

DoD Report: China Arming for Unclear Purposes

By WILLIAM MATTHEWS

With its annual military spending at an all-time high, China is rapidly acquiring advanced weapons and is striving to solidify its dominance over Asia, the U.S. military says in a new report.

China's military budget may be more than \$150 billion a year, enabling the People's Liberation Army to build better ballistic missiles and spy satellites, develop new submarines, expand its surface navy and construct fourth-generation fighters.

From nuclear weapons to cyber warfare capabilities, a "comprehensive transformation" of the Chinese military is under way, according to the Pentagon's latest annual report on Chinese military power.

But it's unclear what China intends to do with its new might, the report says.

The People's Liberation Army — which includes ground, air and naval forces — is being transformed from a force designed to fight long wars of attrition on its own territory to a force capable of winning short, high-intensity conflicts against high-tech adversaries on China's periphery.

But China has used some of those same capabilities to assist in international peacekeeping, humanitarian and disaster relief efforts. And in January, Chinese destroyers joined an international fleet off Somalia to counter pirates.

In the past, U.S. assessments of Chinese power and intentions have focused on Taiwan and China's determination to reclaim the island, and that's in the new report. But there also is substantial attention paid to the importance of China's rising economy.

"Sustaining economic growth and development" is a top Chinese strategic priority, the report says. And China's growing military power may be intended in part to sustain economic growth.

China's "dependence on secure access to markets and natural resources, particularly metals and fossil fuels, has become an increasingly significant factor shaping China's strategic behavior," the Pentagon says.

The "anti-access/area denial" strategy that U.S. analysts have associated with China's desire to retake Taiwan may also help China ensure access to energy and raw materials, said Nirav Patel, a scholar at the Center for a New American Security.

"Anti-access will show up in commerce and energy," he said.

China's navy — now 260 ships — may prove valuable at keeping sea lanes open for oil shipments to China from Saudi Arabia, Africa and East Asia. A blue-water navy could also maintain Chinese access to contested natural gas deposits in the South China Sea, Patel said.

That's not to diminish the importance of Taiwan to China. Despite reduced tensions

following the election of a new president in Taiwan last year, China remains obsessed with the possibility of U.S. military intervention on behalf of Taiwan, the report says.

To keep U.S. aircraft carriers and other naval forces at bay, China is investing in anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles, surveillance satellites, mines, submarines and maritime strike aircraft.

China's improved ability to conduct cyber operations might be a more immediate concern for the United States, Patel said. There has been an increase in the number of cyberattacks on the U.S. Defense Department and intelligence agencies, he said, many of them apparently from China.

"The Chinese keep poking us," he said.

In the past, they seemed to be searching for weaknesses in computer networks and systems. Now they appear to be actively exploiting the weaknesses, he said.

The Pentagon report says the intrusions "focused on exfiltrating information," but the skills needed to break into systems and steal data are the same as those needed to conduct computer network attacks.

"It remains unclear if these intrusions were conducted by, or with the endorsement of" the Chinese military or government. But "developing capabilities for cyberwarfare is consistent with authoritative [Chinese] military writings," the report says.

China also is making rapid progress in military-related space. During 2008, China conducted 11 space launches that put 15 satellites into orbit, including four remote sensing satellites, the Pentagon says.

Space-based capabilities include intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, navigation and communications. And while increasing these, China is developing "a multidimensional program" to limit or prevent the use of space by potential adversaries.

In addition to the January 2007 demonstration that China can destroy a satellite with a ground-based missile, China possesses satellite jammers and is developing lasers, high-powered microwave and particle beam weapons for anti-satellite missions, the report says.

The pace and scale of Chinese military modernization is "broad and sweeping," the Pentagon says. But the new tactics and technology "remain untested in modern combat. This lack of operational experience complicates outside assessment of the progress of China's military transformation."

Despite modernization, U.S. intelligence agencies say the Chinese military probably can't yet defeat a moderate-sized adversary, and it will not be able to sustain even small military units far beyond Chinese territory before 2015. ■

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U.S. Army Offers Network Space In Lieu of Banned Thumb Drives

By WILLIAM MATTHEWS

Still glum about the loss of your thumb? The U.S. Army has a replacement that it's hoping will make the now-forbidden thumb drives seem just a little bit quaint anyway.

