

THE HERITAGE LECTURES

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Beijing's Blockade
Threat to Taiwan

Edited by Martin L. Lasater



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A Heritage Roundtable

**Beijing's Blockade Threat
to Taiwan**

Edited by Martin L. Lasater

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Beijing's Blockade Threat to Taiwan

Martin Lasater: I would like to welcome you to The Heritage Foundation's Lehrman Auditorium this morning. Our program today is sponsored by the Asian Studies Center. I am Martin Lasater, the Center's Director.

Today's discussion is on the topic of "Beijing's Blockade Threat to Taiwan." As you know, Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, and other Chinese leaders have stated for some time that, if Taipei continues to refuse to reunify with the mainland, the PRC may blockade Taiwan in order to force a settlement.

Hu Yaobang's interview with the editor of *Pai Hsing* in May of last year is probably the best-known statement to this effect. In the interview, the Chinese Communist Party leader made a number of points relevant to our discussion today. He said that, although the PRC does not now have the military strength to blockade Taiwan, it will have that capability within five to ten years. Hu Yaobang said specifically: "If we have the strength to enforce a blockade and if Taiwan vehemently opposes reunification, we shall have to consider enforcing a blockade." Hu Yaobang stressed repeatedly that, if China does decide to enforce a blockade, "We shall do this only when we are sure of success." He said that among the factors taken into consideration before Beijing imposed a blockade would be Taiwan's military and economic strength and U.S. political support of Taipei.

Many analysts have noted that the remarks of Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang were not repeated in the official PRC press or to U.S. officials. This has led some observers to conclude that the threats were merely bargaining ploys or perhaps just "loose talk." This may be, but such statements by ranking PRC leaders have to be taken seriously by the United States, which is committed under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act to help Taiwan deter such threats. The TRA states specifically that it is the policy of the United States "to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means . . . a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States."

It is impossible to predict with certainty whether Beijing eventually will use force against Taiwan. It is possible, however, to outline some of the major considerations PRC leaders will have to keep in mind. Among the factors arguing against the use of force, the following may be critical:

- 1) The use of force against Taiwan would jeopardize continued U.S., Japanese, and Western European support for China's modernization.
- 2) As long as the Taiwan Relations Act is in force, Beijing cannot rule out U.S. military intervention on behalf of Taiwan.
- 3) Use of force against Taiwan would tend to confirm Southeast Asian suspicions that China might become an aggressive power.
- 4) The commercial interests of many countries would be damaged by a blockade against Taiwan, and at least some of these countries would retaliate in some way against Beijing.
- 5) Beijing's use of force against Taiwan might precipitate a rapid buildup of Japanese arms to counter the potential Chinese threat to Japan's southern sealanes.

On the other hand, there are perhaps equally compelling reasons why Beijing may elect to use force against Taiwan. The incentives for the use of force would include:

- 1) Taiwan is very important strategically, politically, and economically to China. Since its founding in 1949, the PRC has made reunification a national objective and has repeatedly threatened to use force if necessary to bring it about. If Taipei continues to refuse to negotiate with the communist mainland, Beijing may feel it has no choice but to make good on its threat.
- 2) A great deal of uncertainty exists in Beijing over the policies pursued in Taiwan after ROC President Chiang Ching-kuo retires. To eliminate the possibility of Taiwan drifting permanently away from the mainland, Beijing may elect to use force.
- 3) The PRC is acquiring the naval, ground, and air capabilities to blockade Taiwan or to utilize other means of force. When China believes it has the ability both to neutralize Taiwan's defenses and to deter U.S. intervention, then the use of force to achieve reunification becomes a viable policy option. Hu Yaobang predicted China will have that strength in five to ten years and warned that Beijing may elect to use it.
- 4) Culturally, national unification is viewed as proof of legitimacy for China's rulers. Since procedures are in place for the return of Hong Kong and Macao to the mainland, Taiwan remains the sole obstacle to Beijing's realization of national unification. In terms of cultural values, then, the Chinese may consider the use of force against Taiwan justified. Moreover, the Chinese communists want to finish the civil war with the KMT, and the only way that can be accomplished is if Taipei accepts the status of a local government.

- 5) Finally, the international correlation of forces is favorable to Beijing's resolution of the Taiwan issue. The PRC believes the United States is now stronger than the Soviet Union. Both super-powers and even Vietnam want to improve relations with Beijing. China rapidly is becoming stronger economically. Thus the PRC may soon feel it has the necessary domestic and international strength to resolve the Taiwan issue—even by force.

This partial list of incentives and disincentives for the use of force against Taiwan by the PRC points up the difficulty of ascertaining Beijing's intentions. But our purpose today is to ask somewhat easier questions. Does the PRC have the military capability to enforce a blockade of Taiwan? How might such a blockade be put into effect? What impact would a PRC blockade of Taiwan have on U.S. interests in the region?

To help answer these questions, the Asian Studies Center has invited a panel of distinguished military experts to address the issue from different perspectives. Our first speaker will be Admiral Thomas H. Moorer (USN Ret.). Admiral Moorer has had a distinguished career spanning some 40 years. He served as both Chief of Naval Operations and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and he also served as Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet. Admiral Moorer is currently affiliated with Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies. He will address the blockade threat as a security concern to the United States in the Western Pacific.

We are also honored to have as our guest one of the outstanding military experts of the Republic of China. Vice Admiral Ko Tun-hwa (ROCN Ret.) served for many years as Vice Minister of National Defense and also as Deputy General Chief of Staff. Currently, he is associated with the ROC Society for Strategic Studies. Admiral Ko will examine the blockade threat from the perspective of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

The final presentations will be made by Captain John F. Tarpey (USN Ret.) and Colonel Gerald C. Thomas, Jr. (USMC Ret.). Captain Tarpey was a surface warfare officer in the U.S. Navy with wide experience on destroyers, battleships, and cruisers. He also has a Ph.D. in Political Science from Stanford University. Colonel Thomas is a 28-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. He commanded combat units in both Korea and Vietnam and is a highly trained specialist in amphibious operations. Captain Tarpey and Colonel Thomas will present a blockade scenario that Beijing might adopt should it pursue a military solution to the reunification problem.

Admiral Moorer, welcome to The Heritage Foundation.

Admiral Thomas Moorer: Thank you very much. All of you can rest easily, I am not going to take 25 minutes because many of the things I was going to say have just been covered by Mr. Lasater. My association with this overall problem and with the Western Pacific derives from having been commander of a ship that conducted patrols in the Taiwan Strait, in command of aircraft that participated in those patrols, as well as in senior commands where the question of the confrontation between Taiwan and Red China was looked at over and over again. In the process, we always prepared what are called contingency plans. I always called these “what if” plans. In other words, what if Red China does this or what if Red China does that? What would be the response of the United States? Of course, as time goes on, conditions—and plans—change.

Relative military strength is surveyed in pure numbers. Mainland China has over three million troops, about a third of which are on the Sino-Soviet border and another third of which are down in the general area opposite Taiwan. A large number of PRC aircraft also are deployed within 500 miles of this same coast. There is also a large number of ships in the area, albeit with very limited technological capability. In numbers the PRC far surpasses what our friends on Taiwan have. ROC capabilities comprise about three Army Corps and two Marine divisions, an aircraft component of about 200 F-5Es along with some F-104s and F-100s, and a limited number of ships. In terms of numbers then, the PRC clearly has the capability of imposing a blockade on Taiwan.

What is important in looking at a problem like this, however, is to try to see it from the point of view of the other side in terms of (a) the options open to them and (b) their ability to carry out the option they may choose. Now the situation between China and Taiwan is influenced heavily by economic, political, and geographical, as well as military considerations. So no one should get the idea that it would be possible for China to execute a blockade similar to that which the U.S. imposed during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. The disposition of forces is such that in my view this is not militarily feasible. The facts are that, if the PRC were to choose such an option, it would immediately escalate. Every study on this subject that I am familiar with comes to that conclusion. There is no such thing as a clean blockade of Taiwan that does not involve other types of combat. A blockade would immediately escalate into a high-level conflict, which would involve very high casualties on both sides.

