed Forces

The upgrading of China's conventional armed forces continues to be an important objective for Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. First enunciated in 1975, military modernization was slow until Deng's accession to the chairmanship of the Central Military Commission in 1980. In 1981 Deng and his supporters instituted a new defense strategy for China's industrial northeast that relies heavily on a modernized army with greater firepower and mobility.[1] Since then, the Military Commission has trimmed the size of the armed forces, dramatically improved military education and training, increased funding for weapons development, and improved the quality of weapons. Last year, for example, Beijing undertook sweeping changes to the standing military when the Military Commission announced a two-year program of troop cuts to trim the armed forces by about 1 million men.

China's desire to modernize its military is spurred by the impressive buildup of Soviet power in the Far East. Before 1964, 13 Soviet ground-combat divisions with some 2,500 tanks and armored vehicles were deployed on China's border. Today, there are 49 active ground-combat divisions and over 30,000 tanks and armored vehicles there. As a result, China's ground forces had first priority for modern weapons and equipment. Over the past few years, Beijing has fielded new types of tanks, armored vehicles, self-propelled artillery, antitank missiles, and air defense weapon systems to improve its Army's chances against better equipped Soviet forces.

The growth of Soviet naval forces in the Far East is also compelling Beijing to modernize its 1,300-ship Navy (see inset). High-ranking Chinese officials have publicly called for speeding up the modernization of the Navy to protect China's maritime interests, and Liu Huaqing, commander of the Chinese Navy and a key architect of China's naval modernization, has on several occasions described the building of a modern Navy as an urgent and strategic task in China's national defense construction. In January, Liu stated that the most important task in the Navy's modernization is the production and deployment of new, more sophisticated weapon systems. Despite limited funding, these and other statements by Chinese political leaders suggest that Beijing is ready to provide resources for equipping the Navy with advanced hardware and for training a new generation of officers.

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Beijing Feels the Heat

Beijing rarely voices its concern over Moscow's expansion of Pacific power, but is candid in closed-door discussions. While publicly claiming that the Soviet naval buildup is directed mainly against the United States and its allies in the Pacific, high-ranking Chinese officers have privately conceded that the buildup poses a grave threat to China. According to the told US Navy Secretary Lehman last August that Vietnamese forces regularly exercise with the Soviet Navy, and that China views this collaboration as threatening to its sea lines of communication. Xu Xin, a deputy chief of general staff, expressed similar concerns to high-level US officials last November over the buildup in the Pacific Fleet and, in particular, the growth of Soviet air and naval forces at Cam Ranh Bay.

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Moscow's warming relations with North Korea are also adding to China's perception of growing Soviet power in the region. Beijing International Institute of Strategic Studies (BIISS) officials complained to US visitors last fall about Soviet intelligence collection flights over North Korea and admitted that Beijing had scrambled fighters in reaction to the Soviet

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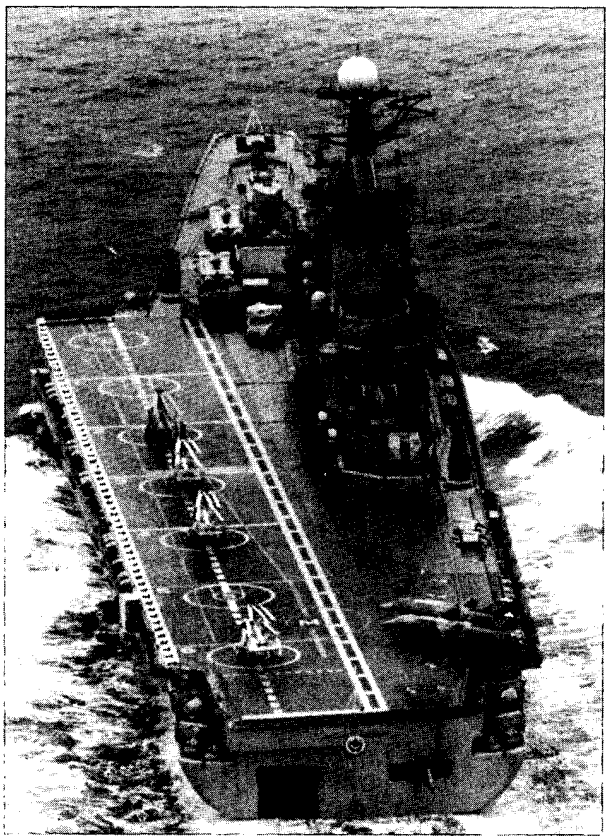

