

# China's Maritime Militia

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An important component of China's local armed forces is the militia—an armed mass organization of mobilizable personnel who retain their normal economic responsibilities in daily civilian life. A reserve force of immense scale, the militia is organized at the grassroots level of society: its units are formed by towns, villages, urban sub-districts, and enterprises. It supports China's armed forces in a variety of functions, and is seeing expanded mission roles as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) continues to modernize. Militia units may vary widely from one location to another, as the composition of each one is based on local conditions (*yindi zhiyi*). A good example is the establishment of emergency repair units in areas with a strong shipbuilding industry. While the Maritime Militia is not a new addition to China's militia system, it is receiving greater emphasis since China now aspires to become a great maritime power and because maritime disputes in China's near seas are a growing concern.

No official definition of the Maritime Militia exists in the many sources the authors examined. However, in late 2012 the Zhoushan garrison commander, Zeng Pengxiang, and the garrison's Mobilization Office described it concisely: “The Maritime Militia is an irreplaceable mass armed organization not released from production and a component of China's ocean defense armed forces [that enjoys] low sensitivity and great leeway in maritime rights protection actions.”<sup>2</sup> Of course, this description does not cover all aspects of the Maritime Militia. Members of the Maritime Militia are all primary militia (*jigan minbing*), as opposed to those in the less active ordinary militia (*putong minbing*). The former receive more frequent training, and they have more advanced skills for carrying out missions at sea.

Logically, the Maritime Militia is found in port areas with large fishing, shipbuilding, or shipping industries where experienced mariners or craftsmen provide a ready pool of recruits.<sup>3</sup> Citizens can join land-based primary militia organizations when they are between the ages of 18 and 35 (or 45 for those who have special skills). The Maritime Militia also has relaxed policies for age requirements, with even more emphasis on their specialized skills in some localities (e.g.,

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<sup>1</sup> The ideas expressed here are those of the authors alone. A complete compendium of their previous publications on this subject may be accessed at <<http://www.andrewerickson.com/2016/02/trailblazers-in-warfighting-the-maritime-militia-of-danzhou/>>.

<sup>2</sup> 曾鹏翔, 傅志刚, 连荣华 [Zeng Pengxiang, Chuan Zhigang, Lian Ronghua], “科学构建海上民兵管控体系” [Scientifically Build a Maritime Militia Management System], *National Defense*, No. 12 (2014), pp. 68-70.

<sup>3</sup> 张荣胜, 陈明辉 [Zhang Rongsheng and Chen Minghui], “关于组织动员海上民兵参与维权行动的几点思考” [Some Thoughts on Organizing and Mobilizing Maritime Militia to Participate in Maritime Rights Protection Actions], *National Defense*, No. 8 (2014), pp. 12-13.

Yancheng City of Jiangsu Province extended the maximum age for its maritime militiamen to 55).<sup>4</sup>

The only estimate of the size of the Maritime Militia obtained during the course of this research was from a source published in 1978, which put the number of personnel at 750,000 on approximately 140,000 craft.<sup>5</sup> In its 2010 Defense White Paper, China stated that it had 8 million primary militia members nationwide.<sup>6</sup> The Maritime Militia is a smaller unique subset since it performs many of its missions at sea. Since an accurate number is not available this chapter takes more of a grassroots approach and attempts to determine the average size of a unit at the local level. It is important to note that the Maritime Militia is distinct from both China's coastal militia (shore based) and its naval reserve, although some coastal militia units have been transformed into Maritime Militia units.<sup>7</sup>

Although this paper focuses on the current organization and employment of Chinese Maritime Militia organizations, it first puts this force into context by presenting a brief history of the Maritime Militia and a discussion of the changing role of militia in the Chinese armed forces as the PLA continues its transformation into a force that will win high-tech local wars under informatized conditions. Next, it examines the current role of the Maritime Militia in China's goal of becoming a great maritime power, which will include both old and new mission areas. Because of the Maritime Militia's localized roots, a section of this paper is devoted to surveying Maritime Militia activities in various provinces along China's coast. This will give the reader a sense of this force's scale and diversity. The remaining sections will address specific Maritime Militia modes of training, organization, and command and control, and will offer possible scenarios and implications.

## History of China's Maritime Militia

China's militia system originated before the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power, but the system of making numerous state-supported maritime militias out of the coastal populations was not fully implemented until the Communists began to exercise greater control of the coastline in the 1950s. This segment of China's population had been relatively isolated from events on land and was subject to Japanese and Nationalist control in the decades before CCP

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<sup>4</sup> 民兵工作条例 [Regulations on Militia Work], “关于认真做好 2015 年民兵整组工作的通知” [Notice on Seriously Completing 2015 Militia Reorganization Work], *Issued by the Sheyang County Huangsha Port Township Government*, 24 March 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Uhalley, “China in the Pacific,” *Oceans* (May 1978), p. 33; op. cit. David G. Muller, Jr., *China as a Maritime Power* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> *China's National Defense in 2010* (Beijing: State Council Information Office, March 2011), [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-03/31/c\\_13806851.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-03/31/c_13806851.htm).

<sup>7</sup> 戴佳辰, 耿跃亭 [Dai Jiachen and Geng Yueting], “海上维权民船动员需求与对策研究” [Research on Requirements and Measures in Civilian Vessel Mobilization for Maritime Rights Protection], *国防* [National Defense], No. 10 (2015), pp. 41-44.

rule was established. The CCP targeted the fishing communities, creating fishing collectives and work units, enacting strict organizational control, and conducting political education.<sup>8</sup> Factors motivating and shaping this transformation included:

- The PLA's early use of civilian vessels
- The need to man the Maritime Militia with fishermen, as there were too few other experienced mariners.
- Confrontations with other states' fishing and naval vessels, due to the depletion of fishery resources and the need to fish farther from shore.
- The need to prevent Nationalist incursions along the coast.
- The transformation from coastal defense militias to the at-sea Maritime Militia.
- Overall trends in militia development, including specialization, emergency response, technological units, and increased orientation towards supporting each of the PLA branches.

The Maritime Militia has played significant roles in a number of military campaigns and coercive incidents over the years, including:

- The 1950s support of the PLA's island seizure campaigns
- The 1974 seizure of the western portion of the Paracels
- The 2009 *Impeccable* incident
- The 2011 harassment of Vietnam's survey vessels (*Viking II* and *Binh Minh*)
- The 2012 Scarborough Shoal standoff (Tanmen Militia present)
- The 2014 *Haiyang Shiyou-981* oil rig standoff.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Bruce Swanson, *Eighth Voyage of the Dragon* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982), pp. 216-23.

<sup>9</sup> Detailed analysis concerning these and related issues is available in the authors' other publications. See Andrew S. Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, "Trailblazers in Warfighting: The Maritime Militia of Danzhou," Center for International Maritime Security, 1 February 2016, <http://cimsec.org/trailblazers-warfighting-maritime-militia-danzhou/21475>; Andrew S. Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, "China's Daring Vanguard: Introducing Sanya City's Maritime Militia," Center for International Maritime Security, 5 November 2015, <http://cimsec.org/chinas-daring-vanguard-introducing-sanya-citys-maritime-militia/19753>; Christopher P. Cavalas, "China's 'Little Blue Men' Take Navy's Place in Disputes," *Defense News*, 2 November 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/2015/11/02/china-lassen-destroyer-spratly-islands-south-china-sea-andrew-erickson-naval-war-college-militia-coast-guard-navy-confrontation-territorial-dispute/75070058/>; Andrew S. Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, "Irregular Forces at Sea: 'Not Merely Fishermen—Shedding Light on China's Maritime Militia'," Center for International Maritime Security, 2 November 2015, <http://cimsec.org/new-cimsec-series-on-irregular-forces-at-sea-not-merely-fishermen-shedding-light-on-chinas-maritime-militia/19624>; Andrew S. Erickson, "Making Waves in the South China Sea," A ChinaFile Conversation, Asia Society, 30 October 2015, <http://www.chinafile.com/conversation/making-waves-south-china-sea>; Andrew S. Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, "Directing China's 'Little Blue Men': Uncovering the Maritime Militia Command Structure," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 9 September 2015, <http://www.andrewerickson.com/2015/11/chinas-daring-vanguard-introducing-sanya-citys-maritime-militia/>; Andrew S. Erickson, "New U.S. Security Strategy Doesn't Go Far Enough on South China Sea," China Real Time Report (中国实时报), *Wall Street Journal*, 24 August 2015, <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2015/08/24/new-asia-pacific-maritime-security-strategy-necessary-but-insufficient/?mod=WSJBlog>; Andrew S. Erickson and Conor

## Role in China's Goal of Becoming a Great Maritime Power

Since 2012, China's efforts to reach its strategic development goal of becoming a great maritime power have been greatly enhanced under Xi Jinping's leadership. The Maritime Militia's role in these efforts has received top-level leadership attention, from Xi on down. The fishing industry and the Maritime Militia built within it have been employed as political tools of the state to consolidate China's maritime claims, particularly in the South China Sea. Because the Maritime Militia is a grassroots movement in coordination with the nation's growing overall strategic emphasis on the ocean, its roles are as political as they are operational.

In 2013, He Zhixiang, director of the Guangdong Military Region (MR) Headquarters Mobilization Department, specifically pointed out three roles of the Maritime Militia:

- It forms a certain embodiment of national will (*guojia yizhi*) of the people in implementing maritime administrative control.
- It helps shape public opinion, as a group of "model" mariners meant to inspire both enterprises and the masses to get involved in maritime development and travel out to China's possessions (disputed islands and reefs).
- It is a guarantor of maritime safety, with its members often serving as the first responders in emergencies since they are already distributed out across the seas.<sup>10</sup>

In the first two roles, considering the strong Party control of China's armed forces and its militia organizations, the Maritime Militia forms an important part of the political mobilization of society towards the maritime environment. The third role is a result of the Maritime Militia's normal productive activities at sea, a means of rapid initial response to various contingencies.

Director He also states that the Maritime Militia is an important force for normalizing China's administrative control of the seas, since it is on the front lines of rights protection. He calls for all areas within the nine-dashed line to have Maritime Militia presence.<sup>11</sup> Despite the Maritime Militia's role as a reserve force to be called on when needed, its use is increasingly routine.

