A Rebalance Strategy for Pacific Air Forces

Flight Plan to Runways and Relationships

Brig Gen Steven L. Basham, USAF
Maj Nelson D. Rouleau, USAF

Even before Far East Air Forces formed on 31 July 1944, airpower had played a key role in securing America's interests in the Asia-Pacific. The nation's Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) not only sacrificed tens of thousands of lives in war and peace but also played a leading role in many major theater conflicts, supported multiple

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smaller-scale contingencies, and contributed to several large humanitarian-assistance and disaster-relief missions. PACAF, the modern successor of the Far East Air Forces, has established itself as a permanent, reliable partner fully engaged in regional security, stability, and prosperity. Without a doubt, 7 December 1941 proved that airpower is synonymous with national security, and PACAF is the primary wielder and guarantor of its application towards strategic objectives in US Pacific Command's (USPACOM) area of responsibility (AOR).

Guided by the propositions articulated in the *National Security Strategy*, the *National Defense Strategy*, and the *National Military Strategy*, we recognize that preventing a war in the Asia-Pacific is paramount to being prepared to win a war in the region.[1] In light of this reality, America's Airmen in the Asia-Pacific have thought hard about their contribution to America's regional rebalance. This article presents PACAF's strategy and contribution to the US rebalance by (1) examining the enduring and emerging challenges in the region, (2) exploring the five lines of operations that PACAF's Airmen are executing to contribute to the nation's rebalance, and (3) presenting the force posture and force modernization strategy the command is undertaking.

Enduring and Emerging Challenges in the Asia-Pacific

Without considering anything else, we note that the Asia-Pacific region's vast size and complexity require continued focus and attention. In addition to China, the world's most populous country; India, the most populous democracy; and Indonesia, a secular democracy, the Asia-Pacific contains over half the world's population. More than 1,000 languages are spoken in 36 nations spread across 52 percent of the earth's surface. Two of the three largest economies are located in the Asia-Pacific along with 10 of the 14 smallest.[2] More than one-third of Asia-Pacific nations are smaller island nations, including the smallest republic in the world and the most diminutive nation in Asia. The region spans 16 time zones and an international date line. In addition, natural disasters are a persistent, random, and unavoidable threat. These facts, combined

with emerging issues—particularly the shifting security environment—present the Asia-Pacific as a unique challenge for the United States.

The 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review* flags the convergence of a rapidly changing security environment and the urgency to refine our defense efforts in a constrained budgetary environment.[3] These concerns were in large part engendered by developments in the USPACOM AOR where significant changes have occurred over the past several years.

In 2009 the People's Republic of China (PRC) laid claim to 90 percent of the South China Sea based on what it refers to as the nine-dash-line map, first hand-drawn in 1947 and still not defined by precise coordinates.[4] USPACOM continues to assert that maintaining stability in this area of overlapping claims and avoiding violence between the claimants will be crucial to the prosperity of the region.

Actions undertaken by the PRC over the past 18 months show a significant increase in operations and exercises, expansion of operational areas, increasing complexity and integration of functions, and improvement of the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) that one might believe are aimed at supporting PRC efforts and strengthening its position on territorial claims. Over the past year, it appears that the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has been conducting extended out-of-area deployment to the Second Island Chain and throughout the South China and East China Seas. Concurrently, PLAAF/PLAN forces appear to be conducting air operations with deployments and training sorties into these same extended operating areas.

China's recent actions, such as increasing the air activity and asserting its air defense identification zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea, make it clear that China's leaders are attempting to alter the status quo in the region significantly. Declaration of the PRC's ADIZ in the East China Sea in November 2013 gave rise to a host of new issues: the possibility of declaring additional ADIZs in the South China Sea and Yellow Sea; establishment of an extended Republic of Korea ADIZ to account

for disputed maritime claims; and further escalation of tensions between the PRC and Japan.

The election of Ma Ying-jeou as president of Taiwan has produced mixed results in the region. On the one hand, tensions across the Strait of Taiwan have ebbed as a result of his enhanced diplomatic and economic ties. President Ma Ying-jeou has sought historically closer relations with Mainland China through a number of initiatives and engagements. On the other hand, these efforts have inflamed hard-line independents within Taiwan to the point of rioting. In a July 2012 article in the *Diplomat*, Parris Chang, a ranking member of Taiwan's Parliament, professor emeritus of political science, and former director of the Center for East Asian Studies at Penn State University, stated that on the heels of protest, mass riots, alleged scandal, and discontent, the president's approval rating fell to a dismal 15 percent.[5] Arguably, President Ma has recovered to a degree, but he is up for election in 2016, and Taiwan could very well see a return of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party if he cannot win the election. Should that party take a hard stance on the matter of Taiwan's independence, tensions with the PRC could again flare up.