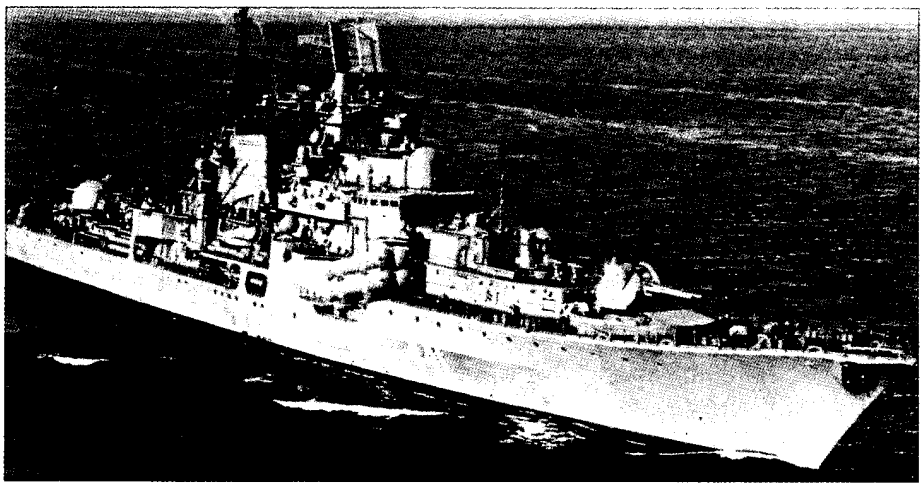

Figure 2. *The 37,000-metric-ton Kiev-class aircraft carrier (top left) can carry 32 aircraft and helicopters. It is also equipped with 16 SS-N-12 surface-to-surface missiles that have a maximum range of 550 kilometers (km), and carries over 100 surface-to-air missiles with ranges out to 40 km.*

The 28,000-metric-ton Kirov-class nuclear-powered cruiser Frunze (top right) carries over 250 surface-to-air missiles, including the 140-km-range SA-N-6. The ship is also armed with 20 SS-N-19 surface-to-surface missiles that can strike targets as far away as 550 km.

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The Sovremenny-class destroyer (bottom) carries the 130-km-range SS-N-22 surface-to-surface missile and the 40-km-range SA-N-7 surface-to-air missile.

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The Growth of the Soviet Pacific Fleet

Since 1979, Moscow has added over 25 submarines and principal surface combatants to the Pacific Fleet, including some of its newest, most powerful ships:

- *The Soviets have augmented the Pacific Fleet's aging November-class nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) with 11 new V-III-class SSNs.*
- *The Pacific Fleet has two Kiev-class VTOL aircraft carriers and was given its first Kirov-class cruiser and Sovremennyy- and Udaloy-class guided-missile destroyers in 1985.*
- *The Soviets have upgraded the Pacific Fleet's naval aviation in the last five years with two Backfire bomber regiments, an SU-17 Fitter fighter-bomber regiment, and increasing numbers of antisubmarine warfare helicopters.* [redacted]

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[redacted] *Soviet naval forces at Cam Ranh include three to four submarines, two missile-equipped combatants, four small ASW ships, and two coastal minesweepers that form the core of a permanently deployed squadron. The Soviets also have a composite air regiment at Cam Ranh, composed of four to eight Bear ASW and reconnaissance aircraft, 16 Badger bombers, and 14 MIG-23 air defense fighters. The missile-equipped combatants and MIG-23 fighter aircraft were added in the last two years and have considerably strengthened Soviet defenses there.*

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[redacted] *suggesting the deployment of additional ships and aircraft.* [redacted]

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aircraft. Moreover, had lodged a formal complaint with Pyongyang, calling the Soviet overflights a threat to China's security.