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M. Kennedy, "Tanmen Militia: China's 'Maritime Rights Protection' Vanguard," *The National Interest*, 6 May 2015, <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/tanmen-militia-china%E2%80%99s-maritime-rights-protection-vanguard-12816>; Andrew S. Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, "China's Island Builders: The People's War at Sea," *Foreign Affairs*, 9 April 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/east-asia/2015-04-09/china-s-island-builders>; Andrew S. Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, "Meet the Chinese Maritime Militia Waging a 'People's War at Sea,'" China Real Time Report (中国实时报), *Wall Street Journal*, 31 March 2015, <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2015/03/31/meet-the-chinese-maritime-militia-waging-a-peoples-war-at-sea/>.

<sup>10</sup> 何志祥 [He Zhixiang], "谈海上民兵建设'四纳入'" [Discussion on the "Four Integrations" in Maritime Militia Construction], *National Defense*, No. 4 (2013), pp. 36-37.

<sup>11</sup> He Zhixiang, "适应海防安全形势--建强海上民兵组织" [Adjusting to the Security Situation in Sea Defense—Strengthen Maritime Militia Organization], *National Defense*, No. 1 (2015), pp. 48-50.

The primary role for China's militia is to be an external defense force; its secondary role, to be a domestic security force.<sup>12</sup> It is also an important reserve force responsible for mobilizing in times of emergencies and war (*yingji yingzhan*). The Maritime Militia retains this orientation, serving external defense while assisting domestic security forces at sea. Domestic security roles take the form of conducting marine rescue operations and assisting maritime law enforcement (MLE) forces, while external defense roles entail performing a variety of operations to assist the PLA Navy (PLAN) as well as conducting independent operations.

The Maritime Militia is assigned a variety of missions, from more traditional logistics support for ground forces, to more advanced missions in support of the navy. Relatively new missions for the Maritime Militia include those focused on protecting China's maritime rights. The following list of mission roles is not exhaustive, but rather a summary of those detailed in Chinese sources:

- In “support the front” (*zhiqian*) missions, the Maritime Militia has roles in assisting the PLA and PLAN. It augments transport capacity through the loading and delivery of troops, vehicles, equipment, and materials; conducts medical rescue and retrieval of casualties; provides navigational assistance; conducts emergency repairs or refitting of vessels, docks, and other infrastructure; provides fuel and material replenishment at sea; and conducts other various logistical functions. It also prepares for engaging in cover and concealment operations (*weizhuang*) for army and naval units through the use of smoke, corner reflectors, and chaff grenades. The Maritime Militia also trains to conduct mine warfare and assist in blockade operations. As in many modern militia units, the areas of construction, information, and electronic warfare are becoming increasingly emphasized.
- Many new units have been formed for emergency response (*yingji*)—that is, to handle “*tufa shijian*,” a broad term that includes a variety of fast-erupting contingencies loosely defined as natural disasters, accidents, public health incidents, and societal security incidents that develop rapidly, harm the public, and require unconventional means of response.<sup>13</sup> In 2007, the National People's Congress passed the “Emergency Response Law of the People's Republic of China,” which requires the militia to participate in relief efforts. Maritime Militia emergency response units are tasked with handling sudden incidents at sea, such as rescue and relief operations. They make good first responders, as they may be near any incidents at sea—as expressed by the phrase *jiudi jiujin*, referring to responses made by nearby local forces. This tends to be a peacetime endeavor but is also certainly involved in a wartime setting.

<sup>12</sup> Dennis Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> “中华人民共和国突发事件应对法” [Emergency Response Law of the People's Republic of China], Chapter 3, Articles 3 and 17, Retrieved from Baike, 1 November 2007, [http://www.baike.com/wiki/%E3%80%8A%E4%B8%AD%E5%8D%8E%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E5%85%B1%E5%92%8C%E5%9B%BD%E7%AA%81%E5%8F%91%E4%BA%8B%E4%BB%B6%E5%BA%94%E5%AF%B9%E6%B3%95%E3%80%8B&prd=so\\_1\\_doc](http://www.baike.com/wiki/%E3%80%8A%E4%B8%AD%E5%8D%8E%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E5%85%B1%E5%92%8C%E5%9B%BD%E7%AA%81%E5%8F%91%E4%BA%8B%E4%BB%B6%E5%BA%94%E5%AF%B9%E6%B3%95%E3%80%8B&prd=so_1_doc) .

- A more recent evolution in Maritime Militia responsibilities is to conduct “rights protection” (*weiquan*) missions. In 2013, the former commander of the Zhoushan garrison outlined the specific missions of the Maritime Militia in rights protection. These missions are meant to display presence, manifest sovereignty, and coordinate with the needs of national political and diplomatic struggles. They involve actions such as law enforcement in coordination with MLE forces, island landings, and work in disputed waters.<sup>14</sup> As China’s non-military maritime forces, such as the China Coast Guard (CCG), are being built up rapidly with larger and more capable vessels, the Maritime Militia is being assigned a special role within what it refers to as the “Maritime Rights Protection Force System” (*weiquan liliang tixi*).<sup>15</sup>
- The Maritime Militia also trains for some independent missions, such as anti-air missile defense, light weapons use, and sabotage operations. Reconnaissance and surveillance are strongly emphasized, as China anticipates potential gaps in its intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) coverage, and can have the Maritime Militia loiter around targets of interest or report sightings during its regular operations at sea.

Militia building and mobilization is a civil-military venture that helps bind together civilian and military leaders—which is increasingly important as the proportion of Party leaders with military experience decreases. As local leaders of coastal provinces look to the ocean for new areas of development and China’s military strategy focuses more on maritime power,<sup>16</sup> the Chinese practice of civil-military integration will necessarily be at the foreground of Chinese sea power. The mobilization of China’s mariner population into the Maritime Militia is one aspect that helps extend this civilian-military integration out to sea. Provincial economic plans explicitly point to the Maritime Militia in sections on economic development. For example, section 6 of Hainan Province’s 2015 economic plan, on “vigorously developing the maritime economy,” specifies the number of new hulls to be added to Maritime Militia forces for increasing the province’s MLE capabilities.<sup>17</sup> Over the past decade, coastal governments, parties, and military headquarters have decided to shift their focus in militia building from urban defense out onto the seas and from inland to coastal towns and villages. One report quoted a Yuhuan County militia battalion

<sup>14</sup> 王治平, 汪勇健 [Wang Zhiping and Wang Yongjian], “民兵参加海上维权斗争的几点思考” [Some Thoughts on Participation of Militia in Maritime Rights Protection Struggle], *National Defense*, No. 6 (2013).

<sup>15</sup> 张荣胜, 陈明辉 [Zhang Rongsheng and Chen Minghui], “关于组织动员海上民兵参与维权行动的几点思考” [Some Thoughts on Organizing and Mobilizing Maritime Militia to Participate in Maritime Rights Protection Actions], *National Defense*, No. 8 (2014).

<sup>16</sup> China’s first defense white paper on strategy stated explicitly, “The traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned.” Section 4, 中国的军事战略 [China’s Military Strategy], (Beijing: State Council Information Office, May 2015), [http://www.81.cn/dblj/2015-05/26/content\\_6507373.htm](http://www.81.cn/dblj/2015-05/26/content_6507373.htm).

<sup>17</sup> 关于海南省 2014 年国民经济和社会发展计划执行情况与 2015 年国民经济和社会发展计划的报告 [Report on Hainan Province’s 2014 National Economic and Social Development Plan Implementation and the 2015 National Economic and Social Development Plan], accessed 7 March 2016, <http://dtfz.ccchina.gov.cn/Detail.aspx?newsId=51421&Tid=173>.

commander as declaring, “the Kanmen primary militia battalion has completed its transformation from a coastal defense battalion into Maritime Militia specialized detachments.”<sup>18</sup> Various organizational planning notices have been circulated by local governments and military commands, instructing militia building within their jurisdiction to focus on Maritime Militia units.<sup>19</sup>

Militias are also becoming more oriented towards the three non-ground-force service arms. The transformation began in 2007 with the new “Militia Military Training and Evaluation Outline” released by the General Staff Department, regulating the militia’s possible evolution as a reserve force for the PLAN, PLA Air Force (PLAAF), and Second Artillery Force (SAF)—renamed the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) and elevated in status to a fourth military service on 1 January 2016.<sup>20</sup> This means a reduction of militia infantry units and units dedicated to solely supporting the PLA Army, and an increase in the creation and training of units meant to support the other service arms. Militia units do not appear to support a single service arm exclusively, as they can be mobilized to support the broader armed forces regardless of the service arm, according to the needs of national defense. In addition to the many emergency response and specialized technical detachments that have been created, there is now a new category: “service branch detachment” (*junbingzhong fendui*). These new service branch detachments are made up of PLAN, PLAAF, and PLARF militia detachments and must train for at least 15 days a year, with one day devoted to political education.<sup>21</sup> Specialization in mission roles with focused training is particularly important because of the limitations of militia mission capacity and allotted training time.

Many local governments along China’s coast are constructing integrated coastal defense systems meant to better implement administrative control over their local waters. Places such as Weihai City in Shandong Province and China’s newest prefecture, Sansha City, are organizing military–police–civilian joint/integrated defense systems (*junjingmin lianfang tixi*), which include Maritime Militia units. Sansha City’s committee has been a focal point for military–police–civilian joint defense projects, with “three lines of defense” (militia, MLE, and military, in that order). The city has also established a joint defense coordination center, an integrated monitoring

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<sup>18</sup> 左贵东, 李华真, 余传椿 [Zuo Guidong, Li Huazhen, and Yu Chuanchun], “‘英雄基干民兵营’加强海上专业分队建设” [‘Heroic Primary Militia Battalion’ Strengthening Construction of Maritime Specialized Detachments], *Taizhou Net*, 15 July 2008, [http://www.taizhou.com/cn/a/20080715/content\\_72021.html](http://www.taizhou.com/cn/a/20080715/content_72021.html).

<sup>19</sup> “宁德市人民政府办公室宁德军分区司令部关于做好 2014 年度民兵预备役工作的通知” [Ningde City Government Office and Ningde Military Sub District Command Notice on the Completion of 2014 Militia Reserve Work], Ningde City Government, 16 March 2014; “关于印发《2015 年党江镇民兵组织整顿工作实施方案》的通知” [Notice on the Publication of “2015 Implementation Plan of Dangjiang Town’s Military Reorganization Work], issued by Dangjiang Township Government, 25 March 2015.

