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The Arming of China's Maritime Frontier

Ryan D. Martinson *

China Maritime Report No. 2

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Newport, Rhode Island**

China's expansion in maritime East Asia has relied heavily on non-naval elements of sea power, above all white-hulled constabulary forces. This reflects a strategic decision. Coast guard vessels operating on the basis of routine administration and backed up by a powerful military can achieve many of China's objectives without risking an armed clash, sully China's reputation, or provoking military intervention from outside powers.

Among China's many maritime agencies, two organizations particularly fit this bill: China Marine Surveillance (CMS) and China Fisheries Law Enforcement (FLE). With fleets comprising unarmed or lightly armed cutters crewed by civilian administrators, CMS and FLE could vigorously pursue China's maritime claims while largely avoiding the costs and dangers associated with classic "gunboat diplomacy."

This same logic argued against employing the armed elements of its maritime law enforcement forces, the China Maritime Police (CMP). Though the CMP had the authority and ability to operate throughout the three million square kilometers of China's claimed jurisdictional space, Chinese leaders elected to keep this service away from disputed and sensitive areas. Its identity as a military organization contradicted key premises of China's maritime dispute strategy.

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Since 2013, these assumptions have changed. In that year, Chinese leaders began a major restructuring of the country's fragmented and dysfunctional maritime law enforcement system, derisively described as “five dragons managing the sea” (五龙制海). This reform sought to “integrate” four Chinese maritime law enforcement forces—the three “dragons” mentioned above, plus a fourth force owned by the General Administration of Customs (GAC)—into a new agency called the “China Coast Guard.” While organizational change has been slow, one outcome is clear: the reform has empowered the armed elements of China's constabulary forces to play an increasingly important role along China's maritime frontier.¹ This reflects a subtle but significant shift in Chinese policy, with possible implications both for future PRC behavior and the future of the China Coast Guard as an organization.

The Age of the Toothless “Dragons”

One of the primary drivers behind Beijing's development and use of sea power is its perceived need to defend and advance the country's position in its many maritime disputes. These disputes involve Chinese claims to sovereignty over offshore islands and claims to certain, often ill-defined, “rights” to use and administer the ocean. China's preferred approach to handling its disputes relies heavily on maritime law enforcement forces, backed up by other elements of national power, to perform missions that in another age and other circumstances would be the sole province of its navy.

China's Maritime Frontier



China's use of maritime law enforcement forces in sovereignty—or, in the Chinese parlance, “rights protection”—operations can be traced to the 1980s. Chinese agencies ensured that foreign companies operating in Chinese waters, often with Chinese partners, adhered to Chinese environmental protection law. Later, Chinese maritime agencies assumed responsibility for tracking and monitoring foreign military vessels. Both occurred mostly in undisputed areas.²

The 1990s saw Chinese coast guard forces directly contribute to China's campaign to expand the geographic frontiers of its control and influence. In late 1994, FLE led the effort to quietly occupy Mischief Reef. In 2000, it established a blue-water patrol system, intended in part to manifest and enforce Chinese claims in disputed areas in the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea (including in the Spratlys). However, it was not until the 2006-2008 period that Chinese maritime law enforcement forces began maintaining a frequent and regular presence in all of the waters China claimed. This effort was led by CMS.³ The vast major of the hostile encounters that took place in disputed areas from 2006-2012 involved either CMS or FLE forces, both of which comprised civilian forces operating unarmed or lightly-armed vessels.⁴

This was by design. On paper, other agencies had both the mandate and the ability to operate in all Chinese-claimed waters. Chinese leaders, however, did not permit them to do so. Another major civilian agency, the Maritime Safety Administration (MSA), sometimes sailed to trouble spots, but its chief political function was to serve as a conduit for international cooperation, or coast guard diplomacy.

The other important blue-water capable law enforcement agency was the CMP.⁵ Notwithstanding its English name, CMP was actually a component of China's “armed forces” (武装力量). It had a clear legal mandate to maintain public security in all Chinese-claimed areas, including those in dispute.⁶ Given that Chinese civilian mariners, especially fishermen, faced danger to life and property while operating in the Spratly Islands, there was an obvious need for CMP forces to be there.⁷ While its oceangoing fleet was much smaller than those of CMS and FLE, by early 2007 it had some large cutters.⁸ Logic suggests that CMP would seek to be on the front line fighting for the favor of Party leaders and the glory of the Chinese nation, and there is evidence that it did.⁹

Photo 1. A China Marine Surveillance Cutter Departs Woody Island (2013)[†]



Organization, Force Structure, and Missions of the CMP

The CMP did not exist as an independent agency. It was the amphibious component of China's Border Defense Force (公安边防部队), itself a part of the People's Armed Police (PAP). Each coastal province or provincial-level city had a Border Defense Force Contingent (总队), beneath which existed at least one CMP "detachment" (支队) and a number of "groups" (大队). CMP forces operated on the basis of local and national law, but took orders in a vertical chain of command (垂直管理) that led to the Ministry of Public Security. By the eve of the China Coast Guard reform, CMP comprised some two dozen detachments and numbered well over 10,000 soldiers.¹⁰

The CMP was China's sole "active duty" (现役) maritime law enforcement force. Its ranks comprised "officers and enlisted" (官兵) who donned military uniforms similar to those worn by members of the PLA. Prospective soldiers entered through three primary channels: the PAP service academies, including the China Maritime Police Academy in Ningbo; direct commission for qualified graduates from civilian universities; and enlistment (义务兵).¹¹ New recruits received basic training like those joining other components of the PAP.

[†] *Xinhua*, 10 March 2013

Photo 2. Training Aboard a China Maritime Police Cutter (2010)[‡]



Public security and anti-smuggling constituted the CMP's core missions. Unlike CMS and FLE personnel, CMP officers had police powers.¹² They could investigate, detain, arrest, and charge suspected violators of the Chinese criminal code.¹³

By the eve of the China Coast Guard reform, the CMP came to own hundreds of vessels, most armed. Among those capable of blue-water operations, it possessed over twenty 600-tonne Type 618B cutters, each equipped with 30 mm cannons. The CMP also owned two former Type 053H frigates, transferred from the PLA Navy in December 2006.¹⁴ In early 2007, a Shanghai detachment commissioned a 1,500 tonne cutter (1001), easily the most capable vessel in the fleet. Whereas CMS and FLE vessels were considered civilian “ships” (船), CMP cutters were designated “warships” (舰), implying they were built to higher (i.e., military) standards.¹⁵

[‡] *Xinhua*, 11 February 2010

Photo 3. Ship 1001 of the China Maritime Police[§]



Because of restrictions imposed on them by China's civilian leadership, CMP cutters seldom ventured far from the Chinese mainland. They did not sail to disputed land features, except the Paracels, which China had controlled since 1974. Even then, they did so only rarely. As such, they operated far from the frontlines of China's sovereignty campaign. One exception is worth highlighting.

In the summer of 2006, vessels owned by China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) conducted seismic surveys south of the Paracels, in waters also claimed by Vietnam. The CCP Central Committee approved a plan to use CMP forces to protect these operations from possible Vietnamese obstruction. To this end, the CMP mobilized units from Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, and Fujian to perform this "escort" mission, unimaginatively code-named "Operation South China Sea" (南海行动). The combined forces totaled twelve CMP cutters and 560 soldiers. Because the service then owned no vessels displacing more than 400 tonnes, the CMP also leased eight large civilian vessels for the mission. From 1 June-31 July 2006, CMP forces fended off waves of Vietnamese "armed vessels" (武装船) sent to obstruct the survey. The CNPC team ultimately completed its operations without suffering damage or loss of life.¹⁶

This ostensibly successful escort mission marked both the beginning and end of major CMP sovereignty operations.¹⁷ In June 2007, CNPC went back to these waters for another round of seismic surveys, but this time its ships were escorted by much larger yet unarmed cutters owned

[§] *Xinhua*, 21 November 2008

by China Marine Surveillance. This operation was also fiercely contested by Vietnam.¹⁸ Subsequent oil/gas escort exploration in these waters was likewise protected by CMS cutters.¹⁹ CMP was out of the rights protection game.