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A Japanese source told US military officials last year that China plans to use a combination of destroyers, aircraft, and submarines to monitor the movements of Soviet warships.

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The Navy Adopts "Active Defense"

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the Chinese press announced last December that a three-year program of building up China's border and coastal defense facilities had been completed.

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Beginning in began to refer to a more extended defense or "active defense" as the Navy's new strategy. In the words of one Navy staff officer, "The Navy's strategy is still one of coastal defense, although we have moved some of our operations farther out to sea, extending our defensive perimeter." that, to accomplish this strategy, the Navy believed it needed to be capable of operating 1,850 km offshore. Active defense, as defined by another officer, "shortens the distance to battle," indicating that in a conflict the Chinese Navy wants to engage enemy warships at greater distances from shore than previously planned.

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The new strategy of active defense has, in our judgment, already extended the defensive perimeter another 370 km from the Chinese coastline. Although the lack of effective air defenses still restricts China's destroyers and frigates to operating within the range

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of land-based airpower, Chinese submarines are patrolling more aggressively, farther from home. They are operating about 900 km offshore near the critical choke points leading into the East and South China Seas. This suggests that they will try to blunt a Soviet naval attack at such points.

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Beijing has not conducted similarly large exercises since 1983 probably because of budgetary constraints. Nevertheless, the Chinese Navy has stressed the integration of aircraft and submarines with surface ships in nearly 40 exercise scenarios.

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More Realistic Training

To implement this more forward-looking defense strategy, Beijing has embarked on an impressive reform of its training procedures and organization. Naval schools and academies closed during the 12 years of the Cultural Revolution (1965-76) have reopened; younger, better educated officers are being selected to captain the Navy's warships; and the Chinese Navy is training in large-scale, complex exercises. The progress in naval training was summed up in the official Chinese media in January: "The good situation of naval fleet training in 1985 was rare in previous years. In particular, the Navy attached importance to long cruise and redeployment training, intensified combined tactical exercises, and further enhanced the combat effectiveness of naval fleets."

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Before 1982, the Chinese Navy had little experience in large exercises featuring air, surface, and subsurface units in opposing forces scenarios. For the first time, in the spring of 1982, and again in both the spring and fall of 1983, Beijing conducted large, multiforce exercises in the North Sea Fleet:

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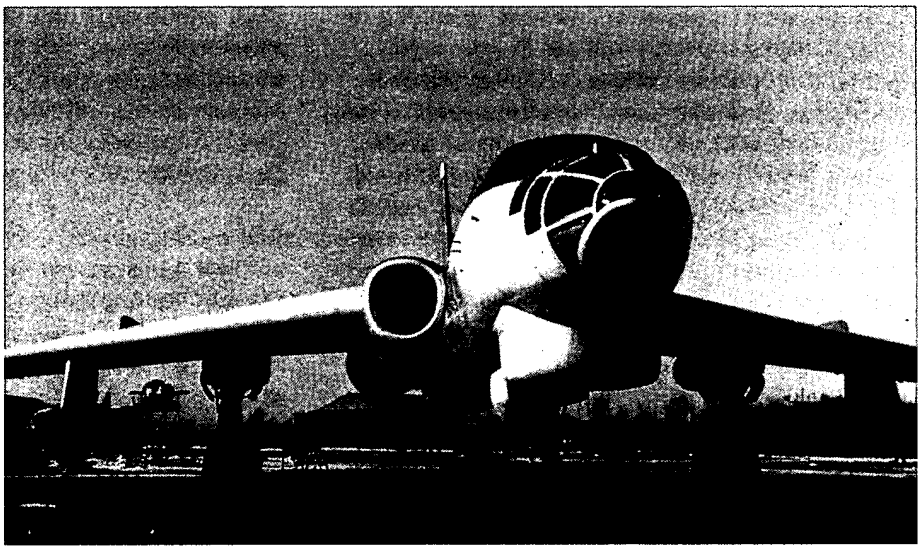

Figure 4. A Chinese B-6 bomber armed with two air-to-surface missiles

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- China conducted its first foreign port calls and deployment to the Indian Ocean in 1985. A Navy destroyer and oiler left Chinese coastal waters on 17 November and entered the Indian Ocean on the 29th. Port calls occurred in Sri Lanka (8-13 December), Pakistan (18-23 December), and Bangladesh (26-30 December).