Now obviously trade by sea is very important to Taiwan’s economy and its overall strength. So shipping is certainly a viable target on the basis of cost effectiveness. But again, it must be remembered that those ships

sailing in and out of Taiwan fly the flags of many nations. One of the quickest ways for mainland China to create a confrontation with other nations would be to inflict damage or casualties on neutral ships or personnel. Anyone who has been down in that general area and seen the flow of traffic through the Bashi Channel and Taiwan Strait understands that it would be impossible to conduct any kind of military blockade without immediate involvement with ships of other nations.

Moreover, the PRC must ponder the fundamental question of what the United States would do if China were to blockade Taiwan.

It appears to me that, certainly as of today, the blockade option is not a viable one and would be unacceptable even to a military novice assigned to come up with a course of action suitable for the PRC. Furthermore, China's main thrust today is to try to lift itself up into the last quarter of the 20th century, to acquire as much technology as it can, and to modernize its entire infrastructure as well as its military forces. That is going to take a tremendous amount of time and effort. I think the PRC will focus on the acquisition of modern procedures and equipment, but it first must acquire foreign exchange. Other nations are not just going to give them such items. Such a process requires peace in the region.

Lurking in the background is the Soviet Union, which is firmly established now in Cam Ranh Bay. There they have TU-16 search aircraft, Mig-23 defensive aircraft, and a squadron of nuclear-powered submarines. This large Soviet presence introduces a new element into the military balance in the Western Pacific and the South China Sea, which China must take into full consideration.

In summary, I would make these points. In terms of numbers, if the PRC wanted to focus its total effort, regardless of the consequences, on trying to effect a blockade, it could do so, but such an effort would immediately escalate into a full-scale war. So the PRC would have to be prepared for full-scale war if it tried to blockade Taiwan. Intercepting shipping and risking the sinking of a neutral country's ship is a very delicate matter, which almost invariably winds up causing a major conflict. The PRC would also have to consider the presence of the Soviets. And perhaps most important would be the risk of interfering with its hoped for economic development.

In short, I do not think it is possible for the PRC to execute a pure and simple blockade. From a contingency plan point of view it does not appear to be a viable option whereby the PRC would gain what it hopes to achieve—the subjugation of Taiwan. It is certainly possible that in fifteen or twenty years from now China could choose to engage in an all-out war

of which a blockade would be just one component. But I do not think the PRC would ever decide to execute only a blockade. We have done studies of that in the U.S. Navy and have always concluded that any effort on the part of China to blockade Taiwan would immediately escalate into a full-fledged war that could spread throughout the entire area.

Mr. Lasater: Thank you, Admiral Moorer. And now, Admiral Ko Tun-hwa of the Republic of China.

Admiral Ko Tun-hwa: About two weeks ago, I received a letter of invitation to come to this roundtable discussion. I hesitated because this is a highly sensitive and military oriented subject. Because of security regulations, I am not supposed to talk openly about military subjects. I cannot say anything I know in connection with my military duties. And naturally I cannot say anything I do not know. So in between the things I know and between the things I do not know I have nothing left to talk about. So I might as well say thank you and conclude right now.

But since I have come, I would like to share with you some of the thought of academic circles in Taiwan. These persons have given good thought to this problem of a possible PRC blockade and are familiar with the general situation in Taiwan waters. So I am not speaking for the ROC Armed Forces, for the government, or for any organization. Nor am I representing myself. What I am going to present is some thought shared by my colleagues in Taiwan.

The Nature of Blockades

If the PRC does decide to launch an anti-shipping campaign against Taiwan, it will be quite a different blockade from other blockades in the history of war. It will not be the same type of blockade that occurred in the American Civil War; nor will it be the type used against Germany in the first and second World Wars; nor will it be like the repelling of the USSR's ships sailing to Cuba in 1962. It will not even be the same type of blockade launched by the ROC against the PRC in 1949 near Shanghai, even though the players remain the same on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Blockade as a means of warfare is aimed at the economic suffocation of the enemy, the cutting of the lines of supply, the undermining of the enemy's war-making capabilities. It seeks to bend the enemy's political will according to a desired end.

But because of technological changes in transportation, industry, and the means of waging war, as well as the ever increasing interdependence

of the world economies—especially among the free democratic nations which rely so much upon seaborne trade—a blockade against one country cannot remain as a simple surface or subsurface naval blockade. It will soon develop into a full-scale three-dimensional war; that is, an air, sea, and land war. The enemy cannot be suffocated by naval ships alone.

Moreover, a blockade cannot be aimed at only one country, especially if the country under attack has substantial trade with the international community. It will not only be the target country that suffers; recent research has found that secondary countries that trade with the target country also will suffer.

Some Possible Scenarios

If the PRC leadership decides to blockade Taiwan, their options may be categorized into four degrees of intensity:

- 1) *High*. Interdict all sea and air lines of communication to Taiwan by maximum forces. If necessary, attack port terminals and airports. Isolate Taiwan by all military means, short of an invasion with landing forces.
- 2) *Medium*. Interdict only the seaborne commerce, leaving air communications open.
- 3) *Low*. Employ a bluff of official port control and sporadic harassment to ward off foreign shipping. Stop and board some merchant ships sailing in and out of Taiwan without actually sinking them. Even sink a ship occasionally by submarines or mines. Reduce the risks to its own ships to a minimum, while causing trouble to Taiwan.
- 4) *Mixed degrees of intensity*. The above courses of action could be mixed. The PRC may vary the degrees from high to low according to changes in world opinion and the ROC's reaction. In the Kinmen crisis of 1958, for example, the PRC started the artillery bombardment with a high degree of intensity of 500,000 shells against the small island. The level was lowered gradually over two weeks. And then the PRC announced the policy of firing only on odd days and not firing on even days. Finally, they forgot about it. The PRC seems to have an unprecedented "creativity" in military affairs. Using the Kinmen model, they might try to stop ships on the odd weeks of the month with two or three submarines and then open the sea passages on the even weeks. It may sound ridiculous, but it also may be an economical way of rotating submarines between patrol stations and bases.

In all of these scenarios the PRC would use not only their submarines, but other types of surface ships plus the numerous motorized junks and fishing vessels at their disposal. Air force would certainly be employed to deter the ROC Air Force's anti-submarine warfare (ASW) patrols.

Is the PRC Capable of Blockading Taiwan?

The answer to this question depends upon many factors, such as the PRC's internal economic and political conditions and its external relations with the two superpowers, other major powers, and neighboring countries. Even assuming the PRC is making reasonably good economic progress and maintaining internal political stability (which may not be the case) and further assuming the PRC does not have to worry about relations with other powers, it still needs to greatly increase its military capabilities to blockade Taiwan.

The PRC has the potential resources to make China a maritime power and to blockade Taiwan. But its capabilities have to be measured in relative terms against Taiwan's capabilities at the time of the blockade. If Taiwan keeps growing as it now is, the ratio of combat effectiveness will not change in favor of the PRC and the PRC will not succeed in the blockade.

One key calculation that must be made is the amount of air superiority the PRC needs to sweep away all of Taiwan's fighters. How many Combat Air Patrols (CAP) does the PRC need to maintain continuous superiority over Taiwan, to intercept all the air traffic flying in and out of Taiwan, and to shoot down all of Taiwan's ASW planes? The ROC does not have to be airborne all the time, but the PRC must maintain a continuous CAP. How many planes would the PRC need? It is not difficult to calculate. There is a simple formula to figure the number of aircraft needed.