Coast Guard Reform

The fragmentation of China's maritime law enforcement system impeded effective administration of Chinese waters and prevented synergies in the struggle to defend and advance China's maritime claims. Different agencies seldom shared information. They did not coordinate their activities. Their investments were redundant. They competed with each other for influence, resources, and prestige.²⁰

Chinese leaders long recognized the need for reform. Discussions had been underway for years. In 2005, then Premier Wen Jiabao attempted to integrate agencies operating in the Gulf of Tonkin. This failed.²¹ In early 2013 a new generation of CCP politburo members led by Xi Jinping decided to impose top-down reform. Xi himself headed the Maritime Rights and Interests Leading Small Group, set up in 2012 with the purpose of formulating and coordinating China's maritime dispute strategy.²² He would have been acutely aware of the problems caused by China's "balkanized" maritime law enforcement system.²³ Additionally, he was committed to a more assertive approach to pursuing China's maritime claims. To realize Xi's aims, bureaucratic walls would have to come down.

The plan to reform Chinese maritime law enforcement was announced early in Xi's tenure, at the 2013 National People's Congress. The legislation that launched the reform called for "integrating" (整合) four maritime law enforcement forces under the authority of the State Oceanic Administration (SOA).²⁴ The new agency would be called the "China Coast Guard." Reform legislation notably did not call for "unifying" (统一) or "merging" (合并) the different agencies. This implied that the reform would occur in two or more phases and that the purpose of phase one was to knit together several key "dragons" and establish unified decision-making under a single chain of command. True organizational "unification" would apparently come later.

Reform would be difficult. It required the old agencies—and, perhaps more importantly, the departments in which they resided—to relinquish resources and authorities to SOA, a low-ranking agency. SOA, for its part, would have to work closely with the Ministry of Public Security, which

was charged with providing (undefined) “operational guidance” (业务指导) to the new service. Negotiated compromises led to bizarre results: for example, the Director of the China Coast Guard had an administrative rank senior to the Director of SOA, the organization which oversaw his agency.²⁵ At the operational level, effective action at sea would require four completely different forces—with different authorities, structures, identities, doctrine, cultures, and personnel and training systems—to work together. Achieving interoperability would take time.

Four years later, the China Coast Guard reform remains in phase one. It is still not a single, homogenous organization.²⁶ All four antecedents still exist in some form. Some organizational “integration” has occurred, but the pace of reform is clearly slower than planned.²⁷ With the creation of a headquarters in Beijing charged with overall command of all China Coast Guard units, coordination has improved. However, members of the different agencies still identify with their old services, and seldom mix.

Photo 4. Early Media Coverage of the China Coast Guard Reform **



In the case of the CMP, most of the service’s pre-reform detachments still exist. However, instead of being subordinate to Border Defense Force contingents, they now operate under China Coast Guard contingents, one in each coastal province or provincial-level city. CMP vessels are painted with China Coast Guard colors and 5-digit hull numbers, distinguishing them from CMS and FLE ships (which have 4-digit hull numbers).²⁸ Many CMP personnel now wear all-black working uniforms, though some continue to use older green camouflage uniforms. Officers and enlisted

** Website of the State Oceanic Administration, 1 October 2013

still wear olive green PAP service uniforms. In the Chinese literature, elements of the CMP are called the “active duty China Coast Guard Forces” (中国海警现役部队), distinguishing them from the civilian elements (CMS, FLE, and GAC).²⁹ There is very little evidence of joint training with other components of the China Coast Guard. As will be discussed below, they have conducted major operations together, with disappointing results. **Table 1** lists current CMP detachments.

Table 1. China Maritime Police Units³⁰

| China Coast Guard Contingent | CMP Detachments |
|------------------------------|--|
| Liaoning | 1 st (Dalian), 2 nd (Dandong), and 3 rd (Panjin) |
| Hebei | 1 st (Qinhuangdao) |
| Tianjin | 1 st (Tianjin) |
| Shandong | 1 st (Weihai) and 2 nd (Qingdao) |
| Jiangsu | Taicang |
| Shanghai | Shanghai |
| Zhejiang | 1 st (Taizhou) and 2 nd (Ningbo) |
| Fujian | 1 st (Fuzhou), 2 nd (Quanzhou), and 3 rd (Xiamen) |
| Guangdong | 1 st (Guangzhou), 2 nd (Shantou), and 3 rd (Zhanjiang) |
| Hainan | 1 st (Haikou), 2 nd (Sanya), and 3 rd (Wenchang) |
| Guangxi | 1 st (Beihai), 2 nd (Fangchenggang), and 3 rd (Qinzhou) |

Moving to the Front Line

Chinese constabulary forces perform two major types of sovereignty missions. First, they maintain administrative presence in disputed areas. This is a political operation intended to serve various purposes, above all persuading foreigners of the seriousness and credibility of China’s claims. The second role is far more coercive in nature. Chinese leaders direct law enforcement forces to impose Chinese prerogatives on foreign vessels operating in Chinese-claimed areas. This mission may be driven by political aims, but it serves the fundamental purpose of controlling space. When performing such “enforcement” missions, Chinese forces are authorized to adopt

measures short of armed force: bumping, ramming, jamming communications, and firing water cannons.

Since coast guard reform began, CMP forces have increased their involvement in both types of missions. They are now present in waters that they seldom, if ever, sailed to in the years prior to the reform. They have also been involved in major operations to forcibly assert Chinese claims, operations formerly only performed by CMS and FLE. CMP soldiers operating CMP vessels have expanded their sovereignty operations both in the East China Sea and in the South China Sea. Moreover, teams of CMP personnel are now often embarked on CMS and FLE ships, militarizing operations that were once entirely civilian in nature. In recent years, Chinese leaders have hastened the arming of the maritime frontier by greatly increasing the size of the CMP's blue-water patrol fleet.

The CMP in the East China Sea

At the core of China's sovereignty campaign in the East China Sea are actions to undermine Japan's administration of the Senkaku Islands (which the Chinese call the Diaoyu Islands). From December 2008 to September 2012, this approach involved periodic constabulary patrols to waters adjacent to the islands, sometimes within the 12 nautical mile territorial sea. In September 2012, Chinese law enforcement vessels began maintaining a near-continuous presence around the features with frequent intrusions into the territorial sea. For years, Chinese leaders assigned these presence missions exclusively to CMS and FLE.

Photo 5. A China Marine Surveillance Cutter Near the Senkakus (2012)^{††}



This changed in late 2015. On 26 December, for the first time a China Coast Guard ship formation entering the Senkakus territorial sea included a CMP cutter—CCG 31239, one of three former PLA Navy frigates transferred to a Shanghai detachment in mid-2015. In the transfer processes, the 2,000 tonne ship had been stripped of its missiles and main gun, but retained four 37 mm cannons. Even in its reduced state, CCG 31239 was clearly of a different class than its consorts.³¹

Since then, CMP vessels have completed dozens of missions to the Senkakus, always together with CMS and FLE cutters. All three PLA Navy frigates transferred to a Shanghai-based unit of the CMP have sailed to the Senkakus. A fourth Shanghai-based cutter, 31101 (former 1001), has also sailed there (11 September 2016 and 8 October 2016).³² A ship from a Zhejiang detachment (33115) and a ship from a Fujian detachment (35115) have completed Senkaku patrols, doing so for the first time on 7 August 2016 and 6 November 2016, respectively.³³

CMP cutters have been involved in at least one major operation to enforce China's "rights" to exploit fisheries resources in disputed waters in the East China Sea. Over several days in August 2016, Chinese authorities allowed well over 200 Chinese fishing trawlers to operate in waters near the Senkaku Islands, with some straying into the territorial sea. These boats were escorted by some twenty Chinese maritime law enforcement vessels, including nine CMP cutters. **Table 2** lists the vessels involved: unit, hull number, and other details.³⁴

^{††} *Xinhua*, 14 September 2012

Table 2. CMP Vessels Involved in August 2016 Escort Operation to the Senkakus

| Location of Detachment | Hull # | Notes |
|------------------------|--------|--|
| Zhejiang | 33115 | 1,700 tonnes. Originally procured by FLE; late transferred to the CMP. Armed with a 30 mm cannon. |
| | 33102 | 600 tonnes. Type 618B cutter. Armed with a 30 mm cannons. |
| | 33103 | 1,600 tonnes. Resembles a 056 frigate. Originally procured by the GAC; later transferred to the CMP. Armed with 30mm cannon. |
| Fujian | 35115 | 1,700 tonnes. Originally procured by FLE; later transferred to the CMP. Armed with a 30 mm cannon. |
| | 35102 | 600 tonnes. Type 618B cutter. Apparently not armed. |
| | 35104 | 600 tonnes. Originally procured by the GAC; later transferred to the CMP. Armed with a 30 mm cannon. |
| Shanghai | 31101 | 1,500 tonnes. Commissioned by the CMP in 2007. Armed with a 30 mm cannon. |
| | 31239 | Former PLA Navy frigate. Armed with four 37 mm cannons. |
| Guangdong | 44103 | 600 tonnes. Type 618B cutter. Armed with 30 mm cannons. |