These voyages give young Chinese naval officers considerable at-sea experience and allow Beijing to use its naval forces to show the flag to the Soviets and the rest of the world. We believe that the value of these voyages for naval training and as a diplomatic tool will persuade Beijing to increase the frequency of such long-distance cruises.

New Weapons and Equipment: The Key to the New Strategy

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Beijing is developing advanced weapons that will considerably strengthen the Navy's ability to implement the strategy of active defense.

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China has produced four of the ASM-capable bombers. We believe that each B-6D is capable of carrying two ASMs.

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This antiship ASM will give China's naval aviators their first standoff weapon against ships. Exploiting the B-6 bomber's long range and speed, the Chinese

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ASM provides naval aircraft with the capability to strike at enemy warships well out to sea—a key requirement of active defense.

China is also fielding a new antiship missile for its warships. Under development since 1978, the solid-propellant CSS-NX-4 is similar to the French Exocet and, according to information obtained by the has a range of about 50 km. US defense attache reporting indicates that the antiship missile's use will be widespread and the missile could be operational as early as next year:

- China launched its first major surface combatant equipped with the CSS-NX-4. The warship, a 1,700-metric-ton Jianghu frigate, carries eight of the new antiship missiles. More of these modified frigates are likely to be built.

- In January, the will soon begin building Osa-class guided-missile patrol boats equipped with the Exocet-like missile. Larger than the Hoku, now used as the platform for testing the missile, Osas can carry eight CSS-NX-4 missiles.

With the Exocet-like missile, China's R-class submarines, which provide the outer perimeter of China's naval defense zones, become even more effective. They are Beijing's only credible naval defense against enemy task forces with standoff strike capability, and, by acquiring its own standoff capability, China's submarine fleet will be able to strike surface targets from 50 km away, instead of the 4 to 8 km required for a torpedo attack.

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The middle and inner rings of China's defense zones also will be reinforced by the CSS-NX-4. Beijing is likely to replace many of the outdated liquid-propellant Styx missiles [4]—China's main shipborne surface-to-surface missile—on Chinese destroyers, frigates, and missile patrol boats with the CSS-NX-4 because of its substantial advantages:

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- The CSS-NX-4's sea-skimming abilities and its small size make it far more difficult to detect on approach and destroy.

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- The greater safety of the CSS-NX-4's solid-propellant fuel raises the readiness level of ships that could fuel their Styx missiles only just before combat. The CSS-NX-4 may also allow reloading of launchers at sea.

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- The CSS-NX-4's size—roughly half that of the Styx—allows Beijing to double the number of missile launchers aboard each warship.

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In our judgment, the flexibility and versatility of the CSS-NX-4 will lead Beijing quickly to adapt the missile for air delivery. China's first air-launched ASM is based on the large, heavy Styx missile and is not suitable for lightweight fighters. With its smaller size and weight, the CSS-NX-4 not only will allow B-6 bombers to carry more missiles and attack multiple targets on a single mission, but it can also be mounted on smaller aircraft, such as China's A-5 ground attack fighter

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[4] The Chinese probably will retain the Styx missile—with its longer range and greater destructive power—for land-based coastal defense and possibly as a second missile system aboard larger surface combatants.

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Antisubmarine Warfare Systems

Beijing is also seeking to improve its antisubmarine warfare (ASW) capability.

