

Marines retool for war on China

written by Scott Scheffer

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U.S. Marines conduct a simulated amphibious assault.

As the COVID-19 death toll in the U.S. approaches 120,000, the Trump administration is relying heavily on anti-China propaganda — including wild accusations, right-wing conspiracy theories and racist anti-Asian rhetoric that greenlit physical attacks and racist assaults against Asian Americans.

Trump and his ilk need to distract from their own disastrous response to the deadly pandemic, the deep capitalist recession, the epidemic of violent police racism and murder, and the brutality against protestors demanding justice for George Floyd. Slanderizing and attacking China became their chosen distraction.

But the animosity toward China isn't limited to mere rhetoric. There are calls to make China pay reparations, lawsuits against China by several U.S. states, investigations of the origins of the virus by intelligence agencies in Australia, Europe and the U.S., an effort by the Trump administration to forge an international alliance to further sabotage China, and a cutoff of funds to the World Health Organization.

The heightened animosity from the White House has prompted establishment media to reference the Cold War, when imperialist hostility meant the USSR, China, Cuba and other socialist countries were under constant threat of nuclear attack. And, in fact, the Pentagon is preparing for a war against China. The possibility of a military confrontation can't be ignored by anti-war forces in the U.S.

Pentagon pivot to Asia long planned

The shift in U.S. military strategy toward targeting China precedes the pandemic and the Trump administration. The reorientation began when the Obama administration embraced then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's "pivot to Asia," which called for a stronger military presence in the South China Sea to challenge China and gain access to Asian markets. But the right-wing coup in Ukraine and Crimea's refusal to be part of the U.S. orbit, along with the war on Syria, ended up taking precedence.

Pentagon war planners are now going full-throttle to make up for lost time. As generals and admirals came to Congress in March to demand more money for war in the 2021 budget, it came to light that they were already thoroughly invested in preparations for all-out war against China. On March 5, Gen. David Berger, commandant of the U.S. Marines, outlined for the Senate Armed Services Committee a 10-year transition for the Marines that is already underway.

The Marine Corps is retooling for war against the People's Republic of China. For decades, the Marines have provided ground troops in the longest reign of imperialist death and destruction in U.S. history, in Afghanistan and Iraq. Now the plan is to leave that to the U.S. Army, and for the Marines to become a high-tech maritime force to operate more vigorously in the South China Sea and to augment the U.S. Navy.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) ended in August 2019, and the U.S. shunned efforts to replace it. Without that treaty in place, the Pentagon is preparing the first phase of the Marine's transition — stocking up on previously prohibited, land-based cruise missiles.

A [May 6 Reuters article](#) reports that "having shed the constraints of a Cold War era arms control treaty, the Trump administration is planning to deploy long-range, ground-launched cruise missiles in the Asia-Pacific region. ... The Marines will join forces with the U.S. Navy, using small mobile units armed with anti-ship missiles dispersed along the so-called first island chain — the string of islands that runs from Japan, through Taiwan, the Philippines and on to Borneo, enclosing China's coastal seas."

The transition means tanks and heavy weaponry are being dispensed with, and fewer F-35 aircraft for the smaller mobile Marine units. V-22 tiltrotor aircraft, helicopter units and shore-assaulting amphibious vehicles will be cut. According to a report by the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#), the radical reshaping of

the Marine Corps will transform it into a naval expeditionary force.

The Marine Corps will be redesigned to fight “within an adversary’s (read China’s) bubble of air, missile and naval power,” according to Gen. Bergen. It will require small groups of less visible, newly designed warships, armed with drones currently in development — essentially jet-powered unmanned fighter jets — to function in small units with the ability to move independently and deploy in and around the South China Sea.

U.S. rulers threatened by China’s example

Military contractors like General Dynamics and Raytheon have made billions equipping the Marine Corp and drained funds from the U.S. Treasury that should have been used for people’s needs. No doubt there will still be lucrative contracts for them, in addition to the billions that will likely be handed over to AeroVironment for the “lethal unmanned” drones and to Kratos Defense and Security for their jet-powered drones. General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin and Huntington Ingalls will all be vying for the billions it will take to build the new warships.

But this shift by the Pentagon is fueled by more than the usual siphoning off of Treasury funds by giant criminal corporations.

Regardless of concessions made to capitalism by the People’s Republic of China over the years of its development, the Chinese Communist Party and the people of China set an example in the “People’s War” against COVID-19. Their successful struggle against the disease trumpeted amazing advances in science and medicine, the superiority of centralized planning and how humanity is prioritized over profit. It is a victory in the battle for the consciousness of the worldwide working class.

A famous quote by the beloved leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, goes: “A revolution is a struggle to the death between the future and the past.” Our

people's movement, strengthened enormously by the working-class explosion against police racist murders, has to be ready to defend socialism in China — the future.