In the interest of security, I am not going to explain the formula fully. I only want to say that it would have to take into account the utilization rate, time of missions, distances between the bases and the target areas, speed of the aircraft, and staying time over the targets.

Based on this formula, which is widely used in exercises of this sort by my students at the university, I will say that to employ three aircraft in A team over each of ten target areas (the five major airports and the five major international sea harbors of Keelung, Kaohsiung, Taichung, Suao, and Hualien), the PRC would need four thousand aircraft.

The ROC can shoot down these aircraft by missiles or by fighters. Each PRC aircraft would last for only about four missions—a very high rate of

attrition for the PRC Air Force. And further, the PRC aircraft will be far away from their tactical ground-to-air control.

Taiwan has a very good air defense system. It is much better than the PRC has, and everything goes automatically. There are good ground-to-air missiles. If 4,000 PRC aircraft come over, they will be shot down either by our fighters, or our missiles. It is a great risk for the PRC to try us out.

Do they have that many aircraft? Yes, they have about 7,000 aircraft. But what about aircraft for training and for use against the Soviet Union and Vietnam? They do not have 4,000 aircraft to put against the ROC. Moreover, in order to save fuel, they would need to put their aircraft on the front lines. But they do not have enough runways within 250 miles of Taiwan to take care of 4,000 aircraft. So they would have to develop their inflight refueling capabilities.

In sum, if the PRC wants to blockade Taiwan, their Air Force will be greatly weakened and they will lose their bargaining power with hostile neighbors.

ROC Reaction to the PRC Threat

The best ROC policy to deal with the PRC's potential blockade threat is to take some effective measures beforehand. These measures include stockpiling critical materials, improving command and control for anti-blockade operations, improving the combat readiness of the armed forces, and emphasizing joint naval and air ASW capabilities. The ROC also should have a mobilization plan ready to move the whole country into a wartime economic status in order to withstand the pressure and hardship brought by enemy actions.

The next thing is to develop an anti-blockade fighting strategy, which will enable the ROC to reduce the loss of ships, trade, and cargo to a minimum, while making the cost of the blockade very high to the PRC. Blockade by nature is economic warfare. A successful anti-blockade should be one that makes the costs of blockading higher than those of being blockaded. The object is to hang on indefinitely and force the enemy to give up.

This strategic concept is generally sound. All that should be done and can be done in Taiwan has been done, or is being done, except the acquisition of some hardware. Research and development is being carried out on such hardware or its purchase is being negotiated from foreign countries.

Numerous war games, computerized simulations and analysis, fleet exercises, and other studies have been conducted to train the officers and men of the ROC Navy and Air Force in ASW. The job of ASW for the ROC is different from that of other nations in other conflicts. The PRC has a great number of submarines, but the ROC does not have to deal with all of them. Some may be deployed in the Pacific, South China Sea, or Indian Ocean. The ROC does not have to fight in the same manner as the British in World War II, who had to find and destroy German submarines everywhere in the open sea. We are concerned mostly about PRC submarines stationed near some choke points leading to our major harbors. The few PRC nuclear ballistic missile firing submarines will be kept as a second strike capability against the superpowers. The PRC will not use its best submarines in Taiwan waters as they might be sunk by our hunter-killer groups, mine fields, or navigational hazards.

We in the ROC have a fairly good estimate of how many submarines the PRC can put on station against us, how long they will be on station, their turnabout times between bases and patrol stations, the availability of submarines, their deployment schedules, and the time needed to resupply the weapons spent on board.

Facing an imminent blockade threat, the ROC would probably put some of its merchant ships into convoys while leaving other ships with good speed to sail independently. Air cover would be provided to shipping in some "safety channels" after ships left or before joining the heavy international traffic. Underwater listening devices, mine fields, auxiliary ships, and fishing vessels with detection capabilities would be employed to supplement the air and sea patrols. Highly mobile air and sea hunter-killer groups would be kept in key positions ready to search and strike at the most probable contact areas. Other means of striking back at the enemy might be considered to destroy PRC submarines and surface ships enroute, or even in their bases, depending on the escalation of the conflict.

Difficulties of Submarine Warfare

There are about 24,000 merchant ships sailing all over the world. Every day roughly 10,000 of these are on the seas. Of these, 2,000 are in the Atlantic Ocean and 8,000 are in the Pacific. In general, there is about one ship every three nautical miles along the major sealanes. That is a lot of ships. On a normal day, ships can almost always be seen on the radar. It is just like the traffic in the city. There are major shipping lanes on all sides of Taiwan. Ships going to Japan, Korea, or China go through the Taiwan Strait. Ships heading for the eastern coast of Japan go through the Bashi Strait off our southern tip. Russian merchant ships usually go through

Bashi Strait, although some of them go through the Taiwan Strait. And this does not count the fishing and other small vessels. Each night patrols along the Taiwan Strait see hundreds of fishing boats.

The large number of vessels in the Taiwan Strait and Bashi Strait make it very difficult for PRC submarines to operate there. It is hard to fix position in a submarine. Underneath the water, listening devices are used to find nearby ships, but there is much noise from so many ships. The problem is knowing who to shoot. And in the Taiwan Strait, there is risk of being sunk by the many underwater navigational hazards.

It is dangerous for the PRC to send its best submarines to Taiwan waters. Naturally, we will put out mines. They have plenty of old diesel Romeo and Whiskey classes, but they are very slow. To attack, a submarine should steam at three to five knots. In chasing a fast merchant ship, it can go very fast for 20 miles but then has to surface to regenerate the batteries, which is when it will be picked up by radar and is in mortal danger. So they have to go slow to save themselves.

And if the submarines see the ships, how can they tell who is who? Many Chinese merchant ships fly flags of convenience such as the flag of Panama. By international law the PRC has no right to sink a Panamanian ship. Also by international law, submarines cannot attack merchant ships without warning. They cannot say this is a ROC merchant and fire torpedoes. The submarine captain has to make sure whose ship it is. Furthermore, nobody on the high seas flies a flag.

On the other hand, our job is simplified because we have to take on only those submarines in front of our doors. This is what we call the threat areas. We have enough capability to make these few choke points safe. We can put down underwater detection devices such as listening cables, and we also have sufficient air and ship patrols. The ROC Navy is very small, but it is an ASW type of navy. We have 24 destroyers, and all our warships have some capability for detecting and attacking submarines.

If the PRC wants to blockade us, we will sail our merchant ships along with international traffic. This makes it very difficult for them to identify us. They have almost no practical way to stop us unless they sink every ship on the sealanes. Then they will get into trouble with the other maritime nations. For the short distance from international waterways to our ports, we have several options. One would be independent ship sailing without escort for those merchant ships with good speed. In World War II, for example, most of the American troops crossing the Atlantic were carried by the Queen Elizabeth or Queen Mary with no convoys. These two ships could go much faster than the German submarines. Every ship we have built recently has good speed. Slow ships could be put into

convoys, or we could put all ships into a convoy somehow. We have run many computerized war games and exercises to find out the probability of getting sunk. We know quite well our loss rate if the PRC does this or does that.

Some Probable Outcomes

The outcome of war cannot be predicted short of actual war. So it is difficult to predict precisely what would be the result if the PRC starts a blockade. But we know something about this hypothetical war. If the PRC blockades Taiwan with only low intensity, the blockade cannot be effective. The ROC will not be brought to capitulation. If the PRC blockades with a high degree of intensity, ROC aircraft will join in the hunt for submarines. The PRC will have to sweep the ROC fighters from the skies. The ROC will shoot down the PRC fighters with anti-aircraft missiles. And so the war will soon escalate.