North Korea continues to generate security concerns in the region. The year 2013 saw President Kim Jong-Un's regime conducting the country's third nuclear test; making preparations to launch Musudan intermediate-range ballistic missiles; threatening nuclear strikes on Hawaii, Guam, and the continental United States; launching two No Dong medium-range ballistic missiles (the first since 2009); and a week later exchanging artillery fire with South Korea at the Northern Limit Line. The pledge of South Korea's President Park Geun-hye to strike back harder than ever in response to the next provocation increases the potential for miscalculation.

Although the potential for regional conflict exists in the USPACOM AOR, the current fiscal environment arguably has the most fundamental impact on how PACAF operates in the Asia-Pacific theater. Competing national priorities limit defense spending, and rebuilding forces that

have spent the last decade on the battlefield will require a large share of the defense budget. Similarly, deep reductions to the US defense budget could lead to decreased confidence in America's ability to fulfill traditional security roles. Daily operations require prudent management of limited fiscal resources.

Flight Plan for Pacific Air Forces: Five Lines of Operations

Guided by our strategy and a deep understanding of that strategy, we have developed five enduring PACAF lines of operations, henceforth referred to as the PACAF Flight Plan: Integrated Air and Missile Defense, Agile and Flexible Command and Control, Theater Security Cooperation, Power Projection, and Resilient Airmen. All five are intended to help guide decision makers and our Airmen during the Asia-Pacific Rebalance and beyond. The flight plan delivers a methodology that allows all Pacific Airmen to understand their particular role in our strategy. For questions about priorities, funding, or manpower, the plan illuminates an answer that circles directly back to our strategy. Though the principles of the flight plan are valid for any fiscal environment, given the current climate this plan is particularly appropriate for the nation's rebalance initiative. Airmen must prioritize efforts within our lines of operations to safeguard our commitment to our allies and partners.

Integrated Air and Missile Defense

We have applied the hard-fought lessons learned from previous US wartime experience to devise an integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) strategy that uses a smart mix of active defense, passive defense, and attack operations. Furthermore, our Airmen are innovating game-changing technologies to overcome missile defense challenges. Given the current security environment, the IAMD line of operation is particularly important for America's rebalance initiative.

Agile and Flexible Command and Control

PACAF's approach in managing its agile and flexible command and control efforts can be summed up through six critical capabilities: (1) battlespace awareness, (2) resilient architecture, (3) defensive cyber operations, (4) combat-support command and control (C2), (5) C2 execution, and (6) war-fighter integration. The ability to command and control our air, space, and cyber resources integrated with our joint and bilateral partners is a revolutionary change in decision superiority. We have matured the Air Force's battle-tested core tenet of centralized control / decentralized execution into something better suited and more relevant to today's complex operational environment: centralized command / distributed control / decentralized execution. This new tenet embodies the spirit of an idea of mission command envisioned by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Essentially, Gen Martin Dempsey's "mission command" empowers all war fighters with the appropriate levels of guidance, authority, and trust to accomplish their missions along with the means to do so. Among the many elements central to distributed control, three stand out: (1) effective communication of mission command throughout the joint force, (2) sustained unity of effort in support of the commander's intent, and (3) an agile, flexible theater air control system.

Theater Security Cooperation

Maintaining existing relationships and building new ones in the Asia-Pacific region are of the utmost importance when pursuing theater security cooperation. Sharing concerns over the growing potential for crisis in Asia's near seas, we have increased our interactions with our counterparts. In close coordination with USPACOM and Headquarters Air Force, we are strengthening our operational exchanges to promote a common picture and understanding of PRC activities, especially in and around the Senkaku Islands. We will support dissuading China from implementing its declared East China Sea ADIZ and from declaring other ADIZs in either the South China Sea or Yellow Sea. In this vein,

we support sending an increased Air Force contingent to the upcoming Military Maritime Consultative Agreement talks to discuss air-safety concerns.

Power Projection

Synonymous with global power, power projection includes rapid crisis response across the full spectrum of military operations. Power projection is the core of the Air Force's mission to fly, fight, and win, as well as its vision of global vigilance, global reach, and global power. Power projection is characterized by PACAF's air, space, and cyber superiority; globally integrated intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities; rapid global mobility; and readiness force posture. Our peacetime posture seeks to deter potential adversaries while reassuring friends through shared efforts to exercise and train as we collectively intend to operate. In the future, we will focus on significantly increasing capabilities in space, cyber, and electronic warfare.