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The Chinese Navy lacks a credible airborne ASW capability, however, and the ASW weapons and sensors on its current warships are inadequate to detect, track, and defeat modern, deep-diving Soviet submarines. For the past several years, acquiring ASW hardware has been a major priority:

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- China had launched its first major combatant equipped with a helicopter deck. According to the the Jianghu frigate probably will carry the French Dauphin helicopter and Western electronic equipment for ASW missions.

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Air Defense Weapon Systems: A Major Weakness

Despite progress in other areas, China has done little to improve its air defense weapons over the past few years. Chinese warships still possess no surface-to-air missiles, and Beijing's indigenous SAM program—under development since the mid-1970s—appears to be a failure. The Chinese Navy, however, is working to overcome some of its air defense weakness by the addition of radar-controlled, rapid-fire guns on its warships:

- In 1983, China fielded a copy of a Soviet-designed 30-mm rapid-fire antiaircraft gun on an Osa-class patrol boat. The gun is capable of firing up to 1,000 rounds per minute and is controlled by a new, indigenously designed fire-control radar. Although the Chinese have encountered difficulties in mating the gun to the radar, at least 13 Osas have been fitted with the new gun. 25X1
  modified Jianghu frigates also will carry four of the 30-mm guns. 25X1
- China's new frigates also will be equipped with a rapid-fire 100-mm gun based on French technology. China bought two 100-mm Compact rapid-fire guns from France in 1983 and may have adapted aspects of the French gun for a Chinese 100-mm gun already under development. 25X1
  suggests that Beijing has been testing a 100-mm gun at a munitions test center in northern China.

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The New Dependence on Western Technology

Beijing's progress in naval modernization depends heavily on access to Western technology. In the past, this was accomplished mainly through the illegal diversion of Western technology to China—as is probably the case in Beijing's acquisition of a French Exocet from Pakistan to reverse-engineer the CSS-NX-4. More recently, the purchase of Western naval technology from foreign companies and governments has played a key role in China's naval modernization. Since 1983, China has accelerated its purchases of naval-related weapons and technology from the West, buying an estimated $284 million worth of equipment Moreover, as Beijing strives to overcome deficiencies in key mission areas such as antisubmarine warfare and air defense, we believe its purchases of foreign technology will increase substantially.

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The Push for US Technology

Diplomatic and views Washington as the best source of technology for its naval modernization. In technical discussions with the US Navy over the past two years, the Chinese have focused primarily on ASW technologies: the Mk 46 Mod 2 ASW torpedo, the Raytheon DE-1167 sonar, and the Lamps Mk-1 ASW helicopter. Beijing has also expressed interest in US air defense weapon systems such as the Phalanx rapid-fire gun and the Standard shipborne surface-to-air missile systems, and is negotiating for US assistance in ship design and systems integration for future-generation naval vessels. Thus far, however, the sale of only a limited number of Mk 46 torpedoes is pending, and discussions with the Chinese for coproduction of the Mk 46 have stumbled over what Beijing perceives to be the inordinately high cost of the agreement ($500 million).

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Future Systems

Beijing's naval modernization thus far consists mainly of mating weapons or equipment onto existing naval platforms. In our judgment, Beijing will use the experience gained by this method in the design and

Major Naval Imports From the West, 1983-85

	Cost (*million US $*)	Equipment
1983		
Total	**16.8**	
France	1.9	Two Fenelon submarine sonars
	12.1	Two 100-mm rapid-fire naval guns
United States	2.8	Ten shipborne chaff launchers
1984		
Total	**23.5**	
France	4.0	Two HS-12 helicopter dipping sonars
	0.4	Integrated shipborne communications system
Italy	7.5	Two shipborne electronic warfare systems
United Kingdom	0.2	Two naval radars and tactical displays
	9.4	Five integrated communications systems
	2.0	Antenna for use with communications systems
1985		
Total	**247.2**	
France	4.2	Maintenance equipment for 100-mm guns
	16.3	ASW equipment for three helicopters
United States	200.0	Five LM-2500 gas turbine engines
Italy	19.7	Forty A244S ASW torpedoes
United Kingdom	2.6	Naval mines
	0.9	Message-handling system
	3.5	Target system

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construction of entirely new classes of warships, and plans for several new classes of ships are going forward:

- *A New Destroyer.* plans to build a new 4,200-metric-ton destroyer. Last July, signed a contract with General Electric for five gas turbine engines for the new destroyer.