A blockade against Taiwan means cutting off our lifelines. Ninety percent of Taiwan's GNP comes from seaborne trade. If the percentage increase of the per capita income in Taiwan is compared with the percentage increase of the seaborne trade, the two are identical.

So, for its own interest and for its survival, the ROC will fight a blockade. Merchant ships will be sunk, trade will be interrupted, and supplies of critical materials will be reduced. But this does not mean Taiwan is going to surrender. Basically, Taiwan is self-sufficient in food. Unless each farmer's house is bombed, there still will be enough vegetables, chickens, eggs, and pigs left to live on. All the buses and cars may be forced to stop running due to a shortage of fuel, but people can still travel on foot or on bicycles, and the buses can still be towed by water buffalo or horses.

Industries will be hurt, but civilian electricity will probably not be cut drastically. Taiwan has coal, natural gas, and some oil. Taiwan needs only one air flight a year to supply the fuel needs for one of its nuclear power plants. Most people worry about our fuel reserves. Actually, to operate industry in Taiwan we need only one small tanker every three days. If the PRC could sink all the tankers, our reserve would still last a great length of time. The military can always operate, because it consumes less than 5 percent of the total fuel oil. Even under severe bombing, the tanks, aircraft, and ships will have enough fuel. It would be difficult for them to suffocate us.

To force Taiwan to surrender, the PRC will have to invade Taiwan by sea across the Taiwan Strait. If the PRC can manage to land—and that will be difficult—the ROC will fight with its many ever-ready crack

divisions, plus over three million reserve troops who can be mobilized within hours. The PRC will find an invasion of Taiwan a much more difficult battle than the 1979 Vietnamese campaign. We cannot say precisely what will happen unless we actually go to war. But it would be a tremendous cost for the PRC. I do not mind saying that our strategy is to make the war very costly and to hang on longer than the PRC would like.

Impact on Other Countries

Taiwan is located astride important international waterways. If a war breaks out there, it will inconvenience the shipping of many nations.

If the PRC blockaded Taiwan by submarines, ships, and mines, the ROC, in self-defense, would probably retaliate by mining against PRC submarines along with other countermeasures. The mining of international waters in retaliation to the enemy's mining has been done before.

If the PRC tried to wave off foreign ships coming to Taiwan, the ROC could retaliate by closing such PRC harbors as Shanghai. We did this before in 1949 with only a few mines, which had the effect of stopping British ships calling at the port for three months.

Trade with Asia is important to the United States. This year U.S. trade with Asia will be \$170 billion, compared with \$70 or \$80 billion with Europe. The sea lines of communication have to be maintained for the benefit of everybody.

Some important new research has been developed by Dr. Lawrence Klein of the Wharton School of Economics, winner of the 1980 Nobel Prize in economics. It is the wartime project link model. It calculates the interdependence of world economies and demonstrates that, if one nation is attacked by blockade or even by mining, many nations get hurt economically. Not only the primary country under attack suffers, but secondary nations that trade with the primary nation also get hurt. Countries that trade with the secondary nation also suffer. For instance, if the PRC were to blockade Taiwan, Japan would suffer because it makes lots of money trading with Taiwan. And some other country like Belgium, which is not involved in the blockade at all but trades with Japan, also might suffer. The interdependency of the world economies means that any blockade of Taiwan will be felt by most other trading nations.

In 1984, 34,356 ships went in and out of Taiwan's ports. The tonnage, not of the cargo but of the merchant ships, was some 349 million tons. U.S. submarines sank only 8 million tons of Japanese ships in all of World War II. Because of the increase in tonnage and the many ships coming in and out of Taiwan, it would be a huge job for the PRC to try to stop shipping into Taiwan.

We trade with 104 countries, and we have ships going all over the world. Not only would the ROC suffer from a blockade, but also many other nations—including the PRC itself. So purely from the point of view of world trade without counting the military cost, the PRC would suffer by blockading us.

The blockade threat also should be considered from the global point of view. Nothing can be isolated. Suppose the Soviet Union decided to have a showdown with the U.S. to gain outlets to the warm seas. They are very near these in Southwest Asia and have 20 divisions in the Crimea ready to push south within three days. The U.S. Rapid Deployment Force could send only two or three divisions within a certain period of time. If the USSR wanted to fight there, they would have local ground superiority.

The U.S. could choose to fight or not to fight because of the favorable combat environment for the USSR. The Soviets' line of communication is perpendicular to their front lines. The U.S. lines of communication are parallel to the line of operation. Any warfare expert would tell you right away the U.S. is in the most disadvantageous position because it would be supplying its front lines horizontally. If this situation ever occurred, all free nations would have to work together with the U.S. to win this war. If they did not, the U.S. would lose the Middle East oil area and everybody would suffer. Taiwan has its small Army, Navy, and Air Force and is willing to do its part of the job.

Actually, we in the ROC look at this blockade problem not as an issue between the PRC and Taiwan, but in terms of the entire global war effort of free democratic countries. To maintain the supply line in case of a showdown between the U.S. and the USSR, Taiwan must remain as it is because the U.S. lines of supply pass within a few miles of our shores. If Taiwan is lost to the PRC or the Soviet Union, the U.S. will be blackmailed. For all practical purposes, the U.S. bases in the Philippines will be neutralized. And there is trouble with the New People's Army in the Philippines. We in Taiwan have good harbors, good runways, and we have three million reserve troops ready to be mobilized in a few hours. We are ready to help the U.S. in case of need.

We mean business because we have nowhere to go. Our GNP relies 90 percent on sea trade. If this sea trade is cut, our lifeline is cut. We have no choice but to put up a fight, and we have the capability to fight. So, in global terms, it is in the interests of everybody to keep Taiwan as it is.

My conclusions, then, are the following:

- 1) A PRC blockade of Taiwan cannot remain a blockade. It will soon develop into a full-fledged war.

- 2) Because of the interdependence of the world economy, not only the ROC on Taiwan but all its 104 trading partners would be hurt by a blockade.
- 3) For survival and self-defense, the ROC will fight to run the blockade. It will not be easy to bring Taiwan to capitulation.
- 4) The density of shipping passing Taiwan is very high. Major shipping powers will not likely tolerate the disturbance caused by a blockade of Taiwan.
- 5) With some moral and external logistical support, the ROC can hang on indefinitely.
- 6) The probability of a successful PRC blockade of Taiwan is very low. Its cost to the PRC will be tremendously high.

Mr. Lasater: Thank you, Admiral Ko, for an excellent presentation. And now, Naval Captain Jack Tarpey and Marine Colonel Jerry Thomas with a plan that the PRC might adopt should it elect to pursue the blockade option.

Colonel Gerald Thomas: As did Admiral Ko, we prepared a study for an academic institution of a possible scenario that could be used to discuss and examine the many problems that are involved in a blockade of Taiwan by the PRC. We participated with a number of Americans with military planning backgrounds, and we looked at an ascending level of threats: first the blockade; then an all-out air assault to gain air superiority over Taiwan; and finally an invasion. Today, however, we will confine ourselves to the blockade scenario.

Because this scenario was for academic use, it was based entirely on open sources and unclassified information. We did, however, make certain assumptions in its development. The key ones were: First, should the PRC announce a blockade of Taiwan, the international community would recognize Beijing's territorial claims to Taiwan and its right to exercise sovereignty over Taiwan's territorial waters. This would include the PRC's right to establish war zones contiguous to these waters in which neutral vessels could be halted, inspected, seized, or attacked if necessary. Second, the international community would recognize the rights of both the PRC and the ROC as belligerents. And finally, we made the assumption that there would be no superpower intervention or overt assistance to either side.

Our summary of the highlights of our scenario will develop a finer level of detail than that in Admiral Ko's presentation, but I think you will find that it is generally complementary to and supportive of his position.