The Army is urging its members to start storing digital data in secure space on servers operated for Army Knowledge Online.

The data is protected by a password or a common access card and by U.S. Defense Department firewalls. Users get 100 megabytes of space for storing documents, PowerPoint presentations, photos and other data. And it's available anywhere there is a computer, BlackBerry, cell phone or other device that's capable of connecting with the Internet, said Lt. Col. Kenneth Fritzsche, chief of operations at Army Knowledge Online.

And it's not just for the Army. Storage space is available to Defense Knowledge Online users, too.

The Army banned the use of thumb drives and other USB memory devices in November after discovering that the portable drives were responsible for transferring

viruses and other malware from computer to computer and from computers to networks.

The Defense Department soon adopted the Army's ban.

It hasn't been easy for everyone to adjust, Fritzsche said. The drives were widely used and extremely convenient. It used to be that a soldier who was assigned to present a PowerPoint briefing to an audience would load the briefing from his office computer onto a thumb drive, walk down the hall to the conference room, plug the thumb drive into the computer there and play the PowerPoint file, Fritzsche said.

The new procedure isn't so different. But instead of saving the presentation to a thumb drive, the soldier saves it to his storage space on Army Knowledge Online (AKO). Then, in the conference room, he signs on to AKO, downloads the presentation from his storage area and plays it on the conference room computer.

Some PowerPoint presenters might still argue that it's more convenient to carry information around on a thumb drive, Fritzsche conceded. But it's a lot more dangerous.

Files uploaded to AKO are scanned for malware with the most up-to-date anti-virus software, Fritzsche said. Most thumb drives have no anti-virus capability. And AKO eliminates the danger that thumb drives full of sensitive information can be filched from a desk or left in a cab.

In Afghanistan, he noted, thumb drives containing sensitive information about U.S. soldiers, interrogators and interrogation techniques turned up for sale in a bazaar outside Bagram Air Base.

But security isn't the only reason to store data on AKO, Fritzsche said. Files placed in an AKO storage area are usually private — only the owner can see them — but they can be made accessible to others if the owners so choose, Fritzsche said. That way, several people can work on the same report or PowerPoint presentation. Or view an invitation to happy hour.

The 100 megabytes given to individuals for storage space is enough for about 2,000 photos or up to 50,000 e-mails, Fritzsche said. It will accommodate about 100 average-size PowerPoint presentations or

several volumes of an encyclopedia.

If that's not enough, Fritzsche said, AKO managers will grant more storage space "if there's a compelling need."

However, each Army organization also has an AKO area, and personnel are encouraged to store work-related data there. Those areas have unlimited storage space, he said.

Fritzsche touts other advantages for storing data on AKO:

■ Files can be retrieved on a handheld computer, a BlackBerry or even a cell phone.

■ Data is automatically backed up. One set of servers where data is stored resides at Fort Belvoir, Va. Another set is kept at an undisclosed location.

■ Data storage space is available to uniformed personnel, civilian employees, reservists, contractors, family members and retirees.

■ The service is free, and so is training on how to use it.

So far, Fritzsche said, 10.8 million files have been uploaded to AKO storage areas, where they take up 11 terabytes of space.

Storing data online so that it can be accessed from anywhere is a good alternative to thumb drives, said Angelos Stavrou, a computer science professor at George Mason University, Fairfax, Va.

From the Army's perspective, it has to protect one large system instead of trying to protect tens of

thousands of individual machines.

And from the user's perspective, "it's better, it's more convenient," Stavrou said. There's no real reason to carry around a virus-prone "hardware device," he said.

Similar systems are in use by companies that handle sensitive digital information, such as financial data or patients' medical records, said Paula Skokowski, marketing chief at Accellion, a California-based firm that specializes in "managed file-transfer solutions."

A potential problem for the Army may be that "100 megabytes isn't going to last very long," Skokowski said of the basic Army storage space.

Accellion offers a secure file transfer service that creates auditable reports that detail who deposited files, who transferred them and who received them. Files also can be searched automatically to evaluate contents and alert security personnel if confidential files appear to be handled inappropriately.

Security-conscious organizations should "have a complete log of what went on" with their files, she said.

That's probably more than the Army needs for the kind of data that personnel used to carry around on thumb drives, an Army official said.

The Army maintains separate, highly secure networks for classified and top secret material, he said. ■

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