<sup>20</sup> “新一代民兵军事训练与考核大纲颁发” [Release of Military Training and Evaluation Outline for a New Generation of Militia], *Renminwang*, 5 July 2007, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/82429/83083/5951615.html>.

<sup>21</sup> 民兵军事训练大纲 [Militia Military Training Outline], 22 May 2007, article 5, line 7, <http://wenku1.com/view/6EC126C7369D17F5.html>.

command center, and a “Hainan Province Paracels Islands Dynamic Monitoring System.”<sup>22</sup> In economic terms, Maritime Militia organizations are explicitly meant to boost the marine economies of local areas and are considered an important force in creating “Great Maritime Provinces.” Maritime Militia vanguard units demonstrate a willingness to enter disputed waters at the risk of being intercepted by foreign maritime forces; this boosts morale in local fishing communities and encourages them to venture further from shore.

## Command and control

First and foremost, the leadership of the Maritime Militia follows the dual military-civilian structure under which most militia organizations in China operate, with responsibilities for militia building falling on both local military organs and their government/Party counterparts (*shuangchong lingdao*). There are institutionalized mechanisms for bringing local civilian and military leadership together in militia building. For example, some principal leaders hold multiple positions on both the military and civilian sides, local Party committees hold military affairs meetings, and ad hoc leading small groups are forming. This dual-leadership system begins at the Provincial Military District (MD) level and goes down to the county/township People’s Armed Forces Department (PAFD) level. At the local level, the Party secretary would serve as first secretary of the military organ’s Party committee, while the chief military leader at the same level would serve as a standing member on the local Party committee.<sup>23</sup>

Although military and government leaders hold positions on each other’s Party committees, the institution that binds the two into one decision-making body is the National Defense Mobilization Committee (NDMC) system, a consulting and coordinating body “in charge of organizing, directing and coordinating nationwide national defense mobilization.” The committee plays a major role in ensuring that national resources can swiftly be transferred towards war or national emergency efforts. At the national level, the State NDMC is led by the Central Military Commission (CMC) and State Council, and an NDMC is formed at each corresponding military and government leadership level from the province down. Because there is no MR-equivalent level of government, an intermediary NDMC is formed from the leaders of each provincial NDMC within that MR.<sup>24</sup> Embedded in this system is the authorization by the

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<sup>22</sup> 丛黎明, 马绍惠 [Cong Liming and Ma Shaohui], “威海军民推进海防建设融合发展” [Weihai Advances in Civil-Military Integrated Development in Sea Defense], *National Defense News*, 28 January 2015, [http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilize/2015-01/28/content\\_4567330.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilize/2015-01/28/content_4567330.htm); “三沙市推动军警民联防机制--构建三线海上维权格局” [Sansha City Promotes its Military-Police-Civilian Joint Defense Mechanism—Constructs a Three-line Maritime Rights Protection Structure], 中国新闻网 [China News], 21 November 2014, <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2014/11-21/6803776.shtml>.

<sup>23</sup> Bo Zhiyue, “The PLA and the Provinces,” in *Civil-Military Relations in Today’s China: Swimming in a New Sea* (Routledge, 2006), pp. 106-17; 严朝君任儋州市人武部党委第一书记 [Yan Chaojun Serves as Danzhou People’s Armed Forces Department’s First Party Secretary], *Danzhou News Network*, 3 March 2015, <http://www.danzhou7.com/a/a/c/03032A242015.html>.

<sup>24</sup> For more details on the National Defense Mobilization Committee System, see China’s Defense White Papers (2002, 2004, and 2010) and Blasko, *Chinese Army Today*, pp. 42-43.

National People's Congress Standing Committee and general secretary to activate national or local mobilization, with the State Council and CMC submitting mobilization policies and plans for approval by the Standing Committee.<sup>25</sup> The local government leader serves as the chairman of that level's NDMC; however, the local Party secretary serves as the first chairman, ensuring Party control. The local military commander would serve as executive chairman, and vice chairmen positions are taken up by the commissar and other government deputy leaders. The NDMC system also allows areas to set up civilian-military joint command structures, such as the one operated by Ningde City. They set up a "one-committee, two-headquarters" command structure, with the NDMC as the committee overseeing a "support the front" mobilization headquarters and a people's air defense headquarters.<sup>26</sup> One *National Defense* article in 2015 called for the establishment of civilian-military joint command centers based on the current NDMC organization at all five levels of defense mobilization—that is, national, MR, provincial, municipal, and county.<sup>27</sup>

Ultimately orders can come down from the CMC or State Council to mobilize, with the degree of mobilization depending on the level of response required. The General Staff Department's Mobilization Department is responsible for formulating regulations for nationwide militia work, overseeing the militia work performed down the chain of command from MR to county-level PAFD.<sup>28</sup> MR, MD, and Military Sub District (MSD) administrations all have departments/offices dedicated to mobilization work for the reserve forces in their respective jurisdictions. Other General Departments are involved, such as the General Political Department's Mass Work Department; however, since this paper is focused on a sub-set of militia organization, local command structures will receive the most attention as they are intimately involved in the construction, training, and management of the Maritime Militia. National-level and theater-level organs are responsible for managing militia work; however, according to the 1991 law, "Militia Work Regulations," the command of the militia begins at the MD and goes on down to the county PAFD. Grassroots PAFDs manage their units via non-active-duty uniformed personnel known as *cadres*, and must be in accordance with the requirements set forth by local civilian and military leadership.<sup>29</sup> The PAFDs are the hubs by which military and civilian leaders carry out militia organization and training, with the PAFD directly executing these tasks with support from other agencies. These same militia command structures govern the Maritime Militia, albeit with several agencies involved (such as China's MLE forces and agencies involved in maritime affairs). The effects of the latest PLA reforms on China's local military organization and reserves,

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<sup>25</sup> See China's National Defense Mobilization Law 2010.

<sup>26</sup> 国防建设巡礼 [National Defense Construction Tour], *National Defense* (December 2014).

<sup>27</sup> 安亮 [An Liang], "实战化: 国防动员的价值追求" [Actual War: Seeking the Value of National Defense Mobilization], *National Defense News*, 19 March 2015, [http://www.mod.gov.cn/intl/2015-03/19/content\\_4575668.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/intl/2015-03/19/content_4575668.htm).

<sup>28</sup> *The People's Liberation Army as Organization v.1.0* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), pp. 184-85.

<sup>29</sup> 民兵工作条例 [Militia Work Regulations], 1991, Articles 4-8.

including the recently-announced consolidation of China's previous seven MRs in to five, remains unclear.

As described in most Chinese-language sources on the Maritime Militia, mobilization orders are reportedly received from three entities: the MSD military command, the PAFDs, and the NDMC. There is significant cross-over among the three, as they all share responsibilities for the militia. China's 2004 Defense White Paper states that the PAFDs command militia operations,<sup>30</sup> however, it may not be this simple for the Maritime Militia, depending on the mission and scale of mobilization. The Maritime Militia introduces a level of complexity in command and control as its units work with many non-military forces such as China's MLE forces. MLE forces—such as those operated by the Fisheries Law Enforcement (FLE) under the Fisheries Bureau, or the Maritime Safety Administration (MSA) under the Ministry of Transport—are critical to the regular monitoring of the Maritime Militia since they regulate marine industries and keep important information on vessels and licensures. Further complicating the issue is the wide dispersal of the Maritime Militia's sea-based operations, which makes control of it much more difficult than that of the land-based militia, further necessitating the incorporation of MLE forces.

Although the local military organs and civilian leadership are the primary commanding entities for the militia, military commanders assume greater operational control, while other agencies participate in the management and training efforts. One caveat here is that local conditions are an important factor since it appears that MR, MD, MSD, and PAFD military leaders are all exploring the best ways to organize and command the Maritime Militia.

The Zhoushan garrison leadership wrote in detail about the missions, organization, and control structure of the Maritime Militia. When former garrison commander Wang Zhiping wrote in *National Defense* magazine in 2013 on the missions of the Maritime Militia in rights protection, he called for clarification of the command relationships and procedures for Maritime Militia units. In early 2014, the MD Mobilization Division head, Xu Haifeng, wrote on standardizing the Maritime Militia, laying out the command and control relationships. At the end of 2014, Wang Zhiping's successor, Senior Colonel Zeng Pengxiang (Grade 7) and the mobilization office took this up in their own writing, where they explained in detail the “four controls” for the Maritime Militia (discussed below). These discourses appeared in these leaders' writings in *National Defense* magazine, and demonstrated an MD-level engagement in the organization and command of the Maritime Militia.

Xu Haifeng explains the command relationships for the Maritime Militia:

- Units independently conducting intelligence gathering and reconnaissance at sea are commanded directly by the MD system.

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<sup>30</sup> *China's National Defense in 2004* (Beijing: State Council Information Office, 2004), <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20041227/>.

- Emergency response units are organized by the local government or search and rescue agencies with MD participation.
- Rights protection units report to a command organized by their MD and relevant agencies, under the unified leadership of local government and Party officials.
- Units involved in law enforcement missions are commanded by the CCG with the cooperation of their MD, under the unified leadership of local government and Party officials.
- Units involved in supporting naval missions will be under the unified command of the PLAN with cooperation by the MD.<sup>31</sup>

The “four controls” raised by Colonel Zeng are: the agents of organizational control, the targets of control, the means of controlling the Maritime Militia, and the standardization of these control mechanisms. Zeng first addresses the daily control of units, then discusses control of their training. He then addresses the establishment of an “integrated mobilization control group” that allows for the integration of MLE departments into a “1 plus 3” command structure. This entails the establishment of a Maritime Militia Mobilization Command Headquarters (HQ) with the MSD/garrison commander as the HQ commander, a leader from the city government appointed executive deputy commander, and the secretary-general of the city government office and the MSD/garrison chief of staff as deputy heads. This body would be in command of the entire city’s Maritime Militia mobilization. Beneath this body, three groups divide the work of Maritime Militia mobilization planning, organization, and direction. They are the integrated planning group, the fishing vessel mobilization group, and the provision support group for fuel, water, and materials. These three groups are the likely conduits through which the MLE departments are integrated into their local Maritime Militia command structure.