- *A New Submarine.* The Chinese Navy has asked the French for assistance in designing a new class of diesel-powered attack submarine, The Chinese are negotiating with several West European countries to purchase the advanced periscopes and fire-control systems, torpedoes, batteries, and sonars that could be used on a newly designed submarine.

- *New Fast Patrol Boats.* China is apparently planning to build a new generation of fast attack boats According to press accounts, each boat will be armed with a 76-mm main gun, four surface-to-surface missile launchers, and a close-in weapon system. These boats will be quicker and more powerfully armed than China's current fast attack boats.

Can the New Strategy Work?

With the greater firepower and flexibility resulting from force modernization, we believe the Chinese Navy will be able to expand the scope of its naval operations and continue to meet its coastal defense mission. The aim of China's drive to modernize its Navy after all is modest, and Beijing knows it cannot compete with the Soviet or the US Navy for dominance of the Pacific. that they do not intend to become a "blue water" navy. Beijing's goal is instead to deter its adversaries by raising the cost of a seaborne attack on China, and the new strategy of active defense supports this aim by giving China's seaward defenses greater depth to inflict losses. In this regard, China's development of antiship missiles and its limited ASW advances represent a dramatic improvement in Beijing's ability to deter hostile naval action.

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Despite progress in building a more modern Navy, however, serious deficiencies in ASW, air defense, and early warning continue to keep the Chinese Navy incapable of protecting commercial sea lanes or fighting the Soviet Navy any farther than 900 km off the Chinese coast:

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- Although China's attempts to upgrade its submarines and helicopters with ASW sensors and the addition of helicopter-capable warships demonstrate Beijing's intention to improve its ASW capabilities, over the next 10 years the Navy probably will not be able to acquire the quantity and quality of ASW platforms to hunt Soviet submarines in deep waters away from China's continental shelf.

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- Even though China's efforts to procure rapid-fire guns for its warships have provided some air defense capability against antiship missiles, without a shipborne SAM system China's major combatants remain vulnerable to aircraft with standoff missiles and restricted in their combat operations to the 900-km combat radius of most Chinese fighter aircraft.

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- China's ability to monitor Soviet naval activity is modest. Chinese aircraft have only limited experience in maritime reconnaissance,

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Moreover, China does not permanently maintain ships or submarines on station at the entrances to the East and South China Seas, severely limiting early warning of Soviet naval moves.

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China, moreover, even with Western assistance probably will be unable to keep pace with the qualitative and quantitative improvements likely to take place in the Soviet Pacific Fleet over the next 10 years. These probably include:

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- The introduction of more advanced nuclear-powered submarines to the Pacific Fleet, including the Alfa SSN and Oscar SSGN.

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- The delivery of additional Kirov-class cruisers and Sovremennyy- and Udaloy-class destroyers.
- The fielding of more long-range Backfire bombers to the Far East, followed by the deployment of Moscow's newest long-range bomber, the Blackjack.

China's severely limited defense budget will continue to be the paramount constraint on the pace of weapons acquisitions from the West and overall naval modernization. With economic modernization continuing to take precedence, China's armed services compete vigorously for shares of a relatively small military procurement budget. Navy Commander Liu apparently has fought successfully for some new weapons production for the Navy, but the equally pressing needs for modernization of ground and air forces are likely to keep naval imports restricted to a very few key areas for many years to come. Indigenous weapons research and development still markedly lag more advanced nations like the Soviet Union, and the Chinese leadership probably will be content if it is able to simply maintain a credible seaward deterrent for the next decade.