Also in the East China Sea, the China Coast Guard is charged with ensuring security around Chinese facilities at the Chunxiao/Shirakaba gas field. While China’s rigs are located west of the midline between Japan and China, they tap resources that may straddle the Japanese-claimed boundary. Japan is therefore hostile to their operations. In 2004, CMS and other civilian forces began patrolling these sensitive waters to deter possible Japanese harassment. In recent years, the CMP has also conducted this mission.³⁵

The cases cited above just involve known CMP vessels operated by CMP crews. But CMP personnel are now also embarking on CMS and FLE vessels heading to disputed waters. For example, on twelve instances from mid-2013 to mid-2015 the 3rd detachment of the Fujian contingent sent SWAT personnel (特勤队员) aboard CMS and FLE vessels sailing to the Senkakus.³⁶ This suggests that any China Coast Guard vessel could have armed crew members with the authority to detain, arrest, and charge foreigners under the Chinese criminal code.³⁷

The CMP in the South China Sea

In the four years since the China Coast Guard reform began, the CMP has expanded both presence and enforcement operations in the South China Sea. Prior to 2013, CMP cutters only operated in

the Paracels. Now they sail to all Chinese-claimed waters. With responsibility for the two million square kilometers within the “nine-dashed line,” the Hainan contingent has led the way. The 2nd detachment began deploying ships to the Spratlys sometime in 2015.³⁸ In early January 2017, CCG 46115 of the 2nd detachment sailed to the Spratlys for a several-week patrol.³⁹ The 3rd detachment is also active in the Spratly Archipelago. The 3,000 tonne CCG 46305 had conducted its first cruise of these remote claims by February 2016.⁴⁰ It now appears to operate there on a routine basis.⁴¹

Photo 6. A China Maritime Police Cutter Patrolling the Spratlys (2016)^{‡‡}



Vessels from other CMP contingents, including those based in northern provinces, have also operated in the South China Sea. For instance, in March 2017 the 1,500 tonne cutter 33115 from the Zhejiang contingent—the same ship that escorted hundreds of Chinese fishing vessels to the Senkakus in August 2016—steamed south along the western border of the nine-dashed line, ultimately switching off its AIS transceiver when it reached waters east of Quang Ngai, Vietnam.⁴² The 1,500 tonne cutter 37115, based in faraway Shandong, has also done sovereignty patrols in the South China Sea.⁴³

As in the East China Sea, Chinese constabulary forces operating in the South China Sea are charged with enforcing the country’s claims through threats and coercive measures short of armed

^{‡‡} South China Sea Research Forum, 5 June 2016

force. These operations range from obstructing foreign surveying vessels to protecting Chinese fishermen from foreign harassment. In recent years, the CMP has played a growing role in such operations.

The prime example is the defense of HYSY 981, a Chinese drilling rig harangued in waters just south of the Paracels in mid-2014. This event is important, not just as a milestone in the CMP's rise to prominence in China's maritime sovereignty campaign. As will be discussed below, it may also have convinced Chinese leaders of the need to militarize the maritime frontier.

In early May 2014, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) deployed a very large drilling rig, HYSY 981, to disputed waters southwest of Triton Island in the Paracels.⁴⁴ Vietnam responded with vigor, sending a number of coast guard and militia vessels to obstruct its operations. Then less than a year old, the China Coast Guard was called upon to protect the rig, by physically blocking access to the waters surrounding it.⁴⁵

Over the course of the 88-day operation, the China Coast Guard deployed CMP vessels from many different detachments. Aside from the South China Sea provinces (Guangxi, Guangdong, Hainan, and Fujian), ships came from as far away as Zhejiang, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Shandong, and Hebei. Working in conjunction with other elements of the China Coast Guard, CMP vessels engaged, chased and shouldered Vietnamese vessels, firing water cannons at sensitive hardware and down smoke stacks.⁴⁶

The CMP has also been asked to buttress China's control over Scarborough Shoal, seized in 2012 by CMS and FLE working in concert with China's maritime militia. Since April 2012, Chinese maritime law enforcement forces have maintained constant presence near this feature, located just 100 nm northwest of Subic Bay. Until the recent thawing of relations with the Philippines, Chinese forces were ordered to bar Philippine fishermen from approaching Scarborough Shoal. Prior to the China Coast Guard reform, only CMS and FLE ships served this guard duty. However, since 2014, a number of CMP units have rotated through. By the end of 2016, for example, vessels from Guangxi detachments had conducted 21 rights protection missions to the Paracels and Scarborough Shoal.⁴⁷ The Guangdong-based CCG 44101 has also patrolled the feature.⁴⁸

Acquiring a Blue-Water Fleet

Since late 2006, when the CMP received two former PLA Navy frigates, the CMP has had some capacity to operate in remote locations along China's maritime frontier.⁴⁹ However, the service

has never had the large numbers of blue-water cutters owned by civilian agencies such as FLE and CMS. Since 2014, Chinese leaders have taken steps to boost material capabilities needed to dramatically expand the service's role in China's sovereignty campaign.

First, ships originally procured by other services have been redirected to CMP units. FLE and the GAC have been the big losers in this reshuffling of resources. For instance, CCG 46305, a key rights protection cutter owned by a Hainan detachment of the CMP, was originally procured by FLE. In addition, a number of 1,500 tonne cutters built for FLE and GAC units were ultimately delivered to CMP detachments. See **Table 3** for representative examples.

Photo 7. A Newly-Commissioned Type 718 Cutter (2017)^{§§}



Second, in July 2015, the PLA Navy transferred three Type 053 frigates to the CMP. These vessels were stripped of their main guns, re-painted with China Coast Guard colors and pennant numbers, and delivered to the service's Shanghai detachment.

Lastly, the CMP has embarked on a major shipbuilding campaign of its own. In May 2016, Chinese shipyards launched two new ship classes, which have since entered serial production. The first was the 2,700 tonne Type 718 class, the first units of which have already been delivered to Hainan detachments of the CMP. The second ship class, Type 818, displaces over 4,000 tonnes and resembles a Type 054A frigate. The first two units of this class (46301 and 46302) were

^{§§} Weibo Account @城里人 111, 23 April 2017

delivered to Hainan detachments in early 2017. Both new ship classes are equipped with 76 mm cannons.

Table 3. Large Cutters Delivered to CMP Units Since 2014

| # | Based | Hull # | Displacement | Notes |
|----|-----------|--------|--------------|---|
| 1 | Liaoning | 21115 | 1,500t | Originally procured by FLE. |
| 2 | Shandong | 37115 | 1,500t | Originally procured by FLE. |
| 3 | Shanghai | 31239 | 2,000t | Former PLA Navy frigate. |
| 4 | Shanghai | 31240 | 2,000t | Former PLA Navy frigate. |
| 5 | Shanghai | 31241 | 2,000t | Former PLA Navy frigate. |
| 6 | Zhejiang | 33103 | 1,500t | Originally procured by GAC. |
| 7 | Zhejiang | 33115 | 1,500t | Originally procured by FLE. |
| 8 | Fujian | 35115 | 1,500t | Originally procured by FLE. |
| 9 | Guangdong | 44104 | 1,500t | Originally procured by GAC. |
| 10 | Hainan | 46104 | 1,500t | Originally procured by GAC. |
| 11 | Hainan | 46111 | 2,700t | Type 718 cutter. Delivered in late 2016. |
| 12 | Hainan | 46112 | 2,700t | Type 718 cutter. Delivered in late 2016. |
| 13 | Hainan | 46301 | 4,000t | Type 818 cutter. Delivered in early 2017. |
| 14 | Hainan | 46302 | 4,000t | Type 818 cutter. Delivered in early 2017. |
| 15 | Hainan | 46305 | 3,000t | Originally procured by FLE. |
| 16 | Guangxi | 45111 | 2,700t | Type 718 cutter. Delivered in early 2017. |

At the same time that new armed cutters have been delivered to CMP detachments, unarmed CMS ships have been transferred from the China Coast Guard to other agencies, especially oceanic research institutes within the State Oceanic Administration. Many of these had been rights protection stalwarts. For instance, CMS 49 has participated in many sovereignty patrols to the Senkakus. CMS 84 was one of two cutters that confronted the Philippine navy at Scarborough Shoal in April 2012, precipitating the 10-week standoff. Both are now listed as components of the SOA research fleet. The large-scale repurposing of CMS vessels has changed the overall composition of China’s “rights protection” fleet in favor of armed vessels. **Table 4** lists vessels transferred from the China Coast Guard to the SOA research fleet.