Zeng and his mobilization office also delve into the control of individual vessels in the Maritime Militia. First, grassroots-level cadres (*zhuanwu ganbu*) with strong political qualities and organizational capabilities are recruited directly into the Maritime Militia detachments meant to strengthen fishing vessel command and control. Second, Maritime Militia personnel with “strong character” will receive focused training to improve their political work in order to create political forces within the Maritime Militia. Third, recruits with specialized “active duty boat cadres (*xianyi chuanting ganbu*) and signalmen (*tongxinbing*)” are recruited into the Maritime Militia in order to strengthen fishing vessel piloting and communication controls. Although *boat cadre* as a term may seem ambiguous, many local PAFDs have targeted fishing vessel captains, owners, and exceptional crewmates to serve as cadres for the Maritime Militia. This is likely what they are referring to; however, the use of the term *active duty* could possibly refer to the assigning of

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<sup>31</sup> 徐海峰 [Xu Haifeng], “适应新形势 全面规范海上民兵建设” [Adapting to New Circumstances—Comprehensively Standardize Maritime Militia Construction], *National Defense*, No. 2 (2014).

active duty coast guard or naval personnel to maritime militia vessels.<sup>32</sup> Other sources refer to the cadres as “boat bosses/skippers” (*chuan laoda*, 船老大), or simply “captains” (*chuanzhang*). Former active duty personnel are given priority for entrance into the Maritime Militia, and likely assume unit leadership roles, becoming cadres. Cadres make up an important group that helps maintain unit cohesiveness and helps ensure that militia building conducted by the PAFD is carried out at the grassroots level. Cadres often serve as squad or platoon leaders. They are especially critical for riding herd over potentially under-disciplined Maritime Militia units that might otherwise abdicate responsibilities while at sea. Many militia training outlines and plans drafted by counties and villages require more intense training of cadres and platoon/company commanders; thus, those personnel may be sent to MSD- or MD-level collective militia training.<sup>33</sup> The cadres at each unit’s headquarters or embedded within units are critical for ensuring that Maritime Militia personnel abide by the commands of the military and serve the interests of the Party.

When MLE forces employ and command the Maritime Militia for missions involved in rescue, law enforcement, or rights protection, it becomes a matter of who will fund or materially support the units being mobilized. Many sources use the phrase “whoever employs the troops must support the troops” (*shei yongbing, shei baozhang*); meaning that departments such as MLE forces who want to use the Maritime Militia to conduct particular operations must support the militia in those operations. It is unclear exactly what this support entails, and whether the funds compensate vessel owners or only pay for the actual materials necessary for the operation. What it does suggest is that the broad spectrum of missions conducted by the Maritime Militia requires support from multiple agencies, alleviating some of the burden on local military commands and governments.

### **Informatization in action**

As early as 2007, the need for a civilian vessel and militia maritime surveillance network and information support system that would cover the country’s vast fishing fleet was recognized by the PLAN. It wanted the satellite navigation and positioning services provided by a combination of the Beidou positioning, navigation, and timing satellite system and automated short-wave radio transmission to be fused in a way to create near-real-time data connectivity so China’s large fishing fleet could supplement the PLAN’s maritime domain awareness (MDA) efforts.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> 邓伟余, 赵赵继承 [Deng Weiyu and Zhao Jicheng], “‘海上民兵’崛起在蓝色国土” [The Rise of “Maritime Militia” on Blue Territory], *National Defense*, No. 2 (September 2007); 廖刚斌, 王牌, 熊睿 [Liao Gangbin, Wang Pai, and Xiong Rui], “海上民兵分队建设存在的问题与对策” [Issues and Measures in Maritime Militia Unit Construction], *National Defense*, No. 8 (2014), pp. 14-15.

<sup>33</sup> “大冶市 2012 年度民兵军事训练计划” [Daye City 2012 Annual Militia Military Training Plan], <http://www.wenku1.com/view/272D31DB2ED82D24.html>.

<sup>34</sup> 刘七虎, 郑一冰 [Liu Qihu and Zheng Yibing], “依托海上民船民兵建立侦察信息体系” [Establish a Reconnaissance Information System Based on Civilian Vessels and Militia], *National Defense*, Vol. 6 (2007).

That same year, the Yuhuan County Maritime Militia “battalion” reported completion of a Maritime Militia surveillance and early warning network, formed between the far seas, near seas, and shoreline, calling the vessels “militia recon vessels.” Xiangshan County of Zhejiang Province operates a large Maritime Militia reconnaissance detachment that follows the same pattern as laid out by the PLAN HQ, with 32 “motherships” acting as nodes for 150 vessels forming a network of surveillance.<sup>35</sup>

Since the Maritime Militia units could be involved in supporting both the Navy and MLE, sorting out who has control of those detachments is a pressing question. Issues of approval authority, command relationships, mobilization processes, and command methods are especially prominent when it comes to its role in rights protection. PAFDs have set up command and control systems between the dispatch offices of marine enterprises and the MLE agencies (such as the MSA, CCG, and FLE). The communications systems already used by MLE forces—such as the Beidou Satellite Navigation System, VHF radios, the Automatic Identification System (AIS), cellular coverage when available,<sup>36</sup> and satellite phones—are used to ensure reliable command and control when at sea.<sup>37</sup> The equipment is provided to the Maritime Militia by the MSD, which coordinates with fisheries departments to purchase and distribute satellite navigation terminals, navigational radar, radios, and other electronic equipment.<sup>38</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture and FLEC in their maritime divisional bureaus have constructed fisheries command and dispatch centers and regional command dispatch platforms. According to Ju Li, director of the Fisheries Law Enforcement Command Center, a blend of capabilities form an important part of the nation’s emergency response and early warning system: 14 shortwave shore stations, 78 UHF shore stations, 15 provincial fishing vessel position-monitoring centers, 30 fisheries AIS base stations, and 59 fishing port video surveillance branches established nationwide.<sup>39</sup> This is a redundant and presumably robust communications network built to maintain reliable communications with militia fishing vessels many miles at sea.

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<sup>35</sup> Zuo Guidong, Li Huazhen, and Yu Chuanchun, “Heroic Primary Militia Battalion, Strengthening Construction of Maritime Specialized Detachments.”

<sup>36</sup> 3G Cellular coverage has been provided by China Telecom for the Spratly Islands since June 2013. “中信卫星携手中国电信实现南沙群岛 3G 信号全覆盖” [CITIC Satellite Together with China Telecom Achieve Full 3G Signal Coverage of the Spratly Islands], CITIC Group Corporation, 31 July 2013, <http://group.citic/iwcm/null/null/ns:LHQ6LGY6LGM6MmM5NDkzOGI0MDJmMTMyZjAxNDZmZjQ5NDRmZT AwMTEscDosYTosbTo=/show.vsm>.

<sup>37</sup> Zeng Pengxiang et al., “Scientifically Build a Management System for the Maritime Militia.”

<sup>38</sup> 吴广晶, 李永鹏 [Wu Guangjing and Li Yongpeng], “打造蓝色大洋支前精兵” [Creating Blue Ocean Elite Support Troops], *Liberation Army Daily*, 29 November 2013.

<sup>39</sup> 居礼 [Ju Li], “北斗卫星导航系统在海洋渔业的应用” [Applications of the Beidou Satellite Navigation System in Marine Fisheries], Chengdu Guowei Communications Technology Co., Ltd., 4 February 2014, <http://gwsatcom.com/Trends/inform/2015-06-23/79.html>.

In addition to this traditional communication network, Chinese Beidou satellite navigation and the widespread implementation of the Vessel Monitoring System applications in many provinces have yielded an all-weather, all-time, continuous monitoring capability that MLE agencies can use to manage fishing fleets. Beidou terminals have been widely installed on China's fishing fleets,<sup>40</sup> allowing the agencies to track their position and have two-way message transmission of up to 120 Chinese characters<sup>41</sup>—enough to dispatch orders to fishing boats as far away as the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. In some areas, Beidou has become an important supplement to the AIS vessel tracking system that uses shore-based stations to receive ship positioning and identification information; when fishing boats are beyond the range of shore based AIS stations, Beidou's AIS transceiver automatically turns on—it also turns off when within range of the shore station which helps avoid duplicate tracks.<sup>42</sup> The widespread implementation of Beidou's Vessel Monitoring System, which includes a marine fisheries integrated information service,<sup>43</sup> permits greater levels of control of at sea Maritime Militia vessels.<sup>44</sup> The head of Zhejiang MD's Mobilization Division, Xu Haifeng, writes that military organs use these systems for monitoring fishing vessel safety and rescue in order to build a Maritime Militia-FLEC-MSD-Navy information-sharing channel.<sup>45</sup>

Supporting this surveillance network are various local reporting mechanisms. For example, Rizhao City's Lanshan District has established a real-time reporting mechanism for its Maritime Militia to use when monitoring the sea and air; it connects at sea vessels with the militia command center, the town's fisheries bureau command center and the PAFD's war readiness office.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “福建: 3800 艘渔船将装北斗终端” [Fujian: 3,800 Fishing Vessels will Install the Beidou Terminal], *Fujian Daily*, 13 June 2014, <http://www.beidou.gov.cn/attach/2014/07/25/20140725.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> “Report on the Development of Beidou Navigation Satellite System (Version 2.2),” *China Satellite Navigation Office*, December 2013, <http://www.beidou.gov.cn/attach/2013/12/26/20131226fed336adf2184d52843d5bf81832e82c.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> “东海航保中心成功研发北斗 AIS 一体化船载终端” [East Sea Navigational Safety Center Successfully Develops Beidou and AIS Integrated Vessel Terminal], *China Water Transport*, 7 January 2014, <http://www.beidou.gov.cn/2014/01/08/20140108b55319901d3f4d2f80f136a4fa66c51a.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Kevin Pollpeter et al., “The Research, Development, and Acquisition Process for the Beidou Navigation Satellite Programs,” *SITC Research Brief* (January 2014).

<sup>44</sup> “Report on the Development of Beidou Navigation Satellite System (Version 2.2),” *China Satellite Navigation Office*, December 2013, pp. 9-10.