Captain John Tarpey: I come to you after spending 45 minutes sitting in a motionless subway car stalled in an underground tunnel. (Heritage seems to be one of the few buildings in the Capitol Hill area that has electrical power.) When we were finally led out of the tunnel into the sunshine, we entered a scene of restrained chaos. Those office workers not trapped in building elevators were milling around in front of their workplaces unable to continue their normal jobs without electric lights or air conditioning. Fire trucks and police cars sped about responding to various emergencies. Stop lights were inoperative; taxis were scarce; and it was no small task to make one's way around town. Despite my concern with missing this meeting, I could not help noticing how closely the Capitol Hill predicament corresponded to the circumstances our fictional blockade was designed to generate on Taiwan. Because of a lack of power all productive effort had come to a halt. And that is the objective of the blockade scenario: through the interdiction of energy supplies and raw materials, to bring all productive effort on Taiwan to a halt.

Now the first point I would like to make about this blockade is that, as with most military operations, it is an extremely complex undertaking. To help in this abbreviated presentation, I would like to offer the analogy of a wall. Blockading a nation is essentially building a wall around that nation. What I am going to discuss is the general nature of the bricks that make up the wall, the rough shape of the wall, and why it is built that way.

Objective

The objective of the PRC blockade would be to cause the complete economic, social, and political collapse of Taiwan (ROC); in other words, to bring about a situation in which Taiwan would have no recourse but to accede to China's wishes and agree to reunification. It is within China's capability to accomplish such an objective. But I would not recommend it. Given Taiwan's food-growing capability, the island could hold out for a considerable period of time, albeit at a greatly reduced standard of living and at great pain and sacrifice for its people.

From the standpoint of the blockading power, in this case the PRC, several unsatisfactory developments can occur in long blockades. For one thing, the cost of a blockade over a long period can eventually exceed the cost of a direct frontal assault. Also, political circumstances can change rapidly and situations inimical to the blockade can develop. Also, if a blockade fails to produce results within a reasonable time, its effectiveness—and consequently its legal status—may be brought into serious question.

For these and other reasons I have posited a time-limited blockade, in which the immediate objective would be to so degrade the logistic reserve stocks of Taiwan's military forces that they would become incapable of defending the island against a Chinese invasion. We assume this time limit to be one year.

A fundamental prerequisite of a Chinese blockade would be the ability of PRC forces to establish sea and air control in the various areas of operation of the blockade. This requirement should be considered an inherent task of all military forces involved. Because of time constraints, I am not going to mention these control missions again. But keep this task always in mind.

The Target

Now, what of the target? Taiwan is an island with all the strategic and tactical liabilities of an island. Aside from agriculture, it has minimal natural resources. It lives and prospers by importing raw materials and exporting various manufactured goods. The most critical raw materials imported are petroleum and petroleum related products (POL). We assume that Taiwan maintains a 90-day POL reserve and that strict conservation could stretch that period to 270 days. Beyond that time, it is assumed that POL reserves become inadequate for effective resistance against a determined PRC amphibious assault.

A blockade planner would look at Taiwan as a collection of six ports, several airfields, and two or more oil buoys. The ports are Keelung in the north, Kaohsiung and Taichung in the west, and Suao, Hualien, and Taitung in the east. Only Keelung and Kaohsiung can be considered major ports, and they account for about 80 percent of Taiwan's seaborne commerce.

Blockade Plan

The blockade plan consists of a 30-mile exclusion zone around Taiwan and a war zone encompassing the remaining waters of the Taiwan Strait. An exclusion zone is defined as territorial or contiguous waters in which presence of any unauthorized vessel is deemed to constitute a hostile act against the power proclaiming the exclusion zone (in this case, China). A war zone is defined as territorial or contiguous waters in which military action is likely to occur and in which the proclaiming power asserts the right to direct neutral shipping in its accomplishment of innocent passage, such direction being intended to protect the safety and rights of innocent vessels. All rights of a belligerent party pertain in both zones, and the zonal prescriptions delineated apply also to airspace.

Anatomy of a Blockade

The building blocks or elements of a blockade wall are mines; submarine forces; surface forces; aviation units; provocation forces; raiding forces; unconventional forces; command, administration, and support elements; and collateral activities.

Where do these forces come from, and how would the PRC organize them for the blockade? I envision that in establishing the blockade the operational command would go to the Commander of the East Sea Fleet, within whose area of responsibility Taiwan lies. The North and South Sea Fleets would retain their normal responsibilities and assume additional duties in providing training and support for the blockade. Table 1 shows the resulting assignment of forces. I would increase the submarines (SS) assigned to the East Sea Fleet from 40 to 50, leaving 20 in each of the other fleets. The allowance of Missile Armed Destroyers (DDG) would be increased to 12, leaving two each to the north and south. Sixteen frigates (FF) would be assigned to the blockade, leaving six each in the other fleets.

TABLE 1

PRC NAVY UNIT ASSIGNMENTS TO EAST, NORTH, AND SOUTH SEA FLEETS

<i>Ship Type</i>	<i>East Sea Fleet</i>	<i>North Sea Fleet</i>	<i>South Sea Fleet</i>
SS (Patrol)	50	20	20
DDG	12	2	2
FF	16	6	6
FAC(M)*	120	50	50
FAC(P)	30	5	5
FAC(G)	100	120	120
FAC(T)**	100	75	75
PC(Old)	10		

Sources: Various. Figures rounded due to new construction and decommissioning dates. *Abbreviations: M=missile; P=patrol; G=gunboat; T=torpedo. **Includes 60 mine-capable fast attack craft and 40 Huchuan hydrofoils.

The great numerical strength of the Chinese Navy lies in its array of fast attack craft (FAC). Of these, 350 would be assigned to the blockade, leaving 120 in each of the other fleets. Of the 350 in the blockade force, 120 will be missile armed (FAC(M)), 100 torpedo armed (FAC(T)), 100 in the gunboat configuration (FAC(G)), and the remaining thirty in the general patrol designation (FAC(P)). Although all of these FAC (and most other surface vessels) can be converted to minelaying capability with

relatively little effort, 60 of the FAC(T) are already mine-capable. Another 40 are high-speed hydrofoils. The ten patrol craft (PC(Old)) listed represent a somewhat motley and divergent collection of older vessels, which have come into the Chinese inventory from a variety of sources. While generally too old for frontline duty, they are considerably larger than the FAC and thus possess better sea-keeping qualities, which allows them to maintain blockade presence in heavy weather.

It is anticipated that PLA Navy aircraft in the East Sea Fleet will be augmented by reinforcements from the other two fleets. Additionally, PLA Air Force units would be assigned to duties in support of the blockade.

Minefields

The foundation of this blockade is a series of minefields sealing off the major ports. To accomplish this, 24 (or more) submarines, each carrying 36 mines, would lay minefields up to and perhaps beyond the 100-foot line. The minefields would be undefended and self-sterilizing. Mines would be both bottom and moored, mechanical and combination-influence. Delayed arming, ship-counters, and other anti-sweep devices would be used. Replenishment would be accomplished primarily by submarines, although air and surface laying might become feasible as the blockade progresses.

In conjunction with the mining, blockships could be used. I realize that blockships have a very checkered history, but some of the Taiwanese ports, particularly those at Keelung and Kaohsiung, are protected by breakwaters with extremely narrow mouths. Consequently, they are quite susceptible to disruption by one or more ships sunk near the entrances. In addition, oil buoys would be destroyed wherever located.

Submarine Force

Apart from their role in mining, submarines are the primary anti-shipping force of the Chinese Navy. Submarines, at first, would be deployed in the various approaches to Taiwan's ports. It would not seem necessary to have them scouting all over the oceans for Taiwanese ships. The PRC knows where Taiwan's imports have to be landed. Subsequent developments, however, might necessitate relatively distant deployment in such areas as the Strait of Malacca, but this is not a likely probability.