Table 4. CMS Ships Transferred to the SOA Research Fleet⁵⁰

| # | Hull # | Displacement | Notes |
|----|--------|--------------|---|
| 1 | 169 | 4,600t | Former PLA Navy AGI. Commissioned in 1982. Transferred to the CMS South China Sea Fleet in late 2012. Belongs to the CMS 8 th detachment. |
| 2 | 168 | 3,400t | Former PLA Navy tug. Commissioned in 1982. Transferred to CMS in late 2012. Belongs to the CMS 8 th detachment. |
| 3 | 84 | 1740t | Commissioned in 2011. One of two CMS vessels involved in the Scarborough Shoal incident in April 2012. Belongs to the South China Sea Branch of SOA. |
| 4 | 111 | 4400t | Former PLA Navy AGI. Commissioned in 1982. Has patrolled the Senkakus. Belongs to the Northern Branch of SOA. |
| 5 | 72 | 900t | Commissioned in 1989. Belongs to the South China Sea Branch of SOA. Defended PRC surveying activities from Vietnamese attack in June 2007. |
| 6 | 47 | 800t | Belongs to the East China Sea Branch of SOA. Commissioned in 1973. Involved in the harassment of Hakuryu-5 in the East China Sea in May 1985. |
| 7 | 49 | 1100t | Belongs to the Eastern Branch of SOA. Commissioned in 1996. Has sailed to the Senkakus. Involved in harassment of Japanese surveying vessels in East China Sea in February 2012. |
| 8 | 53 | 1330t | Commissioned in 1976. Belongs to the East China Sea Branch of SOA. |
| 9 | 62 | 800t | Commissioned in 1973. Belongs to the East China Sea Branch of SOA. Involved in the 2002 monitoring of Japanese operations to salvage a North Korean spy vessel sunk in the East China Sea in late 2001. |
| 10 | 50 | 3,500t | Now called <i>Xiang Yang Hong</i> 19. Belongs to the East China Sea Branch of SOA. |
| 11 | 83 | 3,500t | Now called <i>Haice</i> 3301. Belongs to the South China Sea Branch of SOA. |

The Future of the China Coast Guard

Since maritime law enforcement reform began in mid-2013, China has sought to integrate four separate forces under one chain of command. Ultimately, however, Chinese leaders seek to create a single homogenous organization capable of performing all of the mission sets of the four original forces, only more effectively and more efficiently. The question naturally becomes, what model will China adopt for the future China Coast Guard? Will it be a civilian agency like CMS or FLE, or a military organization like the CMP? In March 2013, SOA officials promised an answer would soon be forthcoming, but did not ultimately offer one, and have not in the years since.⁵¹ The story of the rise of the CMP offers clues about the future of the new agency. Indeed, known facts about China Coast Guard recruitment programs suggest that it is evolving into a military organization based on the CMP model.

Prior to mid-2013, each of the four “dragons” had its own recruitment and training system. CMS, for example, primarily selected new law enforcement personnel through competitive civil service examination. Upon selection, they received their initial training at the PLA Navy Non-Commissioned Officer Academy in Bengbu, Anhui. FLE likewise recruited from graduating college students, choosing candidates with desired backgrounds by means of civil service examination. New law enforcement personnel received initial training at FLE training centers and specialized training through programs run by civilian institutions, such as Shanghai Ocean University. Since 2014, CMS and FLE have apparently closed these recruitment and training channels.⁵²

Now, the only path to become an officer in the China Coast Guard is through a program leading to a commission in the People’s Armed Police. Established at the end of 2014, this program recruits new officers from among the crop of graduating college students.⁵³ To date, this program has commissioned more than 1,000 officers (警官). In January 2017, the China Coast Guard began its third round of officer recruitment.

Photo 8. China Coast Guard Recruitment Poster (2015)^{***}



Applicants apply through a centralized recruitment program run by the China Coast Guard Political Department (中国海警局政治部). They must select one of several possible China Coast Guard units: the three regional bureaus and the eleven contingents. Each has its own specific recruitment targets (numbers, skills, genders). In the 2017 recruitment effort, for example, the Hainan contingent plans to recruit 65 graduating students to join units under its command. It seeks recruits with a broad range of backgrounds, but especially prizes those with degrees in marine engineering, medicine, and the foreign languages that its forces are most likely to use while operating along the maritime frontier (Vietnamese and Tagalog).⁵⁴

^{***} China Coast Guard Recruitment Website, Accessed 23 March 2017

Successful recruits receive commissions in the PAP, with rank/grade determined based on educational background (see **Table 5**).

Table 5. Grades and Ranks for New China Coast Guard Officers

| Educational Background | Grade | Rank |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Technical School Degree (大专) | Platoon Leader (正排职) | Ensign (武警少尉) |
| Bachelor's Degree (本科) | Company Deputy Leader (副连职) | Lieutenant JG (武警中尉) |
| Master's Degree (硕士研究生) | Company Leader (正连职) | Lieutenant (武警上尉) |

Officer candidates receive training at the China Coast Guard Training Center in Guangdong province (广东海警训练基地). In January 2017, the second class of officer candidates completed six months of basic training (入警培训). More than 300 freshly-minted officers were then sent to their front-line units. They will complete at least three more months of “on-the-job training” (岗位任职培训), followed by a final three-month “exercise period” (当兵锻炼时间) during which they will make final preparations to become fully competent front-line soldiers. The next stop for most new officers is the maritime frontier, or, as one source put it, “key rights protection battlefields” (维权执法主战场).⁵⁵

That the China Coast Guard’s sole officer recruitment program leads to a commission in the PAP clearly indicates that the service is becoming a military organization based on the CMP model. The content of official recruitment materials confirms this conclusion. According to a recruitment announcement for the South China Sea Branch of the China Coast Guard, the agency is a “law enforcement force (队伍) that is militarizing (按军事化方向建设) and has the attributes of a police force (具有警察属性).” Even more revealing, applicants are forbidden from “simultaneously applying to *other* public security military organizations (such as the Border Defense Force, Firefighting Force, or Personal Security Force),” all of which are components of the PAP (警种).⁵⁶

Why the CMP?

The rise of the CMP was never a given. Indeed, Chinese leaders decided to create the China Coast Guard before they knew what kind of organization it would become. In subsequent years, Chinese policymakers came to believe that militarizing the China Coast Guard would improve its

performance in China's sovereignty campaign. The HYSY 981 conflict appears to have been a pivotal moment in this decision.⁵⁷

The defense of HYSY 981 posed tremendous challenges for the China Coast Guard. Less than a year into the reform, the new service was poorly integrated at the operational level. Ships from different agencies were not yet able to work together effectively, with near calamitous results. This is suggested by the urgent calls for reinforcements from provincial maritime law enforcement agencies and organizations that seldom did sovereignty enforcement ops, such as Maritime Safety Administration and the China Rescue Service. Indeed, the PLA Navy was forced to take tactical command of the operation.⁵⁸ Writing in the immediate aftermath of the HYSY 981 operation, Ding Chaoping, an officer in the command department of a Fujian-based detachment of the CMP, lamented, "Since 2013, the coast guard has satisfactorily completed escort missions in the South China Sea and East China Sea, but these have revealed a lack of powerful real combat capabilities (实战化能力不强) in terms of professionalism (执法素质), individual ship tactics (单艇战术应用), organization and command of ship formations and joint operations (编队组织指挥和协同作战), and communications support (通讯保障)."⁵⁹

That China ultimately succeeded in defending the rig without using force is largely due to the efforts of the CMP. Both CMS and FLE sent the cream of their fleets to defend HYSY 981. However, it was ultimately CMP cutters crewed by CMP personnel that served as the "main force" (主力) in the defense of the rig.⁶⁰ The available photos confirm this conclusion.