<sup>45</sup> Xu Haifeng, “Adapting to New Circumstances—Comprehensively Standardize Maritime Militia Construction”; “浙江省加强海上民兵建设” [Zhejiang Province Strengthens Maritime Militia Construction], *Xinhua Wang*, 4 December 2013, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2013-12/04/c\\_125806747.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2013-12/04/c_125806747.htm).

<sup>46</sup> 曹树建, 刘健 [Cao Shujian and Liu Jian], “大海成为民兵练兵战备主战场” [The Sea has Become the Main Battlefield for Militia Training and War Readiness], *National Defense News*, 3 November 2014, [http://www.81.cn/gfbmap/content/2014-11/03/content\\_91820.htm](http://www.81.cn/gfbmap/content/2014-11/03/content_91820.htm); 何军毅, 赵继承, 奏景号 [He Junyi, Zhao Jicheng, and Tai Jinghao], “千船齐发, 向着蓝色国土” [A Thousand Vessels Go out to the Blue Territory Together], *National Defense News*, 25 May 2015, [http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilize/2015-05/25/content\\_4586486.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilize/2015-05/25/content_4586486.htm).

Providing the means to report surveillance information is obviously important, but so is the quality of information being reported. Selected militia members are trained as reporting specialists, i.e., information personnel (*xinxiyuan*), within units.<sup>47</sup> These personnel collect intelligence at sea, and use the Beidou and other reporting systems to ensure that the information is sent up the chain. Fu'an, a county-level city of Fujian Province's Ningde Prefecture, recently held a week-long collective training session for its Maritime Militia information personnel, covering target identification, essentials of collection methods, and operation of the Maritime Militia vessel management platform and the Beidou notification terminal.<sup>48</sup> In short, the Maritime Militia has created a cadre of specifically trained fishermen to ensure a degree of expertise and professionalism exists in the reconnaissance function of the Maritime Militia. Being able to properly classify the type of ship or aircraft that one spots at sea is very important. Having specially trained militiamen helps to eliminate some of the uncertainty by higher headquarters regarding what specific types of ships or aircraft are actually operating in the South China Sea.

In sum, command of the Maritime Militia depends on the conditions requiring mobilization, both in peace and in war. The Navy utilizes the Maritime Militia in both peacetime and wartime when needed. MLE forces can also call on Maritime Militia for their own missions, but would likely have to provide the funding, i.e., fuel and labor, for such operations. In all cases, the MD military and civilian leadership would be involved, either directly or in a supervisory role. New institutions and technologies are being incorporated into the mobilization system in order to increase the speed by which local commands can transfer warfighting potential into warfighting force. From theater-level NDMC-led exercises, to orders to mobilize, and from Beidou messages received by captains operating fishing vessels at sea, all the way down to notifications received by individual militiamen from their local PAFD via a specifically designed app on their mobile phones, the ability to reliably command the Maritime Militia is growing in sophistication and effectiveness—it is an interesting example of informatization at the micro level.

## **Tailored Organization**

Local military and civilian leaders appear to have a degree of autonomy in the way they organize militias. For example, Guangxi Province has a “Maritime Militia Construction Plan for 2020” that was agreed on at a provincial military affairs meeting attended by the principal leaders of the

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<sup>47</sup> “宁德市人民政府办公室宁德军分区司令部关于做好 2014 年度民兵预备役工作的通知” [Ningde City Government Office and Ningde Military Sub District Command Notice on the Completion of 2014 Militia Reserve Work], Ningde City Government, 16 March 2014.

<sup>48</sup> “福安市人武部组织海上民兵信息员集训” [Fu'an City PAFD Organizes Maritime Militia Information Personnel Collective Training], Fujian National Defense Education Network, 19 September 2014, [http://mil.fjnet.cn/2014-09/19/content\\_14905500.htm](http://mil.fjnet.cn/2014-09/19/content_14905500.htm).

provincial NDMC.<sup>49</sup> Publications such as the authoritative *National Defense* magazine, published by the Academy of Military Science and the National Defense Mobilization Committee, host writings from military commanders and officers involved in building the Maritime Militia from the MR down to the PAFD levels. Their texts provide a view into the perspectives of various military leaders from different areas on how best to organize and manage the Maritime Militia. Most publications on the militia often state upfront that militia building should be in accordance with the needs of the militia's missions and the potential of a locality's resources for mobilization. In other words, militias are not built in a cookie cutter fashion, directed from national-level leadership; rather, they are organized with two things in mind: the local populace and their industrial or institutional capacity; and what requirements they are intended to satisfy. This section will first explain commonalities across Maritime Militia organization and then delve into some of the organizational concepts introduced by different military leaders at varying levels.

Unlike active duty forces, reserves, such as militia, are formed based on the potential of a locality, not on the recruiting and stationing of troops from a variety of different locations. It is the civilian government's job to incorporate militia building into its economic development planning (especially maritime economic development), and to play a leading role in the construction of the militia. The equivalent-level military organ is responsible for coordinating with that leadership to implement the militia's construction, education, and training, and to provide specialized equipment and normalize its use. Government marine agencies such as the MSA, CCG, and FLE are tasked with assisting the military in organizing Maritime Militia units and their training exercises. Local propaganda, finance, and civil affairs departments are each responsible for ensuring that these activities are carried out in their respective areas. The navy, in cooperation with military organs, provides special technical training and conducts joint exercises with the Maritime Militia.<sup>50</sup> At the center of the Maritime Militia organization are the county- and grassroots-level PAFDs, who are directly involved in the normal management and organization of the units.

PAFDs “scientifically organize” (*kexue bianzu*) militia forces on a scale matching the mobilization potential that exists in that locality.<sup>51</sup> Census information collected by various agencies, such as the transportation bureau, provides the necessary statistics to local military and civilian leaders.

Maritime Militia unit missions follow the same principles as those of land-based militias, such as combining war and peace (*pingzhan jiehe*) by responding to both emergencies and war (*jishi*

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<sup>49</sup> “广西国防动员委员会全体会议召开--彭清华陈武讲话” [Guangxi National Defense Mobilization Committee holds Plenary Meeting—Peng Qinghua and Chen Wu Speak], *Guangxi Daily*, 24 December 2014, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/1224/c117005-26268363.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Xu Haifeng, “Adapting to New Circumstances—Comprehensively Standardize Maritime Militia Construction.”

<sup>51</sup> He Zhixiang, “Adjusting to the Security Situation in Sea Defense—Strengthen Maritime Militia Organization.”

*yingji, zhanshi yingzhan*); however, they are constructed based on individual vessels that will be involved. The vessel is the platform, and the port is its base. Militia troop numbers are determined based on the vessel (*yichuan dingbing*).<sup>52</sup> MSD military commanders place the Maritime Militia into three general unit formations: reconnaissance detachments, emergency response detachments, and support detachments. These detachments are commonly at the grassroots (*jiceng*) level—usually, they are company-sized elements that break down into platoons and squads.<sup>53</sup>

In many areas, Maritime Militia units take on organizational terminology similar to that of the People's Armed Police Force (PAP). For example, Guangzhou recently established a Maritime Militia comprehensive emergency mobile battalion, and the Jiangnan Shipbuilding Group in Shanghai has a Maritime Militia ship repair battalion, both of which use the term (*dadui*) in a fashion similar to PAP units.<sup>54</sup> As another example, the PAFD director in Zhanjiang City's Xiashan District proposes that provinces organize battalion-level units and that prefecture-level cities organize company-sized units, using the term *zhongdui*. However, like methods of organization, terminology is not uniform across all localities. Some areas just directly refer to units as battalions, companies, platoons, and squads. This inconsistent use of terminology can make it difficult to judge the size of units in terms of personnel and vessels.

From 2013 to 2015, He Zhixiang, head of the Guangdong Military Region Mobilization Department, addressed the construction of the Maritime Militia in depth. In 2013 he brought up four aspects of integrating Maritime Militia into national strategic management of the seas and the country's overall maritime strategy. Then, in 2015, He proposed a Maritime Militia force organization that lays out the geographical mission areas of different types of units, combining near, middle, and far areas:

- Reconnaissance forces are deployed to distant islands, reefs, and areas around important waterways.
- Maritime Militia assisting MLE forces are primarily deployed around disputed islands, reefs, and sea areas.

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<sup>52</sup> 刘建东, 张先国, 管水锁 [Liu Jiandong, Zhang Xianguo, and Guan Shuisuo], “‘海上民兵分队’扬帆启航” [Maritime Militia Detachments Set Sail], *Liberation Army Daily*, 13 March 2006.

<sup>53</sup> “三沙海上民兵连” [Sansha Maritime Militia Company], *Baidu Baike*, <http://baike.baidu.com/view/10797320.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> “广东海上民兵综合应急机动大队成立” [Guangdong's Establishes a Maritime Militia Comprehensive Mobile Battalion], *Nanfang Ribao*, 2 July 2013, [http://epaper.southcn.com/nfdaily/html/2013-07/02/content\\_7202988.htm](http://epaper.southcn.com/nfdaily/html/2013-07/02/content_7202988.htm); 刘宗峰 [Liu Zongfeng], “海上支前, 向着深蓝挺进--上海市支援保障海上作战动员演练侧记” [Maritime Support the Front, Advancing Toward the Deep Blue—A Record of Shanghai City's Support the Front Maritime War Fighting Mobilization Exercise], *National Defense News*, 27 January 2014, [http://mod.gov.cn/mobilize/2014-01/27/content\\_4487459.htm](http://mod.gov.cn/mobilize/2014-01/27/content_4487459.htm).

- Maritime Militia support forces are deployed to naval stations, ports, piers, and predetermined operational sea areas.
- Emergency response forces make mobile deployments to sea areas around “traditional fishing grounds.”