Surface Force

The primary tasks of the surface force would be interdiction of Taiwan bound shipping, control of neutral shipping, and minefield replenishment.

The problem with the PLA Navy's surface force (and that of the Taiwan Navy too) is that the largest components are frigates and destroyers, and there are not very many. It is doubtful that the Chinese Navy could list more than 44 combined frigates and destroyers in their order of battle. Of these, probably no more than 28 could be allocated to the blockade force. And of these, no more than half could be maintained consistently on blockade stations. This is a serious constraint on Beijing. In addition, these larger ships are in effect the battle lines of both the PLA Navy and the Taiwan Navy. So they must be judiciously used and not subjected to undue risk early in the blockade.

Heavy blockade responsibilities, therefore, would fall upon the fast attack (FAC) and patrol craft (PC), neither of which claim long-range or exceptional sea-keeping abilities. They should, however, be adequate for operation in the Taiwan Strait. There are also means available to compensate somewhat for their shortcomings. The first objective would be to reduce the area required for patrol by these small craft. Remember that in our scenario China claimed the right, in the definition of a War Zone, "to direct neutral shipping in its accomplishment of innocent passage, such direction being intended to protect the safety and rights of innocent vessels." One of the reasons for emphasizing direction is to provide the Chinese Navy with some capability for constraining neutral shipping within controllable areas. The Chinese might, for instance, establish neutral shipping lanes fairly close to their own coastline, thus significantly reducing the amount of the Taiwan Strait requiring close patrolling.

Further assistance to the surface forces could be provided through establishment of shore-based radar posts and surface surveillance centers. It is anticipated that one or more large, fast merchant hulls might be converted to a combination helicopter carrier, radar picket, and afloat command and support center to facilitate the work of the FAC. Additionally, the Chinese Navy would no doubt develop extensive cooperative helicopter-FAC tactics by which the two systems could use their strengths in a complementary manner.

Before leaving the subject of surface forces, I would like to enter something of an aside. I have not mentioned the rules of engagement or other blockade procedures. Such subjects quickly become so complex that they get out of hand, particularly in a discussion of such limited duration as this one. Today we are interested in the possibility of a blockade, not the legal ground rules pertaining thereto. I will limit my remarks on procedures to noting that it is in the interest of the Chinese Navy to simplify control of shipping procedures to the greatest extent possible, minimizing inspections, and aiming for nothing more complex

than a check-in/check-out procedure on a radio net. The objective should be to avoid antagonizing the maritime powers and to reduce the tasks of the small FACs.

Aviation Units

Aviation units assigned to the PLA Navy have as their mission direct support of the blockade. Units of the PLA Air Force may be assigned routinely to both direct and indirect support. Aircraft assigned to the blockade would have several missions. A Combat Air Patrol responsible for anti-air and anti-surface defense of blockade units must be maintained on a regular basis over the Taiwan Strait and other areas as required. Medium-range units of the PLA aviation forces would be involved in short-range surveillance and anti-shipping roles. We can anticipate a requirement for long-range air surveillance in support of the blockade, a mission neither the PLA Navy nor PLA Air Force can satisfy at this time. To fill this gap China could, using equipment currently available on the international market, reconfigure long-range commercial transport aircraft for military missions by installing research radar.

Aerial mining would be contemplated as circumstances permit. Aviation forces also would participate in operations of the Provocation Force.

As for an air blockade, as Admiral Ko indicated, it would be very difficult. We see no true historical precedent, and the enforceability of an air blockade in the case of Taiwan is questionable. International reaction would likely be highly adverse to even the merest suggestion that passenger traffic might be endangered. The ability to continue to import nuclear power fuel by air in the face of a blockade has been alluded to. But the Taiwan military machine does not run on nuclear fuel; it runs on oil, which is the blockade's main target. The materials that could be brought in by air would not be sufficient to defeat the blockade. In reality, then, an air blockade would be more symbolic than tactical, and its impact would play more on morale than on stomachs or machinery.

Provocation Forces

Provocation forces, composed of military units from any of the PLA branches, would be assigned to missions accelerating the consumption of material resources (particularly POL) on Taiwan. These operations could range from simple feints by a few aircraft to large amphibious demonstrations. While POL is the primary target of such operations, continued operations of this would have a cumulative negative affect on Taiwan's morale.

Raiding and Unconventional Forces

Raiding and unconventional forces would be employed in aggressive operations in and over Taiwan. Raiding forces are elements of the PLA acting in a commando role, attacking blockade-related targets. Unconventional forces are clandestine units inserted into Taiwan for such purposes as covert intelligence collection, sabotage, psychological warfare, and other destabilizing operations designed to accelerate the negative effects of the blockade.

Command, Support, and Administrative Organizations

Command, support, and administrative organizations are important elements of any military operation. Although a blockade generates some interesting command problems, our schedule does not allow time for them today. Suffice it to say that the need for appropriate organizational schemes would be recognized.

Collateral Activities

Collateral activities are nonmilitary, primarily diplomatic and economic, activities by which China might complement the blockade effort. These might include preemption of raw material purchases or ship charters, gathering intelligence, or offering economic incentives to neutrals to encourage cooperation in the blockade.

In our estimation, all of these elements together would present Taiwan with a formidable problem should the PRC elect to use them in a blockade.

Colonel Thomas: I want very briefly to summarize some of the possible military moves the ROC could take to counter a blockade, should it be established in the Taiwan Strait.

As has been pointed out, the Republic of China would have to take immediate measures very quickly to mobilize its economy, and particularly to conserve fuel. It should be noted that in the near future as much as 50 percent of Taiwan's energy requirements will be met by nuclear power plants. So it is feasible that the civilian economy could be mobilized to mitigate the effects of reduced oil imports.

In addition, the ROC would have to demonstrate that the blockade is ineffective—an important point in international law. Kaohsiung, Taichung, and Keelung are the major ports, accounting for over 90 percent of current port capacity. The eastern ports of Hualien and Suao (currently being built up as a supplement to Keelung which has reached its capacity)

represent less than 10 percent of Taiwan's total port capacity. However, this 10 percent would need to be kept open, and it probably could be with the ROC forces involved.

From the point of view of PRC military planners, Taiwan is a tremendous obstacle—a 250-mile-long obstacle. You cannot drive ships through it; you can fly aircraft over it only at great risk. So the mountainous area to the east of Taiwan is where the relative combat power favors the ROC. In the area just northeast of Taiwan in the Ryukyus chain are Japanese national waters. Convoys could be safely assembled in this area. From there they could be escorted enroute to Taiwan's east coast ports with ROC surface ships, overwatched by ASW aircraft and by tactical aircraft with an ASW attack capability. And with current ROC forces, this could be done readily for an extended period of time. The real limitation is the capacity of those eastern ports, but improvisation and all types of unusual methods could be used to handle cargoes: vessels with light tonnage; off loading ships outside of port, which would involve moving barges along the coast to other areas where they could be unloaded. This would increase port capacity and keep some supplies steadily entering Taiwan.

The PRC could not do much to counter this, since it is an area in which it is difficult for them to operate. The PLA Navy does not have a tradition of operating far from its home bases. With the ROC's excellent air defense over Taiwan, it would be very difficult for the PRC to bring in surface units or aircraft to the east of the island. They would be limited to submarine operations, which would require the submarines to be submerged during daylight and to surface steam at night to recharge their batteries. As Admiral Ko has pointed out, this gives great advantage to high speed merchant ships: a 20-knot ship has a 6 to 1 speed advantage over a 3-knot submarine. PRC submarines thus would have to be positioned on known sealanes where they would be more readily detected and destroyed.

So our analysis agrees very closely with that of Admiral Ko. Taiwan could keep supplies coming into the island for a long time.