Photo 9. China Maritime Police Forces Protecting HYSY 981^{†††}



The strong performance of the CMP south of Triton Island appears to have convinced Chinese leaders of the value of placing military, not civilian, forces on the front lines. As one China Maritime Police Academy professor, Li Lin, put it, events like the defense of HYSY 981 had shown that “in a real fight, only soldiers (现役人员) have the needed combat power and executive power (执行力) to execute the mission.” Writing in 2016, Li admits that even within the China Coast Guard there remained an ongoing debate about the future of the service, “but after more than two years of experience, there is consensus on one thing: it must have combat power (战斗力).” The only force that possessed that attribute was the China Maritime Police.⁶¹

Choosing paramilitary police forces like the CMP for front-line operations has other advantages. It gives China the option to enforce Chinese criminal law against foreign mariners operating in Chinese-claimed waters. For example, Hainan public security law lists a number of categories of prohibited foreign behavior within Hainan’s “jurisdictional waters” (管辖海域, i.e., all of the waters within the “nine-dashed line”) that would warrant a police response.⁶² These behaviors include, inter alia, “illegally” stopping or anchoring, causing an altercation (寻衅滋事), landing on a Chinese island, and conducting propaganda activities that infringe Chinese sovereignty or threaten Chinese security.⁶³ Foreigners that violate any of these provisions could suffer one of the following consequences.⁶⁴ CMP officers can board, inspect, and expel foreign vessels, and detain

^{†††} South China Sea Research Forum, 15 October 2014

their crews. The law also allows them to force foreign vessels to halt, change course, or return in the direction from whence they came. They would also have legal grounds to impound foreign vessels or pursue legal measures in accordance with PRC public security and border law.

In 2016, China's Supreme People's Court issued two regulations providing a "judicial interpretation" (司法解释) of the authorities of Chinese maritime law enforcement forces when handling foreign infringements.⁶⁵ The first of two regulations allows for criminal prosecution of foreign mariners suspected of poaching anywhere within China's "jurisdictional waters."⁶⁶ According to the second regulation, repeat foreign intrusions into China's claimed territorial sea would also be subject to criminal prosecution.⁶⁷ Among front line China Coast Guard forces, only CMP officers have the authority to enforce these provisions.⁶⁸

CMP partisans had been highlighting these advantages for years, to no avail.⁶⁹ For China's civilian leadership, there was a compelling political logic behind the decision to keep the CMP close to shore.⁷⁰ The CMP comprised soldiers operating ships with deck guns. Sending them to sensitive waters risked conjuring images of military coercion. Moreover, in the types of intense encounters apt to take place, deploying soldiers introduced a risk of an inadvertent armed clash (擦枪走火). Both of these possibilities were anathema to the foreign relations China sought under the administration of Hu Jintao.

These political considerations changed under his successor, Xi Jinping. Building and employing capabilities to safeguard China's maritime claims has received higher priority, and the relative importance of stability and restraint has been de-emphasized.⁷¹ This shift is vividly highlighted by remarks made by Sun Shuxian—then Deputy Director of the China Coast Guard—in an interview just a few months prior to the HYSY 981 conflict. Sun openly acknowledged that the future of the China Coast Guard was unsettled. However, in his view the new agency should not become a component of China's armed forces. Doing so might "upset" (刺激) China's neighbors, providing fuel for the so-called "China threat theory"—a catch-all term for foreign anxieties about China's rise.⁷² Sun was a former CMS officer and his lobbying efforts may have been driven in part by parochial concerns. Nevertheless, his objections fell on deaf ears.⁷³

Photo 10. Former Deputy Director of the China Coast Guard, Sun Shuxian^{***}



Implications

Begun in mid-2013, the China Coast Guard reform remains very much a work in progress. All four forces selected to be “integrated” into the new agency continue to exist in some form. Three of the four still perform their old mission sets. However, the reform has dramatically affected the fate of the fourth, the China Maritime Police.

Perhaps due to a decision made in the wake of the HYSY 981 conflict of 2014, Chinese leaders have empowered the CMP to play a leading role in China’s sovereignty campaign. Since the CMP is a component of China’s armed forces, the result is a marked militarization of China’s maritime frontier. Armed cutters crewed by soldiers are operating in areas once only patrolled by civilian agencies. When sailing to disputed waters, cutters owned by civilian agencies such as CMS and FLE now frequently embark CMP officers.

This development has at least two potential implications. First, the rise of the CMP could portend more vigorous enforcement efforts in disputed areas. Since 2012, the PRC has strengthened the legal authorities of Chinese law enforcement forces. To date, the most aggressive of these tools—i.e., detention and prosecution of foreign civilians operating in Chinese-claimed waters—has not yet been used. But with CMP forces now routinely operating on the maritime frontier, these legal authorities are available for use when Chinese leaders judge it in the national interest to use them.

^{***} Website of the State Oceanic Administration, 2 March 2013

Within the China Coast Guard, there is already strong impetus to do so: the current practice of simply ordering foreign mariners to depart Chinese-claimed areas is an ineffective deterrent against future infringements.⁷⁴

Second, the growing power and importance of the CMP could have major implications for Chinese strategy in the early phases of a crisis or armed conflict.⁷⁵ The service could play a key role in certain scenarios involving the seizure of disputed land features. Indeed, at least one CMP detachment has built a training center to prepare for the conduct of island landings (渡海登岛) in a “rights protection” scenario.⁷⁶ Moreover, some of the most recent CMP cutters, especially the Type 818 class, are clearly built to military standards and could perhaps be fitted out to serve important combat functions in a future conflict.⁷⁷

¹ In this report, the “maritime frontier” refers to disputed maritime space in the East China Sea and South China Sea.

² One noteworthy exception took place in May 1985, when a China Marine Surveillance vessel purportedly “expelled” (驱赶) a Japanese drilling rig (Hakuryu-5) as it conducted operations east of the midline in the East China Sea. 郁志荣 [Yu Zhirong], 完善我国海洋维权管理体制势在必行 [“It is Time to Improve China’s Maritime Rights Protection Management System”] 中国海洋报 [*China Ocean News*] 22 August 2014, p. 3.

³ In July 2006, the State Council approved a decision to regularize patrols in Chinese-claimed waters in the East China. These were expanded to all Chinese-claimed waters in 2007-2008. 吴琼 [Wu Qiong] 中国海监定巡执法全海域 [“China Marine Surveillance Conducts Regular Law Enforcement Patrols in All Waters”] 中国海洋报特刊 [Special Supplement of *China Ocean News*] 22 July 2014, p. 41.

⁴ All front-line CMS ships were unarmed. Most front-line FLE ships were equipped with small, deck-mounted machine guns (14.5 mm). Of the two agencies, CMS was far more active in disputed areas.

⁵ In this report, a “blue-water” patrol vessel displaces at least 500 tonnes.

⁶ 公安机关海上执法规定 [“Regulations on Maritime Law Enforcement for Public Security Agencies”] This regulation can be found here: www.gov.cn/flfg/2007-09/28/content_763859.htm

⁷ Indeed, its service motto was “rights protection, law enforcement, and service” (维权, 执法, 服务).

⁸ In at least one instance, anti-smuggling operations have drawn CMP ships to remote waters. On 11 December 2009, a new 618B cutter from the 1st detachment of Guangdong was ordered to interdict a Hong Kong fishing vessel suspected of carrying nearly two tonnes of cocaine as it transited the Bashi Channel. The cutter eventually tracked down and boarded the fishing vessel near the Pratas. 惠珍珍 [Hui Zhenzhen] and 游春亮 [You Chunliang] 海警 44101 舰南海维权 曾逼退外籍船队疯狂进攻 [“While Conducting Rights Protection in the South China Sea CCG 44101 Warded Off the Fierce Attacks of Foreign Vessels”] 法制日报 [*Legal Daily*] June 19, 2016, www.chinanews.com/m/mil/2016/06-19/7909180.shtml

⁹ According to an anonymous source, the CMP had the “intention” (意向) of sending ships to the Senkakus in early 2012. 韩永 [Hang Yong] 谁来管理中国的海洋 [“Who Will Manage China’s Oceans?”] 中国新闻周刊 [*China Newsweek*] 26 November 2012, p. 26. In the years prior to the China Coast Guard reform, the *Journal of the China Maritime Police Academy* published a number of articles advocating for the service to play a meaningful role in sovereignty operations. Several of these articles are cited below.

¹⁰ According to one authoritative source, as of April 2010 the CMP had “more than 10,000 personnel.” 程均 [Cheng Jun] 碧海扬帆酬壮志 踏波蹈浪展宏图 [“Sailing the Blue Water to Realize Aspirations and Dancing with the Waves to Show Ambitions”] 中国边防警察 [Frontier Defense Police Force] April 2010, p. 12.