He opines that units could be organized according to their operational destinations: forces assigned to law enforcement and reconnaissance missions would be organized based on the sea areas in which they normally conduct productive activities. This likely means that Maritime Militia units composed of fishing vessels would be organized within their normal fishing areas, allowing them to be conveniently mobilized there. Conversely, Maritime Militia forces responsible for security or loading operations would be organized in the coastal areas in which they are needed. In accordance with this type of approach, He also proposed a mixture of stable unit organization and flowing organization: units formed out of stable enterprises would develop marine resources or work on island and reef construction, while also serving as mobile militia sentry posts in distant waters. Lastly, He discusses moving away from units that combine fishing enterprises with individual fishermen, and instead creating concentrated, linked organizations in coastal areas that contain numerous large-scale marine enterprises, including a dispersed ad hoc method of recruiting when personnel with specialized skills are needed.<sup>55</sup>

He’s views reflect the degree to which the military leadership is experimenting with different forms of Maritime Militia organization, as most who write on the subject use words such as “exploring” (*tansuo*) or “development path” (*jianshe zhilu*). His proposals differ from those followed by other MRs, such as Jinan Province’s Shandong MD, which seems to call for more rigid organizational structures, and probably reflects differences in theater-level strategic orientation: Guangdong MR is faced with different missions for its Maritime Militia than the Jinan MR. The reality is that that the Maritime Militia is a flexible instrument whose employment is sensibly left to the desires of the MR (now Theater Command) staff. There is no uniform model for Maritime Militia organization.

### **The Annual Organizational Process: Militia Consolidation Period**

Counties, districts, towns, and villages carry out an annual “consolidation” (*zhengzu*).<sup>56</sup> To ensure that all militia forces are meeting their organizational requirements, leading small groups (LSGs) are formed to plan, implement, and report on the consolidation work of militia. This

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<sup>55</sup> He Zhixiang, “Discussion on the ‘Four Integrations’ in Maritime Militia Construction”; He Zhixiang, “Adjusting to the Security Situation in Sea Defense—Strengthen Maritime Militia Organization.”

<sup>56</sup> The authors chose to translate the word 整组 as “consolidation” instead of “reorganization” because of the nature of what this annual event entails for the militia. It is not simply a reorganization, but in fact a point in the year where units are evaluated and changes are made to strengthen unit cohesiveness and management. Local PAFDs use this time to consolidate units as personnel leave or new recruits enter the force.

process, which typically begins around March and can extend into June, comprises three phases:<sup>57</sup>

- *Organizational Preparation and Planning* — This first phase involves examining and evaluating the area’s potential for signing up militia recruits, reconciling potential with mission requirements, formulating consolidation plans, holding Party committee meetings and appointing LSG members, sending out orders to each village’s militia unit leaders, and making overall preparations for consolidation of units. Cadres (civilians who operate grassroots PAFDs) undergo education and training to help them implement the consolidation. During this time, the PAFD also develops and disseminates various means of propaganda in order to build a political and social atmosphere that will mobilize the population, targeting eligible youth. The propaganda campaign continues throughout all phases of the consolidation.
- *Organizational Implementation* — This phase entails transfers of personnel or cadres, any changes in organization, processing members entering or leaving the militia, distribution of training schedules, inventory of equipment and weapons, troop registry and ID card processing, data processing, troop roll call and inspection, and (a very important step) political examinations to ensure members’ loyalty to the Party.
- *Summary of Inspection* — Once inspections are completed, all materials and forms are collected to build a report on the consolidation as well as on the previous year’s militia work. This report is submitted to the next level in the chain of command, likely a prefecture-level city/MSD. During this time, many areas will hold political education classes and award ceremonies for outstanding units, personnel, or cadres. Any remaining problems are rooted out and handled in order to prepare for inspection by the next level of military command.

This consolidation period is an important opportunity for new reforms and for members to enter or leave the militia. The LSG brings together civilian and military leaders to jointly implement any necessary changes in the militia within their jurisdiction. The mayor or a senior Party leader usually leads the LSG, while the PAFD director serves as deputy leader. Other members come from sub-departments of the PAFD and other government departments. The LSG also sets up an office and a director within the local PAFD to oversee and inspect the consolidation work of each town and village PAFD. Much information on this consolidation process is found within notices and plans put out by county and township governments, usually with attachments

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<sup>57</sup> In accordance with this three-phase approach, the timing of the consolidation is allowed to vary for each county, town, or village as long as the consolidation is continuous once it is started, “关于认真做好 2015 年民兵整组工作的通知” [Notice on Earnestly Completing 2015 Militia Consolidation Work], issued by Qiangjiang Township Committee, 23 March 2015, [http://xxgk.yueqing.gov.cn/YQ119/zcwj/0203/201503/t20150326\\_1800276.html](http://xxgk.yueqing.gov.cn/YQ119/zcwj/0203/201503/t20150326_1800276.html).

containing tables of militia units and personnel, major activities planned for that year, and plan schedules.<sup>58</sup>

While the Maritime Militia are generally subject to this consolidation pattern, one important caveat in applying this routine method is that units composed of fishing vessels often have trouble coordinating times with the land-based militia due to their extended time at sea and the arrival of the off-season. Military and civilian leaders work around this situation and use the off-season to inspect, evaluate, enact changes, and conduct training and education. In the South China Sea for example, China's annual moratorium on fishing lasts from 16 May to 1 August, and many PAFDs use this period to conduct consolidation or land-based training and education.<sup>59</sup>

Local geography dictates individual Maritime Militia organization focus. For example, fishing ports in Hainan, Guangxi, and Guangdong Provinces are ideally located to build Maritime Militia units oriented towards operating in the Paracels and as far south as the Spratlys, and may put greater emphasis on particular missions that deal with foreign vessels in disputed areas. Ports in Fujian, Zhejiang, Nanjing, and Shandong Provinces may find Maritime Militia organizations to be more oriented towards contingencies involving Taiwan, and hence be more militarized than Maritime Militia forces that operate in the South China Sea and are engaged in rights protection, displays of presence and sovereignty, and law enforcement.

## Training

Training is conducted in a way similar to consolidation, in that it involves a military training LSG with an accompanying office run by the local PAFD. It draws up training plans based on instructions and requirements of the MSD and are executed primarily through the PAFD director. Many militia training plans are drawn up in accordance with the latest "Militia Military Training Outline," which determines the basic training requirements and practices for all militia.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Based on a number of local government notices on recent militia consolidation efforts. For a few examples, see: "宁德市人民政府办公室宁德军分区司令部关于做好 2014 年度民兵预备役工作的通知" [Notice on Ningde City People's Government Office and Ningde Military Subdistrict Headquarters Notice on Earnestly Completing 2014 Militia Reserves Work], Document No. 44, *Ningde City Government Website*, 16 March 2014, [http://www.fujian.gov.cn/zwgk/zxwj/sqswj/nd/201404/t20140402\\_707082.htm](http://www.fujian.gov.cn/zwgk/zxwj/sqswj/nd/201404/t20140402_707082.htm); "关于做好海上民兵作战分队训练的通知" [Notice on Earnestly Completing Training of Maritime Militia Combat Units], issued by Heshan City Government, 20 July 2006, <http://zwgk.heshan.gov.cn/Government/PublicInfo/PublicInfoShow.aspx?ID=502>; "关于认真做好 2015 年民兵整组工作的通知" [Notice on Earnestly Completing 2015 Militia Consolidation Work], issued by Huangshagang Township Committee, Sheyang County, 24 March 2015, <http://www.sheyang.gov.cn/zgsy/zfxgk/showinfo.aspx?infolid=8d4a106d-7568-41e2-87eb-7ee05e990f5e&categoryNum=010005002>.

<sup>59</sup> "Fishing Moratorium," *Baidu Baike*, accessed 7 March 2016, <http://www.baik.com/wiki/%E4%BC%8F%E5%AD%A3%E4%BC%91%E6%B8%94>.

<sup>60</sup> "新一代民兵军事训练与考核大纲颁发" [New Generation of Militia Military Training Outline Released], *Liberation Army Daily*, 22 May 2007, <http://www.cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/82429/83083/5951615.html>.

The NDMC system is also involved with organizing Maritime Militia exercises in coordination with various levels of military command. Although militia work is conducted operationally at the MD, MSD, and PAFD levels, the MR is extensively involved. In the early 2000s, Fujian Province had begun to experiment with the construction of Maritime Militia units—building reconnaissance, transport, and vessel repair units—while also organizing exercises for civilian vessel mobilization and requisition. The same report also mentioned the improvement of civilian vessel refitting bases, the identification of small to medium vessel refitting points, and the development of barges as platforms for transferring heavy equipment.<sup>61</sup> Here we can see the structure involved: the MD and lower levels serve as the body for training mobilization of the militia while MR commands inspect and evaluate the work of MDs in their jurisdiction, with many of these leaders holding positions within the NDMC system.

Training of militia is not overly intense, in order to avoid harming the militia members' normal "day jobs." To compensate, the PAFD active duty personnel, cadres, battalion/company militia unit commanders, and the militia information personnel receive focused training. This is essentially a matter of "training the trainers" since these individuals are expected to train individual militia members in turn. Having well-trained supervisors is necessary since it is rare for any given region to have its entire maritime militia force available for training at a single event. For example, Mawei District was only able to train one-fourth of its emergency response militia personnel during a given exercise.<sup>62</sup> This reality of limited training availability is one reason why demobilized active duty soldiers and Party members are considered priority recruiting targets: they tend to have substantially more experience with training. If they can be recruited they are often given positions of responsibility within the Maritime Militia units.<sup>63</sup>

A strong political indoctrination effort is applied to militia organizations broadly, but especially to the Maritime Militia units since they can disproportionately affect events and diplomacy at sea. It is important that Maritime Militia personnel be familiar with national and provincial objectives and policies. They often receive education in the laws of the sea and rules governing what they can and cannot do.

## **Recent Maritime Militia Activities in Three Military Regions**

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<sup>61</sup> “南京军区司令员朱文泉观摩福建海上支前保障演练” [Nanjing MR Commander Zhu Wenquan Attends Fujian Maritime Support-the-Front Exercise], *China News*, 25 July 2004, <http://www.chinanews.com/news/2004year/2004-07-25/26/464131/shtml>.

<sup>62</sup> “关于做好 2014 年度民兵组织整顿和兵役登记工作的通知” [Notice on the Completion of 2014 Militia Reorganization and Military Service Registration Work], issued by Tingjiang Township, 12 May 2014.

<sup>63</sup> “关于印发《2015 年党江镇民兵组织整顿工作实施方案》的通知” [Notice on the Issue of “Dangjiang Township 2015 Militia Consolidation Implementation Plan”], Document no. 15, issued by Dangjiang Township, 25 March 2015, <http://219.159.197.85:8080/govinfo/documentAction.do?method=toDocView&docId=059e53c4-c7a5-45d2-b58e-3720e6291dc5&moduleId=046f299f-f5c2-49c3-833c-3651c836a3d4>.