Resilient Airmen

Our Airmen serve as the foundation of the Pacific strategy. This line of operation touches everything we do as a force. It all starts with mission-qualified Airmen and their ability to withstand, recover, and grow in the face of stressors and changing demands. The Resilient Airmen line of operation integrates into the other four lines of operations in measurable ways. We are currently looking at areas in which to construct new strategic effects that address our joint, combined, and coalition forces.

Our Resilient Airmen team constantly seeks engagement opportunities and expansion of areas such as training and development. Ultimately this process will ensure that when we step to the fight with our friends, allies, and partners, we do so together as Resilient Airmen.

In light of drawdowns and financial constraints, we are researching manpower and personnel constructs with our component counterparts

that will integrate our Airmen and joint war fighters more closely than ever as they make progress in the IAMD, C2, theater security cooperation, and power-projection lines of operations. We have begun developing cultural-immersion programs that installations will field with their newcomer orientation to assure that our Airmen and families are armed as competent ambassadors in cross-cultural matters. Lastly, we continue to develop new strategies to increase readiness and enhance mental, physical, social, and spiritual well-being.

Force Posture and Modernization

US strategy and its Asia-Pacific derivative—our Pacific theater strategy—both adhere to a central theme: building, maintaining, and nurturing partnerships and relationships. A nuanced forward presence offers the most meaningful way to cultivate such relationships in the region.

For more than 60 years, our forces primarily focused on the Northeast Asia regions of Japan and Korea. In light of our nation's rebalance, PACAF, in coordination with USPACOM, is enhancing its presence in the region by dispersing its defense posture over a wider geographic range. Over the next few years, we will modify our posture while preserving our presence and increasing our commitment to the entire region. Our enhanced posture does not imply that we require new main operating bases (MOB), in military parlance. On the contrary, we will continue to mature our "places, not bases" approach.[6] This proposition is at once politically sustainable and operationally resilient. Naturally, we will continue to coordinate efforts with sister services to maximize resources. Our force posture concentrates on the strategic triangle of bases in Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam, which endure as the centerpiece of our footprint in the Pacific for two primary reasons: (1) they are located on US soil and thus present minimal access limitations, and (2) Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam lie beyond the range of most conventional threats.[7]

Our relationship with Japan is one of the most important we have. In a region where access is increasingly difficult to maintain, our strong ties with Japan provide tremendous confidence that the United States will have access when needed. In 2015 we operate out of three air bases in Japan: Yokota, Misawa, and Kadena. No one should doubt that PACAF is committed to the long-term security of the Japanese people.

The alliance between the United States and South Korea was originally forged in blood and has flourished ever since.[8] Over the last 60 years, the partnership has expanded from its security relationship into an alliance that emphasizes global economics, access, and security. Among other reasons for the US presence in South Korea, it discourages an attack from North Korea—and thus demands US commitment.

Increased US Air Force presence in Australia is a concrete example of America's rebalance. The service's fighter, tanker, and bomber training there sends a strategic message that the United States is strengthening alliances and friendships in the Pacific that offer new and meaningful access to the Air Force. Furthermore, Australia is a premier ISR sharing partner whose shared early warning radar performs double duty by improving war-fighter integration in the region while increasing US combat capability.

PACAF is well prepared to expedite reestablishing US air access in the Philippines now that the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement is in place. Their location makes Philippine bases ideal for multilateral military exercises. Presence on these bases provides concurrent opportunities for us to develop the interoperability of Filipino maritime and air defense capabilities.

Our recent visit to Vietnam is a watershed event in our relationship with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Vietnam overflight and landing rights would provide flexibility and increased opportunities to assist in the region. The humanitarian-assistance and disaster-relief radius of aircraft operating out of Da Nang could cover some of the most disaster-prone areas on the globe.

Given the proximity to Andersen AFB, airfields such as those located in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marinas, Palau, or Yap supply convenient divert options for US aircraft. Furthermore, nearness to a variety of US Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy bases provides more joint-force opportunities to validate Air-Sea Battle concepts of operation in a forward environment. We look to invest in significant improvements in airfield infrastructure with a focus on divert capability in the near term and joint training opportunities in the midterm to long term.