¹¹ The 2013 White Paper mentions the CMP in the section on “Border and Coastal Security,” located in Part III (Defending National Sovereignty, Security and Territorial Integrity). The Border Defense Force, of which the CMP was then a component, is discussed in the section on “Safeguarding Maritime Rights and Interests,” located in Part IV (Supporting National Economic and Social Development). This discussion focuses exclusively on the Border Defense Force role in the Gulf of Tonkin and the Paracels, because the service did not yet operate along other parts of China’s maritime frontier. CMS and FLE are discussed in the section on “Safeguarding Maritime Rights and Interests.” They are portrayed as an adjunct to the “rights protection” work done by the PLA Navy. *The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces*, Information Office of the State Council, 16 April 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-04/16/c_132312681_3.htm

For more on recruitment channels, see 阮智刚 [Ruan Zhigang] and 何博 [He Bo] 中国海警教育培训工作的既有格局及其启示 [“The Current Situation with China Coast Guard Education and Training and Ideas for Change”] 中国水运 [China Water Transport], August 2016, Vol. 16, No. 8, pp. 80-82. Both authors are lecturers at the China Maritime Police Academy.

¹² FLE personnel do not have police powers, but they have detained foreign fishermen, especially in the Paracels. In March 2012, for example, FLE forces detained 21 Vietnamese fishermen on Woody Island for nearly a month and a half. While searching one of their two Vietnamese fishing vessels, FLE officers purportedly found 25 kilograms of explosives, apparently intended for fishing purposes. FLE forces released the Vietnamese fishermen after they all signed letters promising never to repeat this offense. They were not subject to Chinese criminal prosecution. See 梁钢华 [Liang Ganghua] 中国渔政部门释放一越南西沙侵渔渔船及越南渔民 [“China Fisheries Law Enforcement Releases a Vietnamese Fishing Vessel and Vietnamese Fishermen Caught Infringing Chinese Rights”] 新华网 [Xinhua] April 21, 2012, http://gd.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2012-04/21/content_25106574.htm

¹³ See “Regulations on Maritime Law Enforcement for Public Security Agencies.” Article 6 outlines the CMP’s “responsibilities,” which include “safeguarding national security” but do not include content on safeguarding maritime rights and interests.

An earlier document, the 2004 Ministry of Public Security Circular Regarding Issues Relating to Coast Guard Law Enforcement (公安部关于海警执法有关问题的通知), did charge the service with responsibility for “safeguarding national sovereignty and interests in the territorial sea” (维护国家领海主权和利益).

See also 徐宽宥 [Xu Kuanyou] 论我国海上执法力量的整合与构建 [“On the Integration and Construction of China’s Maritime Law Enforcement Forces”] 武警学院学报 [Journal of the Chinese People’s Armed Police Force] February 2005, Vol 21, No. 1, pp. 59-61. When this article was published, the author was a Senior Colonel and Commander of the Zhejiang contingent of the Border Defense Force.

¹⁴ These were owned by the 3rd detachment in Guangdong (1002) and the 2nd detachment in Hainan (1003).

¹⁵ Writing in late 2011, China Maritime Police Academy faculty member Ye Jun states that the designs of CMP vessels are “nearly identical to those of navy ships of the same displacement.” See 叶军 [Ye Jun] 海警在战时对海军进行支援的问题探讨 [“A Discussion on the China Coast Guard as a Supporting Force for the Navy in Wartime”] 公安海警学院学报 [Journal of China Maritime Police Academy], Vol. 11, No. 1 (2012), p. 7.

¹⁶ The CMP purportedly “expelled” (驱赶) 126 “armed” Vietnamese vessels from the area of operations. See Cheng Jun, “Sailing the Blue Water to Realize Aspirations and Dancing with the Waves to Show Ambitions,” p. 9. The First Detachment of the Guangdong CMP alone intercepted and expelled more than 30 Vietnamese vessels. See also 碧海挥戈显身手——广东边防海警一支队海上执法工作巡礼 [“Wielding an Axe in the Blue Sea and Showing Off Its Skills—A Profile of the Maritime Law Enforcement Work of the First Detachment of the Guangdong Contingent of the China Maritime Police”] 中国缉私网 [China Anti-Smuggling Online] 12 August 2008, www.jisi.gov.cn/news/tctb/200808/20080812090957_322.html

¹⁷ By one CMP account, both the CPC Central Committee and CNPC praised the CMP for its performance. See Cheng Jun, “Sailing the Blue Water to Realize Aspirations and Dancing with the Waves to Show Ambitions,” p. 9.

¹⁸ This engagement was documented by CMS with footage shown in a late 2013 documentary. *Travelling Around China* (走遍中国), South China Sea Travel Notes (南海纪行), Episode Eight: “Blue Border Guards” (蓝疆卫士), CCTV 4, 31 December 2013, <http://news.cntv.cn/2013/12/31/VIDE1388496485764597.shtml>

This episode is also available on Youtube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaVdwLcNYY4

¹⁹ For more on the role of CMS in these escort operations, see Ryan D. Martinson, “Shepherds of the South Seas”, *Survival*, 58:3, (2016) p. 190.

²⁰ 师小涵 [Shi Xiaohan] 海洋局内部人士谈海警局诞生：不只是统一服装的问题 [“A Person from the State Oceanic Administration Talk About the Birth of the China Coast Guard: It is Not Just a Matter of Wearing the Same Uniform”] 南方周末 [Southern Weekend] 7 April 2013, http://ocean.china.com.cn/2013-04/07/content_28464179.htm

²¹ 刘昱龙 [Liu Yulong] 中国海警的历史沿革和发展前景探析 [“An Examination of the Historical Reform and Develop Prospects of the Chinese Coast Guard”] 法制与社会 [Law and Society] 2013, 5B, p. 170.

²² 彭美 [Peng Mei] 师小涵 [Shi Xiaohan], and 邢丹 [Xing Dan] 中国海警局亮剑--中国海警局诞生终结“五龙治海” [“The China Coast Guard Flashes its Sword—The Creation of the China Coast Guard Ends the Era of ‘Five Dragons Managing the Sea’”] 人民文摘 [People’s Weekly], 2013, No. 9, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmwz/html/2013-09/01/content_1307445.htm

²³ The term “balkanized” comes from Lyle J. Goldstein, *Five Dragons Stirring Up the Sea: Challenge and Opportunity in China’s Improving Maritime Enforcement Capabilities*, China Maritime Study Number 5, April 2010, p. 2, www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/CMSI_No5_web1.pdf

²⁴ Of note, the reform only involved the national-level units of CMS and FLE. CMS and FLE units owned and funded by governments at the provincial-level and below were not included. They still exist. 国务院机构改革和职能转变方案 [Plan for Organizational Reform and Functional Changes to the State Council] 中央政府网站 [Website of the Chinese Government] March 14, 2013, www.gov.cn/2013lh/content_2354443.htm

²⁵ The first Director, Meng Hongwei (孟宏伟), was a Vice Minister in the Ministry of Public Security.

²⁶ For a discussion of the lack of official documents outlining the characteristics of the new agency and the direction of the reform, see 裴兆斌 [Pei Zhaobin] 海上执法体制解读与重建 [“Interpreting and Reconstructing the Maritime Law Enforcement System”] 中国人民公安大学学报 (社会科学版) [Journal of the People’s Public Security University of China (Social Science Edition)] 2016, No. 1, pp. 135-136. The author is a professor at the Coast Guard College of Dalian Ocean University.

²⁷ In the words of a professor from the PAP Academy, “the China Coast Guard has not yet achieved the aim of ‘combining the four dragons.’” See 李佑标 [Li Youbiao] 关于中国海警海上综合执法依据的法学思考 [“Reflections from the Perspective of the Law on the Bases for China Coast Guard Comprehensive Maritime Law Enforcement”] 武警学院学报 [Journal of the China People’s Armed Police Academy] March 2016, Vol. 32, No. 3, p. 45.

²⁸ Recent evidence suggests that CMP personnel are now also crewing ships with four digit hull numbers. For instance, a May 2017 article indicates that CCG 3304 is crewed by “officers and enlisted” (官兵), not the FLE personnel suggested by that hull number. See 姜宗平 [Jiang Zongping] 中国海警：我们的征途是星辰大海 [“The China Coast Guard: Our Journey is the Stars and the Sea”] 中国军网 [China Military Online] May 15, 2017, <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0515/c1011-29274824.html>

²⁹ This is often shortened to “[armed] Coast Guard Forces” (海警部队).