The following sample set of recent Maritime Militia activities focuses on paramilitary functions. Therefore, it omits a large number of cases in which the Maritime Militia rescued other fishing and domestic vessels.

### **Guangzhou MR:**

May 2015 — In Guangdong Province, Jiangmen MSD organized a training exercise for the Maritime Militia detachments, focusing on their wartime missions. Exercises involved assembly and mobilization, maritime rights protection, patrolling, logistics, and emergency repairs of piers hit by the enemy.<sup>64</sup>

May 22, 2015 — In Hainan Province, the Dongfang City PAFD militia training base held an award ceremony for a Maritime Militia skills contest, granting awards to advanced units and personnel. City officials attending the event emphasized strengthening the Maritime Militia units and training them to become a force for protecting territorial sovereignty and maritime interests, and for supporting active duty forces.<sup>65</sup>

April 20–25, 2015 — In Hainan Province, the Danzhou City MSA assisted the city PAFD in holding a Danzhou City-wide Maritime Militia contest/demonstration in the basic skills of maritime rights protection. The MSA strengthened communications with the city PAFD; cooperated with port authorities; offered up its own pier as the site for this activity; ensured security during the event; and made sure that the PAFD issued timely navigational warnings, provided management for transportation, and cordoned off the sea area for the activities.<sup>66</sup>

December 2014 — Along with Sansha City's establishment of PAFDs in Yongxing Village, North Island, somewhere in the Crescent Group of the Paracels, and somewhere in the Spratlys, the city also held an integrated maritime administrative law enforcement exercise involving the Maritime Militia, CCG, and FLE. The exercise was meant to raise the city's capabilities in maritime administrative control, specifically focusing on inspection of illegal fishing boats and rescue operations. The exercise ended with a seven-day joint law enforcement patrol.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> 刘方超 [Liu Fangchao], “江门军分区组织海上民兵分队开展实战训练” [Jiangmen Military Subdistrict Holds Realistic Combat Training for Maritime Militia Units], *Liberation Army Daily*, 19 May 2015, [http://www.81.cn/mb/2015-05/19/content\\_6496450.htm](http://www.81.cn/mb/2015-05/19/content_6496450.htm).

<sup>65</sup> “东方市表彰海上民兵技能比武先进个人和单位” [Dongfang City Recognition Ceremony for Maritime Militia Individual and Unit Skills Contest], Dongfang City Broadcast Station, 23 May 2015, <http://www.dongffc.cn/news/20150523/26918.html>.

<sup>66</sup> “洋浦海事局提前作好协调海上民兵比武观摩活动的准备工作” [Yangpu Maritime Safety Administration Completes Preparation Work Ahead of Coordinated Maritime Militia Training Exercise Tournament], Publicity Department of Hainan Maritime Safety Administration, 17 April 2015, [http://www.hnmsa.gov.cn/news\\_6478.aspx](http://www.hnmsa.gov.cn/news_6478.aspx).

<sup>67</sup> “中国南海四岛出现新情况: 整个南海紧张” [A New Situation on Four Chinese Islands in the South China Sea: Tension throughout the South China Sea], 10 January 2015, <http://www.junying.com/jstd/932fe5b5.html>.

August 2014 — In the Gulf of Tonkin, a maritime garrison of the South Sea Fleet, organized a large-scale area defense joint exercise involving forces from the navy, naval aviation, air force, FLE, CCG, and Maritime Militia elements. This exercise simulated protection of a drilling rig. Exercises included joint escorting of supply ships by the PLAN and CCG, and responses to enemy incursions with multi-wave missile attacks from warplanes and missile boats. When a suspicious enemy armed fishing trawler approached the defensive lines, the command ordered a Maritime Militia reconnaissance boat to go out and inspect it under the over watch of a naval submarine chaser, with a CCG patrol vessel assigned to intercept the enemy boat. Simulated frogmen heading towards the rig were dealt with by live fire from naval guns and light weapons. A nearby observation and communications station monitoring the exercise used a unified command platform to deliver early warning information to the command center.<sup>68</sup>

### **Nanjing MR:**

May 19, 2015 — In Zhejiang Province, the Ningbo City NDMC held a maritime mobilization “support the front” exercise. Xiangshan District’s PAFD displayed its Maritime Militia reconnaissance detachment, with over 182 fishing vessels forming a reconnaissance network. There were 32 “motherships” forming nodes, and 150 vessels subordinate to these motherships forming a network.<sup>69</sup>

March 2015 — In Zhejiang Province, Wenzhou MSD held “realistic” training exercises for its naval militia detachments, emphasizing informatized support using satellite navigation, long-range command and control, and even new techniques to interfere with electronic surveillance.<sup>70</sup>

December 2014 — In Xiangshan Harbor, in Zhejiang Province, a reserve minesweeper unit of the East Sea Fleet organized a military-civilian minesweeping exercise, involving fishing vessels. Over the years, this unit has trained and harnessed the abilities of fishermen to deploy and sweep sea mines as well as perform reconnaissance. In a departure from the usual Maritime Militia nomenclature, the personnel of this force were referred to as “reservist officers and soldiers.”<sup>71</sup>

January 27, 2014 — Shanghai Jiangnan Shipyard’s Maritime Militia ship repair battalion held a training exercise commanded by both the city mayor and the garrison commander. Upon receiving the mobilization order from a truck-based satellite National Defense Command Center, using data stored on the National Defense Mobilization Command Information Network, orders

<sup>68</sup> 张毅根, 何鹏责 [Zhang Yigen and He Pengze], “保护钻井平台: 军警民南海演练围歼” [Protecting the Drilling Platform: Military-Police-Civilian Exercise to Surround and Annihilate], *National Defense News*, 23 August 2014, [http://www.81.cn/jmywyl/2014-08/23/content\\_6107899.htm](http://www.81.cn/jmywyl/2014-08/23/content_6107899.htm).

<sup>69</sup> “A Thousand Vessels Go out to the Blue Territory Together,” *National Defense News*, 25 May 2015.

<sup>70</sup> 徐守洋, 孟晓飞 [Xu Shouyang and Meng Xiaofei], “海上支援作战能力逐浪攀升” [Maritime Support Operations Climbing the Waves], *National Defense News*, 7 April 2015.

<sup>71</sup> “东海大批渔船编入海军 条条渔船是战舰” [A Large Number of Fishing Vessels Enter the Navy in the East China Sea—Each Fishing Vessel is a Warship], *人民海军* [People’s Navy], 8 December 2014, p. 4.

were sent out to the mobilization group at Jiangnan Shipyard. Within three hours, 200 militia members reported for duty and set out on an East Sea Search and Rescue Bureau ship. They repaired a leak in a naval vessel; conducted firefighting, coordinated by the rescue vessel's helicopter; and performed dredging and salvage operations for a sunken sand-laden vessel. The units of this group had received training in repairing naval vessels and using naval tools to carry out repairs.<sup>72</sup>

September 2012 — In Jiangsu Province, Taicang City's militia emergency response group's recon and transport detachment responded to a distress call from two cargo vessels that had collided 80 nautical miles out. Using its "satellite navigation command system" (likely the Beidou system, which features message transmission capabilities), it located the vessels. The detachment took on the vessels' goods and personnel, and conducted emergency repairs.<sup>73</sup>

### **Jinan MR:**

November 2010 — In Shandong Province, Rizhao City, the Lanshan District has organized many emergency response units of Maritime Militia, implemented a new "political education at sea" system for over 100 distant water fishing vessels, and held a "support the front" exercise involving over 600 Maritime Militia personnel out at sea.<sup>74</sup>

October 2014 — In Shandong Province, Rizhao City, Lanshan District, training exercises, which were arranged by the PAFD in coordination with army and navy units, involved 10 Maritime Militia specialized detachments utilizing various types of vessels. Maritime Militia recon, equipment, and technical support detachments engaged in joint training with a naval unit, and Maritime Militia transport and logistics detachments supported a PLA Army beach landing exercise. Military and civilian authorities jointly organized exercises for the Maritime Militia emergency response and rescue detachments.<sup>75</sup>

November 2013 — In Shandong Province, Weihai MSD, Rushan City, several hundred Maritime Militia members of the enterprise Zhengyang Group participated in an exercise "under gunfire" for loading and unloading, and rescue and repair. The group received military and civilian

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<sup>72</sup> "Maritime Support the Front, Advancing toward the Deep Blue—A Record of Shanghai City's Support the Front Maritime War Fighting Mobilization Exercise," *National Defense News*, 27 January 2014.

<sup>73</sup> 王绍云, 王军钢, 庄明霞 [Wang Shaoyun, Wang Jungang, and Zhuang Mingxia], "江苏省太仓市打造海上民兵应急支前先锋队掠影" [Glimpse of Jiangsu Province's Taicang City Maritime Militia Emergency Support Vanguard], *PLA Pictorial*, No. 8 (2013), <http://www.plapic.com.cn/txt/201308b/20130811-1B.html>.

<sup>74</sup> 柴世民, 刘君 [Chai Shimin and Liu Jun], "岚山区人武部探索海上民兵教育之路" [Lanshan District's People's Armed Forces Department Explores a Path for Maritime Militia Education], *Liberation Army Daily*, 25 November 2010.

<sup>75</sup> 曹树建, 刘健 [Cao Shujian and Liu Jian], "大海成为民兵练兵备战主战场" [The Seas Have Become the Main Battlefield for Militia Combat Readiness Training], *National Defense News*, 3 November 2014, [http://www.81.cn/gfbmap/content/2014-11/03/content\\_91820.htm](http://www.81.cn/gfbmap/content/2014-11/03/content_91820.htm).

approval for its amphibious war-fighting capabilities. In May of that year, the city's first marine fishing cooperative had established a "group army" out of 70 fishing vessels.<sup>76</sup>

## Vessel Requirements

Vessels mobilized for military purposes can vary widely, from fishing trawlers to oil tankers, as was recently publicized in China's new classification standards for civilian shipbuilding. However, there appear to be some differences over what constitutes vessel requisition and mobilization versus more normalized Maritime Militia activities. Local regulations drafted for vessel mobilization procedures lay out the requirements for all departments involved in mobilization planning, and some place Maritime Militia within a separate category from the inventory keeping of some mobilization work. For example, Fuzhou City's "Temporary Regulations on Fuzhou Civilian Vessel and Militia Crew Mobilization and Requisition" states that all fishing vessels of 50-ton displacements or higher must register with the city's national defense transportation authorities. Although in principle most vessels should register for defense mobilization, general civilian vessels see less regular use, and their crews get less regular training, than those in the Maritime Militia.