As for other concerned powers, Japan has very large trade and investment interests in Taiwan. Given its restraints on the use of military force, Tokyo's only options would be to increase surveillance and to ensure the integrity of its territorial waters. Unanswered questions are whether Japanese ships would respect the blockade and whether Japanese ports would be available for the transshipment of cargoes bound for Taiwan. This would involve the use of Japanese port facilities to transfer cargoes from the ships of other nations to ships of the ROC merchant marine.

We believe the ROC initially would be fairly cautious about attempt-

ing to use foreign flag ships to break the blockade. It would be prudent to use its own merchant ships until Taipei worked out the procedures and the ROC naval and air escort forces were working smoothly. Questions of language and authority also would be much simpler if the convoys initially were made up of Taiwan ships. So at least until the feasibility of blockade running was demonstrated, it might be best not to attempt to convoy the ships of another nation into Taiwan ports.

The ports most readily available for transshipment are Manila, about 700 miles away, or Japanese ports such as Naha, Okinawa (350 miles), or Kobe which is still less than 1,000 miles away. Whether these ports would be available is a political question.

In our opinion U.S. military options also would be limited. Washington would be under great pressure to take some action in view of the U.S. commitment under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. However, its actions likely would be limited to increased reconnaissance in the area, positioning the Seventh Fleet so that it could react if necessary, increasing theater force levels in case of escalation, and certainly continuing to provide defensive weapons to Taiwan.

The third power that is involved is the Soviet Union, which has military air and naval traffic continuously passing around Taiwan to and from its bases in the Soviet Far East and Cam Ranh Bay and points farther east. Soviet merchant ships and some commercial aircraft also pass Taiwan. Our estimate is that neither the PRC nor the ROC would interfere with Soviet traffic. Neither has anything to gain by doing so. However, the point needs to be made that, in any situation where Taiwan is brought under great pressure by a blockade or other PRC military action, the Soviet Union would have the option of giving Taiwan critical support. Under certain conditions, the Soviet Union might well attempt to drive a bargain with Taipei to provide material aid in exchange for military basing rights. Taiwan, reduced to a very critical state, might have few other choices.

Finally, I would like to make the point that both sides would be fighting essentially a World War II type combat. If either side could acquire advanced weapons systems to upgrade its anti-submarine warfare, electronic warfare, surface-to-air missiles, or air-to-air missiles, then there would be a dramatic tactical advantage shift to one side over the other.

So, essentially, we see a standoff. We agree with Admiral Ko that it appears that the ROC could hold out for a long time. However, small changes in the tactical ability of either side could make a dramatic difference as to the outcome of this type of situation.

Mr. Lasater: Thank you. Now I would like to have a few comments from the audience. William Carpenter of SRI International is a specialist on strategic forecasts for the ROC. He has looked specifically at the blockade threat.

William Carpenter: SRI has studied this Taiwan blockade problem, and there is a consensus that action would not be limited to just a blockade. I would hope that, at some point in the not-too-distant future because of the Taiwan Relations Act and because of the moral commitment that the United States has to Taiwan, the United States would make a statement to the effect that we would view with very great alarm the imposition of a blockade around Taiwan.

The other point I would like to raise is the remarkable precedent set during the post-World War II era concerning attacks on ships at sea. From 1945 until 1975 there was virtually no attempt by any nation—even belligerents such as the United States and its allies in the Korean and Vietnam Wars—to sink ships at sea. We finally did blockade Hanoi, but that was near the end of the war. But compare this with the figures in the Persian Gulf War. Casualties in 1978 totaled 73 ships; then it moved down to 70 in 1981, up to 80 in 1982, 12 in 1983, and 22 in 1984 for a total of 132 ships. That is just in the Persian Gulf. This reflects a remarkable change in the ground rules that have held sway ever since World War II. And we have not done anything about it.

The reason I raise this point is that the same dilemma might face us in the Strait of Taiwan. The Persian Gulf War could be a dangerous precedent. The PRC might learn a lesson from this and think they could get away with sinking ships of major powers in a blockade of Taiwan. I hope that is not so.

Mr. Lasater: I would now like to recognize Professor Hungdah Chiu of the University of Maryland School of Law.

Hungdah Chiu: Since the normalization of relations between the United States and the PRC on January 1, 1979, the PRC repeatedly has refused to rule out the use of force against Taiwan. However, as of late last year, the PRC had not specified the type of force it might use against Taiwan. Then on October 11, 1984, a Japanese visitor quoted Deng Xiaoping, the *de facto* ruler of China, as saying China possessed the military capability to blockade. More recently, on April 10, 1985, in an interview with Lu Keng, a journalist based in the United States, Hu Yaobang, General

Secretary of the Chinese Communist party, said: "If we have the strength to enforce a blockade and if Taiwan vehemently opposes reunification, we shall have to consider enforcing a blockade." Thus, the PRC leaders have now specified that the type of force they might use against Taiwan is a blockade. The resort to this type of use of force is understandable.

Taiwan, although less than 0.5 percent of the size and less than 2 percent of the population of the mainland, has a gross national product (GNP) of about 16 percent of the mainland (\$49 billion, Taiwan, v. \$313 billion, or \$2,444 v. \$303 per capita in 1983). To attack this prosperous area by bombing, invasion, or missile attack, thereby reducing it to rubble would serve no useful purpose to the PRC. It would create a refugee and resettlement problem for the PRC in a hypothetical postwar period. Internationally, such a ruthless use of force would be condemned by many countries and overseas Chinese, and it would severely undermine PRC relations with Japan, the U.S., and Southeast Asian countries.

But with the limited use of force in a "blockade," the PRC hopes to force the Republic of China on Taiwan to the negotiating table to accept its "one country, two systems" Hong Kong model to unify Taiwan with the mainland. Through such tactics, the PRC hopes to minimize the adverse consequences of its attempted military action against Taiwan. Generally speaking the PRC's possible tactics can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Put out a seemingly reasonable offer for negotiation under the formula "one China, two systems" to influence world public opinion, especially in the United States. This formula promises that Taiwan can maintain its status quo with a "high degree of autonomy" under unification. However, after Taiwan was incorporated into the PRC, the latter would retain the right to interpret or even to cancel the so-called "high degree of autonomy." There is no guarantee that the PRC would not change its promise.
- 2) Since in the West individuals, social organizations, corporations, and countries negotiate everything almost daily, the refusal of the ROC to negotiate with the PRC would put it in a very unfavorable position, despite the fact that accepting the PRC's "one country, two systems" proposal as the basis for negotiation would almost be tantamount to suicide.
- 3) Over a period of, say, five to ten years, the ROC's military capability would deteriorate vis-à-vis the PRC in the Taiwan Strait because

of the limitation of the quantity and quality of arms the U.S. could sell to the ROC under the August 17, 1982, U.S.-PRC Communique. Under these circumstances, the ROC would not be in a position to react effectively to the PRC's blockade.

- 4) Since the PRC's resort to the use of force through blockade would be for limited political purposes—i.e., forcing the ROC to the negotiating table—the U.S. would be in a dilemma in formulating its response. Would the U.S. want to disrupt its whole relationship with the PRC by taking a high profile response? The PRC, I believe, considers this unlikely. The PRC hopes that under the circumstances the U.S. might even take certain actions to persuade the ROC to negotiate

What should the U.S. and the ROC do to prevent the occurrence of the above scenario? First, the U.S. should strengthen the ROC's naval capability, especially its counter-submarine warfare capacity. This would not be in violation of the August 17, 1982, Communique, because the limitation of the quantity and quality of arms sold to Taiwan under the Communique is contingent on the PRC's peaceful intentions toward Taiwan. Twice since the issuance of the Communique the PRC has specifically indicated its intention to blockade Taiwan. Therefore, the U.S. should make a selective response commensurate with such actions and upgrade the ROC's ASW capability. In order to avoid offending the PRC publicly, this should be carried out quietly.