³⁰ The author thanks Brian Waidelich for helping to correct errors in the original version of this table.

³¹ Other former PLA Navy vessels have sailed to the Senkakus, but all were former auxiliaries owned by CMS or FLE.

³² See 中国海警舰船编队 9 月 11 日在钓鱼岛领海内巡航 [“A China Coast Guard Formation Sailed Within the Diaoyu Island Territorial Sea on 11 September”] 中国军网 [China Military Online], September 11, 2016, www.81.cn/jwz/2016-09/11/content_7251549.htm See also 中国海警舰船编队 10 月 8 日在我钓鱼岛领海巡航 [“A China Coast Guard Formation Sailed Within the Diaoyu Island Territorial Sea on 8 October”] 中华人民共和国国土资源部 [Website of the Ministry of Land and Resources] October 11, 2016, www.mlr.gov.cn/xwdt/hyxw/201610/t20161011_1419027.htm

³³ See 中国海警舰船编队 8 月 7 日在我钓鱼岛领海巡航 [“A China Coast Guard Formation Sailed Within the Diaoyu Island Territorial Sea on 7 August”] 中华人民共和国国土资源部 [Website of the Ministry of Land and Resources] August 8, 2016, www.mlr.gov.cn/xwdt/hyxw/201608/t20160808_1413907.htm See 中国海警舰船编队 11 月 6 日在我钓鱼岛领海巡航 [“A China Coast Guard Formation Sailed Within the Diaoyu Island Territorial Sea on 6 November”] 中华人民共和国国土资源部 [Website of the Ministry of Land and Resources] November 7, 2016, www.mlr.gov.cn/xwdt/hyxw/201611/t20161107_1421171.htm

³⁴ “Status of activities by Chinese government vessels and Chinese fishing vessels in waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands,” Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website, 26 August 2016, www.mofa.go.jp/files/000180283.pdf

³⁵ 蔡荣锟 [Cai Rongkun] 福建海警第三支队海防工作纪实 [“An Account of the Ocean Defense Work of the 3rd Detachment of the Fujian Contingent of the China Coast Guard”] 中国海洋报 [China Ocean News] 3 July 2015, 3 July 2015, p. 3.

³⁶ See Cai Rongkun, “An Account of the Ocean Defense Work of the Third Detachment of the Fujian Contingent of the China Coast Guard”

³⁷ For more on the crew composition of China Coast Guard vessels operating in disputed areas, see 冯志 [Feng Zhi] 当前海警巡航急需解决的问题及对策 [“Problems and Solutions for Urgent Problems Currently Faced By China Coast Guard Patrol Operations”] 公安海警学院学报 [Journal of the China Maritime Police Academy] 2015, No. 4, pp. 72-73.

³⁸ The 2nd detachment of the Hainan contingent of the China Coast Guard began conducting patrols to the Spratlys in 2015. See 宋体 [Song Ti] 南海海警二支队举办建队 20 周年庆祝活动 [“The Second Detachment of the Hainan Coast Guard Holds an Activity to Celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Its Founding”] 中新网海南 [China Net Hainan] 22 November 2016, [China Ocean News] www.hi.chinanews.com/hnnew/2016-11-22/428359.html

At least one ship from the 2nd detachment of the Hainan contingent was operating in the Spratlys in January 2017. See 为伟大祖国守岁，边防官兵倍儿自豪！ [“For Staying Up All Nights For the Motherland, Border Defense Soldiers Feel Extremely Proud!”] 中国军网 [China Military Online] 28 January 2017, www.81.cn/jmywyl/2017-01/28/content_7470178.htm

According to a Xinhua article, “in recent years, ships from the 2nd detachment of the Hainan contingent of the China Coast Guard have sailed to the Spratlys on several occasions to conduct rights protection law enforcement operations.” See 郑玮娜、朱卫军 [Zheng Weina and Zhu Weijun] 南海海警二支队春节期间巡航南海保平安 [“Second Detachment of Hainan Coast Guard Patrols the South China Sea and Keeps the Peace During the Spring Festival”] 新华社 [Xinhua] 2 February 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-02/02/c_1120400685.htm

³⁹ 中国海警：南沙海域“跨年巡逻” [“China Coast Guard: ‘New Year’s Patrol’ to the Spratly Waters”] 北京电视台 [Beijing TV] 30 January 2017, www.china.com.cn/v/news/2017-01/30/content_40195902.htm

⁴⁰ See 南海研究论坛 [South China Sea Research Forum] 5 June 2016, www.nhjd.net/article-2949-1.html This research forum shows a photo of CCG 46305 while on patrol in the Spratlys.

⁴¹ In early April 2017, CCG 46305 was operating in the Spratlys when it was ordered to rescue a Chinese fisherman who had suffered severe head injuries in waters 120 nautical miles from Subi Reef. 王继鹏 [Wang Jipeng] 渔民作业脸部受伤 南海海警紧急救助 [“A Fisherman Injured His Face While Fishing and a Hainan

Unit of the China Coast Guard Came to the Rescue” 人民网 [People Online] April 5, 2017, <http://legal.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0405/c42510-29188783.html>

⁴² This vessel’s Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number is 412371215.

⁴³ 刘成龙 [Liu Chenglong] 海警 37115 舰以党建助推海洋维权 [“CCG 37115 Uses Party Construction to Promote Maritime Rights Protection”] 青岛日报 [Qingdao Daily] 28 March 2017, p. 3, <http://epaper.qingdaonews.com/html/qdrb/20170328/qdrb1078912.html>

⁴⁴ For a good description of the incident, see Austin Ramzy, “A View From the Sea, as China Flexes Muscle,” *The New York Times*, 9 August 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/08/10/world/asia/a-view-from-the-sea-as-china-flexes-muscle.html?_r=0

⁴⁵ For a video showing a Chinese fishing vessel sinking a much smaller Vietnamese vessel, see <https://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/06/06/vietnam-says-video-shows-chinese-ship-intentionally-sinking-boat/>

⁴⁶ Guangxi sent 11 vessels and 330 soldiers. 万稳龙 [Wan Wenlong] and 梁文悦 [Liang Wenyue] 广东海警镇万里海疆不惧风浪, 维权对峙 88 天不退让 [“The Guangdong Contingent of the China Coast Guard Stands Watch at the Maritime Frontier and is Not Affair of Wind or Waves, Conducts 88 Days of Rights Protection Operations Without Retreating”] 南方日报 [Southern Daily] 24 July 2016, http://news.southcn.com/gd/content/2016-07/24/content_152142421.htm

⁴⁷ 叶永坚 [Ye Yongjiang] and 叶华南 [Ye Huanan] 福建海警第二支队开拓进取献礼建队 20 周年 [“The 20th Anniversary of the Creation of the 2nd Detachment of the Fujian Contingent of the China Coast Guard”] 福建法治报 [Fujian Rule of Law Newspaper] 29 November 2016, <http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2016-11-29/doc-ifxyawxa3025409.shtml>

⁴⁸ 董芳 [Dong Fang] 新快报记者揭开海警 44101 舰神秘面纱 [“Xinkuai News Reporter Lifts the Mysterious Veil of CCG 44101”] 新快报 [Xinkuai News] 7 June 2016, <http://news.xkb.com.cn/guangdong/2016/0607/433552.html> See also Hui Zhenzhen and You Chunliang, “CCG 44101 is ‘Frequent Guest of the Paracels.’”

⁴⁹ At least one Chinese source says that the Guangdong cutter (44102) did do some WQ work, but the author has not been able to find any examples. It could mean operations in the Gulf of Tonkin or perhaps even the Paracels. 陈纪臻 [Chen Jizhen] 广东海警原旗舰海警 44102 舰退役 [“The Former Flagship of the Guangdong Contingent of the China Coast Guard CCG 44102 Has Been Decommissioned”] 湛江晚报 [Zhanjiang Evening Paper] 30 May 2016, http://news.gdzdaily.com.cn/zjxw/content/2016-05/30/content_2121502.shtml

⁵⁰ For information on the oceanic research fleet, see 国家海洋调查船队 [Website of the China Research Fleet] www.cmrv.org/home/plus/list.php?tid=1

⁵¹ 肖中仁 [Xiao Zhongren] 国家海洋局重组 将明确海警局刑事执法权和武器配备问题 [“SOA Reorganization Will Make Clear Whether the China Coast Guard Will Have Police Powers and Be Equipped With Weapons”] 国际在线 [China Radio International Online] March 20, 2013, <http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2013/03/20/6651s4059544.htm>

⁵² See Ruan Zhigang and He Bo, “The Current Situation with China Coast Guard Education and Training and Ideas for Change,” pp. 80-81.