Force modernization is another key component of our Asia-Pacific rebalance strategy. We will sustain investments in force recapitalization while we advocate for new capabilities, particularly the KC-46, F-35, and long-range bomber. In addition to these new abilities, our strategy mandates that we pursue innovative solutions. Consequently, Headquarters PACAF recently completed its conversion into our nation's first component major command (C-MAJCOM)—a modernization that creates opportunities to further transform our air and space operations center (AOC) and employ our airpower in innovative ways. Finally, as part of the rebalance, we will smartly employ our command and control, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities (C2ISR).

The KC-46 Pegasus, central to the Air Force's recapitalization priorities, will assure the ability to maintain global reach and project global power. The role of air refueling in the region can't be overstated. We anticipate that the KC-46 will deploy on a rotational basis throughout the Asia-Pacific to increase combat capability and demonstrate US commitment to USPACOM's AOR.

The Joint Strike Fighter is vital to modernizing the Air Force's aging fleet of multirole fighters and will remain a top priority for the service's recapitalization efforts, particularly in the Pacific. The F-35 increases combat capability and improves war-fighter integration. This aircraft is the most tangible representation of the concept of networked, integrated attack-in-depth to disrupt, destroy, and defeat a potential adversary's antiaccess/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Twelve ally and partner countries, including Japan, South Korea, and Australia, have committed

to purchase the fifth-generation multirole fighter.[9] As a common platform between the United States and three of our closest, most capable allies in the theater, the F-35 represents a unique opportunity to enhance interoperability and bridge many Air-Sea Battle concepts into operational reality.

We do not have detailed plans on the permanent basing of the future long-range bomber; nevertheless, we continue to advocate for this capability as a critical component of operating in an A2/AD environment. Our future ideas will address the Asia-Pacific's strategic basing options. At present the continuous rotation of B-2s and B-52s to Andersen AFB in Guam creates a continuous presence of US bombers in the AOR: a new long-range bomber will further increase this combat capability.[10]

Headquarters PACAF, as a C-MAJCOM, is the Air Force's first warfighting headquarters on a MAJCOM scale. The PACAF commander assumes multiple leadership roles: commander of an Air Force MAJCOM, USPACOM commander of Air Force forces (COMAFFOR), the USPACOM theater joint force air component commander (JFACC), the theater area air defense commander (AADC), airspace control authority (ACA), and space coordinating authority (SCA). Headquarters PACAF not only gives Air Force component support to USPACOM in all operational phases across the range of military operations but also serves as the senior administrative service headquarters for the commander of PACAF, performing the service's organize, train, and equip functions not appropriate for reachback.

The C-MAJCOM organization structure allows PACAF to perform day-to-day functions with its operationalized staff and total-force-integration team members while preserving the ability to surge and meet the nation's wartime requirements. Depending on the timing, type, and severity of an event, multiple Airmen can fulfill theater COMAFFOR, JFACC, AADC, ACA, or SCA roles. To be sure, PACAF's unique C-MAJCOM structure allows an immediate and tailored presentation of forces to USPACOM.

The evolution of the 613 AOC into a joint air and space operations center (JAOC), located at Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam, is an innovation to an existing capability that will increase war-fighter integration and combat capability. Formally maturing into a combined AOC (CAOC) is a natural advancement for the PACAF AOC. In many ways, it is already a CAOC. The 613 AOC already hosts some of our treaty partners. Further, during contingency operations and multilateral exercises, the center operates as a CAOC with joint and coalition partners. This innovation forces potential adversaries to reassess their prevailing plans and address a more coherent and multinational operational structure in the region.

PACAF understands the necessity of enlarging our C2ISR capability. We will continue to advocate for increased presence of the E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System capabilities and permanent rotational presence of the E-8 Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System. Given our current fiscal constraints, America's C2ISR capabilities alone will not likely satisfy theater requirements. Therefore, we will continue to leverage those capabilities with our allies and partners in the spirit of responsible intelligence sharing and mutually beneficial domain awareness.

Conclusion

Preventing a war in the Asia-Pacific is paramount to being prepared to win a war in the region. All Pacific Airmen understand that proposition. Even before formation of the Far East Air Forces, airpower had played a meaningful role in securing America's interests in the Asia-Pacific. Over three-quarters of a century later, Pacific airpower has established itself as a permanent, reliable partner, fully committed to regional security, stability, and prosperity. As the nation rebalances to the Asia-Pacific, America can stand assured, knowing that—as was the case before—US airpower provides an effective deterrent to potential adversaries. ✪

Notes

1. For the treatment of US strategy, see Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 2012), http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf; and Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2011: Redefining America's Military Leadership* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 2011), http://www.army.mil/info/references/docs/NMS%20FEB%202011.pdf. See also Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, 11 October 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century.