Second, recent indications by PRC leaders of their intention to use force against Taiwan appear to suggest that it is very likely that the PRC's "peaceful intention" might suddenly change in the future. In order to respond effectively to such an eventuality, the U.S. must train a sufficient number of ROC military personnel to use high performance jet fighters and other new weapons. Without a sufficient pool of military personnel trained to use new weapons, the ROC would not be in a position to use new weapons supplied by the U.S. in response to any future PRC military action against Taiwan. This is because the mastery of modern weapons requires a long time.

Third, the U.S. should transfer certain high technology to the ROC for developing the latter's defensive weapons. The August 17, 1982, Joint Communique provides limitations only on arms sales. There is no limitation on the transfer of technology.

Finally, the ROC should respond more effectively to the PRC's peace offensive, especially its "one China, two systems" model. The mere rejec-

tion of that model without providing a persuasive counter offer can only put the ROC in a deteriorating position in world public opinion, especially in the United States.

Unidentified Guest: I would like to ask Colonel Thomas or Captain Tarpey how the ROC could counter the mine warfare threat against Taiwan? I would like to put the question in the context of the *Moore's Fighting Ships* suggestion that even the United States in time of war would not have enough countermine warfare assets to keep key U.S. ports clear.

Captain Tarpey: I served on a minesweeper when I was younger, and I have a very healthy respect for mine warfare. It is the most underrated form of naval warfare in existence. Very few people realize the tremendous potential of mine warfare. The only way to counter mines is to remove them either by minesweeping or by locating them and either dropping a charge right on top or picking them up with a hoist. I do not see a lot of mine countermeasure forces in Taiwan.

Unidentified Guest: Most of the countries that Taiwan trades with also have diplomatic relations with the PRC. Can the PRC effectively require that all the ships wanting to trade with Taiwan clear customs in Shanghai or some other PRC port?

Mr. Lasater: I will try to answer that. One of the fears expressed by some analysts is that the PRC would simply declare that a blockade was in effect and demand that any ships bound for Taiwan clear customs through Shanghai. How effective that would be is difficult to predict. Some have said that insurance rates would immediately rise to prohibitively high levels for most shippers. But others have said that the number of countries trading with Taiwan whose interests would be adversely affected is so large that considerable political and diplomatic pressure would mount on the PRC to rescind its order.

Unidentified Guest: The PRC can say to these countries that they have previously agreed that there is but one China, that Taiwan is a part of that China, that the PRC is going to exercise its sovereignty over that area. Under international law, there potentially is a case.

Hungdah Chiu: Some countries acknowledge or note the PRC claim to Taiwan. Others do not even mention the Taiwan question. So this would not be effective under international law. The PRC has tried this argument before. It instructs countries with which it has diplomatic relations not to

issue visas to people from Taiwan. But most countries do so anyway through unofficial offices.

Captain Tarpey: One of the points I did not cover adequately when I listed the elements of blockade is collateral activities. This is the type of thing I had in mind under economic war. The problem is that a paper blockade is nonmilitary and not legal under international law. So we do not consider a paper blockade to be very effective.

Unidentified Guest: Admiral Ko made a statement that the PRC also would suffer economically from enforcing a blockade. Could you elaborate on what you meant by that?

Admiral Ko: The PRC trades with many Western nations which also trade with Taiwan. All are part of the network of economic interdependence, and all will be affected by a blockade of Taiwan. From a commercial point of view, nobody can be isolated from this international network of trading interdependence.

Thomas Robinson, Georgetown University: With regard to the August 17, 1982, Communique, is it not true that if the PRC does take the kinds of action that we have been talking about they thereby abrogate the Communique? Hence, all bets would be off as to what kinds of military response the United States might take. I should think that, according to the language of the Communique itself, the U.S. would be free to do whatever it wanted to assist Taiwan or to take actions according to its own interests.

Also, such developments as the coming into possession by both sides of new weapon systems have not been taken sufficiently into account. Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs) are so quickly reconfiguring the nature of warfare that it is hard to make any kind of predictions on the basis of existing weaponry. And until you can do that, I am not sure what kind of conclusions can hold up over more than, say, the next four or five years. Taiwan is developing its PGMs and the United States, even within the context of the August 17 Communique, is supporting Taiwan in this endeavor.

Finally, I do not necessarily accept that the assumption that the blockade would take place without any follow-up. It might well occur, but it would seem that the PRC has only one chance in the next 25 or 30 years to take Taiwan by force. If it is going to use force in a blockade, it has to be the preliminary for something else. If Beijing does not succeed at that

time, Taiwan is essentially going to be an independent state. Taipei does have that option at that point, having demonstrated its independence in the ultimate sense of the term. And the PRC would have demonstrated that its policy of peaceful reunification was nothing but a series of empty statements. The PRC has one chance and it has to make sure. That means total takeover of the island. The blockade, then, would have to be a prelude to some further major military operations against the island. This would seem to be outside the realm of possibility for the next 20 to 25 years.

John Copper, Rhodes College: I agree with Tom Robinson's point that Beijing will likely have just one shot at taking Taiwan by force. But I would like to note that investor confidence on Taiwan seems to have dropped recently. In part this reflects sensitivity to Deng's remarks about blockading the island. But perhaps after hearing the results of this meeting, the people on Taiwan will have more confidence in their future. The decision to impose a blockade on Taiwan would be a very serious one. A blockade cannot just be announced and be effective. If it could not enforce the blockade the PRC would be seen as just a "paper tiger."

Lu Ya-li, Atlantic Council: I agree with much of what has been said. One thing, however, bothers me. Most of the panelists seem to think that the possibility of such a blockade is low and that, even if the PRC were to impose it, the attempt would probably fail. It seems to me that the PRC leadership in deciding to impose a blockade might not regard it primarily as a military option. Instead, they might regard it as a relatively costless means to test the reactions of Western governments, Western businessmen, and the people of Taiwan. The blockade would not need to be a full-fledged military exercise imposed with a full fleet of aircraft and naval vessels. It could remain mainly a "paper blockade" with diplomatic announcements coupled with an occasional use of "force."

From the viewpoint of the PRC leadership, such a course might produce certain political advantages. In the first place, it would be a means to demonstrate to Western governments that the PRC is serious about the "Taiwan issue." If Western governments showed any weakness, the PRC might well conclude that a military solution of the problem is possible. It would also put the people of Taiwan to the test. If massive outflows of capital and other undesirable consequences occurred, the PRC might decide that the time is ripe for solving the Taiwan problem. So I do not think we should lightly dismiss the possibility of such a blockade. Even more, we should do something to prepare for such an eventuality.

Mr. Lasater: Thanks to all of you. This has been a very interesting and informative discussion. Obviously, there are many more aspects of the problem that could be covered, and perhaps we will do that sometime in the near future.

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THE HERITAGE LECTURES

Mainland China blockading Taiwan? The question is not far-fetched. Warned General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, Hu Yaobang, in May 1985: "If we have the strength to enforce a blockade and if Taiwan vehemently opposes reunification, we shall have to consider enforcing a blockade." These words provide the compelling rationale for this discussion sponsored by The Heritage Foundation's Asian Studies Center. Four experts bring their wide experience in Pacific military affairs to bear on such questions as: Does the People's Republic of China have the military capability for a blockade? How would it be effected? How would it affect U.S. interests?

Among their observations is general agreement that the PRC has the military power to impose a blockade. But the discussion also clarifies such potential obstacles to a blockade's success as: Taiwan's staying power; the widespread effects on neutral shipping, including that of the United States; the near certainty that a workable blockade would lead to all-out war.

These are realities that Beijing must consider before opting to use a blockade to force reunification.