

Pacific Fleet Commander Says He Has a Duty To Prevent Seizure of Taiwan



Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet Adm. Sam Paparo speaks to Forward Deployed Naval Forces, Commander, Fleet Activities Sasebo and tenant command leadership onboard CFAS June 9, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jasmine Ikusebiala*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet says he is concerned about People's Republic of China (PRC) as a pacing threat, but he is also confident in his forces, allies and operational designs to thwart any attempt by China to seize Taiwan by force.

"China is a pacing threat," Adm. Sam Paparo said June 29 during the final webinar of the West 2021 symposium of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, and the U.S. Naval Institute. Paparo said he interpreted that to mean China's development of its own combat capability, particularly maritime capability, "is the factor that we're taking into account in making our own investments in our own combat capabilities."

Paparo, who took command of the Pacific Fleet in May, said he completely agreed with the former head of Indo-Pacific Command, Adm. Philip Davidson, who told a Senate hearing in March that China might attempt to take over Taiwan in six years, as part of its aim to expand its influence across the region and supplant the U.S. leadership role in the rules-based international order by 2050. China claims Taiwan, a position officially supported by the United States.

"I worry about China's intentions," Paparo said. "It doesn't make a difference to me, whether it is tomorrow, next year or

whether it is in six years. At Pacific Fleet and Indo-Pacific Command we have a duty to be ready to respond to threats to U.S. security.”

That duty includes delivering a fleet “capable of thwarting any effort on the part of the Chinese to upend that [world] order, to include the unification by force of Taiwan to the People’s Republic of China,” the admiral said. “But I also feel confident in our Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen ... as well as our operational designs to thwart such an effort with the teamwork of our allies and partners.”

Asked if there was any further discussion of creating a numbered fleet for the Indian Ocean, Paparo noted that by Navy doctrine, every numbered fleet is a tactical three star headquarters that can be deployed worldwide against any task.

“No numbered fleet, anywhere in the world has a monopoly on any battle space. They are broadly associated with bits of geography by convention,” he said. While hard to imagine the 5th, 6th or 7th fleets being separated from the geographic areas where they have deep relationships as a function of their placement, the 4th, 2nd and 3rd fleets “are up and ready rounds that can be deployed to the point of need.”