2. The United States has mutual defense treaties with five Asia-Pacific states: Japan, South Korea, Australia, Philippines, and Thailand. The four nuclear armed states are Russia, India, China, and North Korea.

3. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2014), http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf.

4. Originally, an eleven-dash line, the nine-dash line was first drawn on the Chinese map in December 1946 by the Republic of China government. The intent was to enlarge China's living space in the South China Sea. Today, the PRC asserts that the so-called nine-dash line delineates its claim in the South China Sea. For a complete understanding of the origins of the line, see Dr. Andrew Marshall, *China: The Three Warfares* (Washington, DC: Office of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, May 2013), http://images.smh.com.au/file/2014/04/11/5343124/China_%2520The%2520three%2520warfares.pdf?rand=1397212645609.

5. Parris H. Chang, "Can Hu 'Do Something Big' on Taiwan?," *Diplomat*, 19 July 2012, http://thediplomat.com/2012/07/can-hu-do-something-big-on-taiwan.

6. The phrase "places, not bases" reflects the emphasis on operational resiliency with regards to PACOM's theater force posture. MOBs are an efficient means of maximizing resources to project power, but they enable the concentration of adversary forces and ultimately increase US vulnerability. In contrast, forward operating sites can provide distributed yet effective means not only to survive attacks but also to recover and quickly generate additional sorties. PACAF's pursuit of these sites supports America's whole-of-government efforts to promote theater security cooperation while discouraging an adversary's ability to accurately and confidently achieve the desired degree of confidence in his precombat forecasts. By maximizing interoperability with allies and partners, building partnership capability, and establishing the necessary agreements with host nations, PACAF can offer global vigilance, global reach, and global power without the constraints of MOBs.

7. The Pacific strategic triangle of today differs from the original triangle. America's twentieth-century notion of a Pacific strategic triangle survives today with Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam. The original triangle included Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii. In the early twentieth century, America strengthened its Pacific military presence to protect these territories and defend America's West Coast. But not until the 1940s did military strategists recognize the importance of what came to be known as the Pacific strategic triangle. Conceiving of a strategic triangle encompassing Alaska to the north, Hawaii to the west, and Panama to the south, these strategists recommended committing military forces to defending all points within its border.

8. The term *alliance forged in blood* describes the relationship between the United States and South Korea. For a complete understanding of the genesis of the relationship, see William

Stueck and Boram Yi, " 'An Alliance Forged in Blood': The American Occupation of Korea, the Korean War, and the US–South Korean Alliance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 2 (April 2010): 177–209, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01402391003590200.

9. For information on the F-35 Lightning II, see "The Centerpiece of 21st Century Global Security," Lockheed Martin, accessed 29 September 2014, https://www.f35.com/global.

10. The continuous bomber presence mission seeks to deploy Air Force bomber assets into the PACOM AOR and provide a visible deterrence to potential adversaries as well as demonstrate US commitment towards regional security for our allies and partners.

Brig Gen Steven L. Basham, USAF

Brigadier General Basham (BS, Western Kentucky University; MA, Webster University; MA, Air Command and Staff College; MA, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies; MA, Army War College) is director of Strategy, Plans, and Programs, Pacific Air Forces, Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam, Hawaii. Prior to assuming his current position, Brigadier General Basham was chief, House Liaison Office, Office of Legislative Liaison, Washington, DC. He has served in a variety of positions flying the B-1, B-2, and B-52, and has commanded a B-2 Squadron, an Air Operations Center Squadron, and a B-52 Bomb Wing. Brigadier General Basham attended the Air Force Enterprise Leadership Seminar at the Darden School of Business, University of Virginia; Seminar for Executives on Legislative Operations, George Washington University; and a Senior Manager Course at the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University. Prior to his service as chief, House Liaison Office, Brigadier General Basham served on the Joint Staff as the assistant deputy director for command, control, and nuclear operations (J-36), Joint Staff, Pentagon, Washington DC.

Maj Nelson D. Rouleau, USAF

Major Rouleau (BS, MS, Troy University; MPhil, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies) is a military strategist and chief of the Pacific Air Forces Strategy and Campaigns Branch, Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam, Hawaii. He served as an air battle manager in three command and control major weapons systems: the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System, E-3C Airborne Warning and Control System, and Control and Reporting Center. Major Rouleau has operational experience in South America and combat tours in Operations Southern Watch, Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, and Enduring Freedom. He worked as a military assistant to Andrew Marshall in the secretary of defense's Office of Net Assessment and as an airpower strategist in Checkmate, Washington, DC, as an Air Force Fellow.

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