Implications for the United States

We believe Beijing views the United States as an excellent source of military technology and as an important counterweight to Soviet naval power in East Asia. Although the Chinese Navy is eager to build on the senior naval contacts that have developed over the past two years, they are unlikely to lead to any form of strategic cooperation or close military coordination. For its part, Beijing believes that would undercut its claim of pursuing an independent foreign policy, further complicate its relations with Moscow, and—in our judgment—be a source of friction in the leadership. China's extreme sensitivities on this issue were demonstrated last spring when a scheduled US port call at Shanghai—the first since 1949—was canceled at the last moment, in part because it became entangled in other issues, including leadership politics. More recently, Chinese and US warships steamed together for the first time, but the Chinese Foreign Ministry downplayed the significance of the exercise and stressed that China is not allied with either superpower. Moreover, China recognizes that the United States intends to maintain a strong naval presence in the Pacific—from which Beijing benefits—regardless of China's actions. 25X1

Nonetheless, Beijing's inability to keep pace with the growing sophistication of the Soviet Pacific Fleet will make the role of the United States in China's naval modernization increasingly important. In our judgment, as the Chinese Navy slowly absorbs the first of its Western technologies, the pressure on Beijing from the Chinese Navy probably will increase for the acquisition of even more sophisticated weapons and equipment not only for the ASW mission area, but also for more sensitive areas such as submarine warfare. 25X1

If Washington fails to provide the level or type of technology desired by Beijing, however, China most certainly will try other channels. Moreover, Beijing is most interested in acquiring production technology, and arms deals that offer only finished weapon systems are less attractive. To get the transfer of the most sophisticated technology for the lowest cost, we believe, Beijing will seek to further exploit the rift between the United States and other Western nations on arms sales to China by luring the Governments of Israel, Britain, France, and Italy to make concessions on technology transfer. One tactic favored by the Chinese is to stage a showdown among competing Western weapon systems. In 1983, for instance, Beijing held a "fly off" among three Western defense contractors for a heavy-lift helicopter that netted Sikorsky a $150 million contract. A similar "fly off" was held last year for attack helicopters. 25X1 25X1

The US Posture in East Asia

Although Beijing's naval strategy and the weapons desired from the West are primarily defensive, China's naval modernization will improve Beijing's capability to use its naval forces to project power against militarily weaker nations. In East Asia, Taiwan and Vietnam will view these developments as most threatening, but diplomatic and 25X1
modernization is a 25X1
major concern to Japan and other East Asian nations. 25X1

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In our judgment, the strengthening of China's naval capabilities will improve Beijing's chances of successfully blockading Taiwan.[5] As a result, Taipei will seek means—including heavier lobbying of the United States for more advanced weapons and equipment, such as FFG-7 frigates, Lamps ASW helicopters, and PC-3 Orion aircraft—to restore the naval balance in the Taiwan Strait

Hanoi likewise will seek to improve its naval forces, in our opinion, by requesting more warships and training from the Soviet Union, possibly allowing Moscow greater access to Cam Ranh Bay in return. Japan and other East Asian nations, on the other hand, are likely to express their concern and seek assurances from Washington on how far the United States will go on military technology transfer to Beijing. Japan already has expressed reservations in COCOM about the transfer of certain types of naval equipment to Beijing—including US torpedoes and British sea mines—and more advanced sales are sure to elicit sharp protests. Both Indonesia and Malaysia, while seeking to improve their relations with Beijing, plan to upgrade their air and naval forces with advanced fighters and warships from the West, and are likely to seek US assistance in doing so.

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No Direct Threat to US Naval Power

Although naval modernization somewhat improves China's capability to project power, Beijing lacks the weapons, doctrine, and experience to seriously threaten US interests in the Pacific.

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China built its last amphibious warfare ship in 1981, and there is no evidence Beijing plans to resume construction. Moreover, China's naval training is strikingly defensive in orientation. China has only one 5,000-man Marine brigade, and its mission appears largely confined to defending the Paracel Islands from Vietnamese assaults. Furthermore, China has not used its Navy against the much weaker Vietnamese Navy despite two years of artillery and infantry clashes along the Sino-Vietnamese border. Beijing's reluctance to employ its Navy to harass and intimidate the Vietnamese suggests that the Navy's mission is, and will remain, largely defensive.

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