With renewed emphasis on Maritime Militia building in recent years, terminology has changed for certain units. For example, "militia vessel transport group" (*minbing chuanyuntuan*) has been changed to "Maritime Militia organization."<sup>77</sup> Such a change may reflect the change from the earlier militia that served limited transport roles, to today's more diverse and specialized Maritime Militia that is organized for missions beyond transporting PLA troops and equipment.

## Incentives

Vessel owners complain about the opportunity cost from being held up at a dock for militia obligations. Local governments and regulations concerning vessel mobilization and requisition allow for monetary compensation to vessel owners and personnel for lost income.<sup>78</sup> To resolve the costs of the Maritime Militia and convince its units to venture farther out into places such as the Spratlys, many local governments subsidize the fuel for these boats. Taishan City of

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<sup>76</sup> 谭磊,于安丰,管水锁 [Tan Lei, Yu Anfeng, and Guan Shuisuo], "千舟竞发, 护卫千里海疆安宁" [A Thousand Boats Set Off to Guard the Peace of One Thousand Li of Coast], *Liberation Army Daily*, 10 February 2014, [http://www.81.cn/jmywyl/2014-02/10/content\\_5764774\\_2.htm](http://www.81.cn/jmywyl/2014-02/10/content_5764774_2.htm).

<sup>77</sup> "福州市民用船舶和船员民兵动员征用暂行规定" [Temporary Regulations on Fuzhou Civilian Vessel and Militia Crew Mobilization and Requisition], 20 July 2004. This change was one of many that the Fuzhou People's Government made to the same regulation, revised and released 14 November 2014.

<sup>78</sup> "福州市人民政府关于修改《福州市民用船舶和船员民兵动员征用暂行规定》的决定" [On Fuzhou City Government's Revisions to "Temporary Regulations on Fuzhou Civilian Vessel and Militia Crew Mobilization and Requisition"], issued by Fuzhou City Government, 14 November, 2014, <http://law.law-star.com/cac/4140096684.htm>; "广东省海上民用船舶动员征用规定"[Regulations on Guangdong Provincial Mobilization and Requisition of Civilian Marine Vessels], issued by Guangdong Provincial Government, 13 May 2002, [http://zwgk.gd.gov.cn/006939748/200909/t20090915\\_11195.html](http://zwgk.gd.gov.cn/006939748/200909/t20090915_11195.html).

Guangdong Province recently garnered considerable attention from military leaders, and received a visit from MOD Minister Chang Wanquan. In 2013, the Guangdong MD commander visited Taishan to inspect its Maritime Militia construction and meet with fishing representatives. That year, Taishan's city government provided 194 million RMB in fuel subsidies to its 2,650 fishing vessels (this came out to about 3,850 RMB per ton).<sup>79</sup> Hainan's famous Tanmen Village also provides fuel subsidies to its Maritime Militia, meant to mitigate the expense of travel to the Spratlys.

A system of rewards and publicity is set up to encourage the Maritime Militia, with events usually held during provincial military affairs meetings. A series of awards recognize advanced militia units, advanced captains and cadres, and other outstanding individuals; such accolades are meant to instill pride and a sense of national duty in the Maritime Militia. Other efforts are meant to prevent abuse or neglect of militia obligations, requiring each fishing vessel and its crew to have the appropriate certificates for national defense and mobilization. These are reviewed annually, to ensure that all the militia National Defense Obligation Certificates are up to date and sufficient. If crews violate their obligations, their fuel subsidies will be reduced or eliminated, and their fishing permits could even be cancelled.<sup>80</sup>

## Implications

China's Maritime Militia plays an important supporting role for the PLAN and MLE in the Yellow, East and South China Seas. It has not only the world's largest fishing fleet that is active in these "near seas"; but also the world's largest distant water fishing fleet, which fishes globally. The Maritime Militia also enjoys very high level support. For instance, in 2013, when Xi Jinping visited Qionghai City in Hainan Province, he met the Maritime Militia and told them that "Maritime Militia members should not only lead fishing activities, but also collect oceanic information and support the construction of islands and reefs." He went on to also praise fishermen for protecting China's maritime interests in the disputed waters in South China Sea.<sup>81</sup>

Amid the rising tensions in the South China Sea and East China Sea, renewed attention is being given to the development of maritime militia. Some Chinese scholars and security experts have been advocating that maritime militia should be China's first line of defense in the South China

<sup>79</sup> 石江龙 [Shi Jianglong], "2650 艘渔船分享 1.94 亿燃油补贴" [2650 Fishing Vessels Receive 194 Million in Fuel Subsidies], <http://paper.oeeee.com/nis/201311/29/145728.html>; "台山市委书记张磊获得广州军区第七届"国防之星·殊荣"" [Taishan City Committee Secretary Zhang Lei Receives Guangzhou Military Region's Seventh "National Defense Celebrity" Distinction], 16 June 2015, <http://news.tsbtv.tv/2015/0616/39266.shtml>; "省军区司令员台山调研海上民兵建设工作" [Provincial Military District Commander Investigates Tanshan's Maritime Militia Work], *Taishan Station*, 27 November 2013, <http://www.jmtv.cn/news/a/e/2013-11-27/1385552619943.shtml>.

<sup>80</sup> Zeng Pengxiang, Chuan Zhigang, and Lian Ronghua, "Scientifically Build a Maritime Militia Management System."

<sup>81</sup> "President Pays Visit to Hainan Fishermen," *China Daily*, 11 April 2012, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/2013-04/11/content\\_16394643.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/2013-04/11/content_16394643.htm).

Sea and East China Sea.<sup>82</sup> Since Xi's April 2013 visit to Hainan, numerous articles have been published in the *PLA Daily* and *National Defense Magazine* urging for more support to develop Maritime Militia forces. More financial resources were allocated to provide training for the fishermen and subsidize the building of new fishing vessels.<sup>83</sup> In the past, China's Maritime Militia forces normally relied on renting the fishing vessels of the fishermen or fishing companies, but it appears that China is building a state-owned fishing fleet for its Maritime Militia force in the South China Sea. China's Hainan Province has ordered the building of 84 large militia fishing vessels for Sansha City; 10 fishing vessels were scheduled to be delivered in 2015, with four reportedly delivered by August 2015.<sup>84</sup>

The militia provides a peacetime adjunct to China's space-based surveillance systems. Since the key to what the Pentagon has called China's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) system is the ability to closely monitor China's seaward approaches, it is hardly surprising that the PLA has elected to capitalize on the on-hand capabilities that its fishing fleet offers. In addition to the obvious surveillance advantages, other low-intensity peacetime scenarios include supporting rights protection (presence missions, obstruction, reef/island development, "cabbage strategy"-style envelopment, etc.) and dealing with fishing-fleet-related skirmishes over maritime claims. Medium-intensity scenarios could include involvement in conflicts between China and its smaller regional neighbors. In these cases, the Maritime Militia might be charged with greater strategic employment (mine warfare, ambush, false landings, etc.). High-intensity conflict, involving war between great powers—which is the least likely scenario to occur in practice—might witness Maritime Militia providing support to active duty forces (in the form of mine

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<sup>82</sup> Additional details at “专家：10万渔民兵化 南海诸国都不是对手” [Expert: 100,000 Fishermen Become Militia, South China Sea Countries Are Not Rivals], 环球时报 [Global Times], 28 June 2012, <http://mil.huanqiu.com/Observation/2012-06/2862590.html>; “将渔民编入民兵保家卫国” [Incorporating Fishermen into Militia Will Defend the Homeland], 南国都市报 [Southern Metropolis Daily], 27 January 2013, [http://ngdsb.hinews.cn/html/2013-01/27/content\\_5\\_6.htm](http://ngdsb.hinews.cn/html/2013-01/27/content_5_6.htm).

<sup>83</sup> Wang Xinhai, “推进新型海防建设军民深度融合发展的路径选择” [Paths to Push Forward New Model of Marine Border Defense and Civil Military Cooperation], *National Defense*, No. 3 (2014), <http://kns55.en.eastview.com/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?recid=&FileName=GUOF201403008&DbName=CJFD2014&DbCode=CJFD>.

<sup>84</sup> “通报市领导班子专题民主生活会情况 分析上半年工作部署下半年工作” [Circular on City Leadership's Special Meeting on the State of Democratic Life—Analysis of Work Plan from the First and Second Half of the Year], *Sansha City News Office*, 24 July 2014, <http://www.sansha.gov.cn/page.php?xuh=1624>; “关于在文昌木兰头规划建设三沙战略腹地 and 民兵渔船停泊港的建议” [Proposal on the Planning of Construction of a Strategic Interior and Militia Fishing Vessel Berths for Sansha in Mulantou of Wenchang], *Hainan Government Website*, 12 February 2015, <http://www.hainan.gov.cn/tianprint-rdjy--5740.html>; “外媒称三沙拟建 84 艘大型民兵渔船 巩固南沙主权” [Foreign Media Say That the 84 Large Maritime Militia Fishing Vessels Will Consolidate Spratly Islands Sovereignty], 参考消息 [Reference News] via *QQ News*, 2 August 2015, <http://news.qq.com/a/20150802/006925.htm>.

laying, replenishment of island bases, transporting troops and ammunition, rescue, repair, concealment, sabotage, etc.).

Given the increased focus on the Maritime Militia, and the way it has already been employed in the near seas proximate to China, it is a key element of Beijing's overall vision of becoming a maritime power. It seems likely that Chinese planners envision employing the Maritime Militia in unexpected, unconventional ways in addition to its surveillance, "rights protection," and support operations. Thanks in part to the inherently decentralized nature of China's Maritime Militia, abundant open sources offer significant data points. The continued exploitation of these sources can offer important insights into the dynamics concerning the Maritime Militia's development, as well as its prospects.