⁵³ See Ryan Martinson, “The Militarization of the China Coast Guard,” *The Diplomat*, 21 November 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/the-militarization-of-chinas-coast-guard/>

⁵⁴ Of note, the Hainan contingent has the largest recruitment quota. The two other provinces bordering the South China Sea, Guangdong and Guangxi, have the second largest quotas (each with 50). For information on the 2017 recruitment objectives for specific units, see the China Coast Guard Recruitment website: www.chinahjzs.cn/Zcshow.asp?id=10

⁵⁵ 毛一竹 [Mao Yizhu] 中国海警 3 0 0 余名入警大学生开赴维权执法主战场 [“Over 300 Newly Commissioned China Coast Guard Officers Head to the Key Rights Protection Law Enforcement Battlegrounds”] 新华社 [Xinhua], 19 January 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-01/19/c_1120347066.htm. These officers were officially sworn in on 29 November 2016. Reports indicate that there were 350 new officers. See

廖键, 姜宗平 [Liao Jiang and Jiang Zongping] 中国海警 2016 年度入警大学生宣誓授衔 [“College Students Recruited to Become China Coast Guard Officers Receive Their Commissions”] 中国网 [China Online] 30 November 2016, http://military.china.com.cn/2016-11/30/content_39818094.htm

⁵⁶ See 南海海警分局 2017 年接收普通高等学校应届毕业生简章 [Brief on the South China Sea Branch of the China Coast Guard Recruitment from the 2017 Graduating Class]. This is available on the China Coast Guard Recruitment website: www.chinahjzs.cn/Zcshow.asp?id=10

At the National People’s Congress in March 2016, the Political Commissar of the PAP, Sun Sijing, called for a revision of the People’s Armed Police Law. When outlining his rationale, Sun said that the functions and tasks of the PAP have expanded to include, inter alia, “maritime rights protection” (海上维权). This statement seems to confirm that the China Coast Guard has become or is in the process of becoming a component of the PAP. See 李佑标 [Li Youbiao] 试论国家海洋局中国海警局和公安部之间的职务关系—兼论中国海警作为武警警种部队的改革方案 [“A Discussion of the Functional Relationships Between the State Oceanic Administration, China Coast Guard, and the Ministry of Public Security”] 武警学院学报 [Journal of the Armed Police Academy] Vol. 32, No. 11 (2016), p. 8.

Some sources suggest that the China Coast Guard is already a component of China’s armed forces. See 高奇 [Gao Qi] 海警保卫海上钻井平台研究 [“Research on Coast Guard Defense of Marine Drilling Platforms”] 公安海警学院学报 [Journal of the China Maritime Police Academy] September 2016, Vol 15, No. 3, p. 23.

⁵⁷ The decision to transform the China Coast Guard into a military organization may have been outlined in a document that has not been publicly released called the State Council Office Notice Regarding Doing More to Advance Work to Integrate the China Coast Guard Forces (《国务院办公厅关于进一步推进海警队伍整合工作的通知》). See 黎雄才 [Li Xiongcai] 海警部队人才培养工作转型升级问题初探 [“A Preliminary Discussion of the Change and Improvement of Training Work for the China Maritime Police”] 公安海警学院学报 [Journal of the China Maritime Police Academy], March 2016, Vol. 15, No. 1, P. 17.

⁵⁸ 刘征鲁 [Liu Zhenglv] 这些年, 人民海军在前进! [“In Recent Years, The PLA Navy Has Been Advancing!”] 中国海洋报 [China Ocean News] 29 July 2016, p. 4. This source says that the PLA Navy worked directly with the CMP to defend the rig.

Chinese counterparts told Linda Jakobson that because coast guard forces involved lacked professionalism, the PLA Navy was required to organize the operation. Linda Jakobson, “China’s unpredictable maritime security actors,” Lowy Institute Report, December 2014, p. 19, www.lowyinstitute.org/files/chinas-unpredictable-maritime-security-actors_3.pdf

⁵⁹ 丁超平 [Ding Chaoping] 试论当前如何强化海警实战化训练 [“On How to Improve the China Coast Guard’s Realistic Combat Training”] 公安海警学院学报 [Journal of China Maritime Police Academy] December 2014, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 12.

⁶⁰ According to China Maritime Police Faculty Academy faculty member Ye Jun, the success of the 618B cutter in the defense of HYSY 981 was due to a new, systematic approach to training that began in 2011. 叶军 [Ye Jun] 回顾与展望: 关于海警舰船长训练的思考 [“On China Coast Guard Ship Captain Training”] 公安海警学院学报 [Journal of China Maritime Police Academy], Vol. 15, No. 3 (2016), p 27.

⁶¹ 李林 [Li Lin] 论中国海警在改革实践中存在的不足及其完善 [“On the Adequacies of the China Coast Guard Reform and How to Fix Them”] 法制与社会 [Law and Society] 2016, 9b, pp. 150-151.

⁶² 海南省沿海边防治安管理条例 [Hainan Province Regulations for the Management of Coastal Border Security and Public Order] Passed by the Hainan People’s Congress on 27 November 2012. Full text is available here: www.hq.xinhuanet.com/hngov/2013-01/04/c_114233756.htm

⁶³ See Hainan Province Regulations, Article 31.

⁶⁴ See Hainan Province Regulations, Article 47.

⁶⁵ Part 1 defines what those are.

⁶⁶ See Article Three of 最高人民法院关于审理发生在我国管辖海域相关案件若干问题的规定 (一) [Provisions of the Supreme People’s Court With Respect to Certain Questions on Trying Related Cases that

Occur in China's Jurisdictional Waters (Part 1)] 最高人民法院 [Website of the Supreme People's Court] 2 August 2016, www.court.gov.cn/zixun-xiangqing-24261.html

⁶⁷ See Article Three of 最高人民法院关于审理发生在我国管辖海域相关案件若干问题的规定（二） [Provisions of the Supreme People's Court With Respect to Certain Questions on Trying Related Cases that Occur in China's Jurisdictional Waters (Part 2)] 最高人民法院 [Website of the Supreme People's Court] 2 August 2016, www.court.gov.cn/zixun-xiangqing-24271.html

⁶⁸ When interviewed about the new regulations, an unnamed representative of the Supreme People's Court acknowledged that they were conceived to serve as a tool in China's maritime dispute strategy. They were intended to "better highlight China's maritime judicial sovereignty" and help China's courts play a more active role in "resolutely safeguarding China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests." See 罗书臻 [Luo Shuzhen] 依法积极行使海上司法管辖权 统一涉海案件裁判尺度 ["Positively Enforce Maritime Judicial Jurisdictional Rights According to the Law and Unify the Judgement Standards for Maritime Cases"] 中国法院网 [China Court] 2 August 2016, www.chinacourt.org/article/detail/2016/08/id/2047234.shtml To date, foreigners operating in Chinese-claimed waters have not yet been subject to criminal prosecution. Surely this is not because foreigners are innocent of the "crimes" outlined above. Rather, these new regulations should be seen as a policy action designed to deter foreign infringements and provide China Coast Guard forces with new tools that could be useful when China's civilian leaders judge it political expedient to use them.

⁶⁹ Writing in late 2011, three researchers from the China Maritime Police academy point out that Chinese government policy "limited" (限制) the geographic scope of CMP operations in the South China Sea. The researchers recommended that the service "make proposals to relevant departments" to expand the geographic scope of CMP law enforcement activities to "all Chinese waters in the South China Sea." See 何忠龙 [He Zhonglong], 潘志焯 [Pan Zhixuan], and 王珂 [Wang Ke], 就南海局势谈中国海警的建设与发展 ["Construction and Development of the China Maritime Police from the Perspective of the Current Situation in the South China Sea"] 公安海警学院报 [Journal of China Maritime Police Academy] Vol. 10, No. 4, 2011, p. 54. In a second article published in the same issue, these three researchers acknowledged that the service lacked adequate numbers of advanced cutters for sovereignty operations, but argue that this should not prevent the service from playing a role in disputed waters. See 潘志焯 [Pan Zhixuan], 何忠龙 [He Zhonglong], and 王珂 [Wang Ke], ["Opportunities and Challenges for the China Maritime Police from the Perspective of the Current Situation in the South China Sea"] 公安海警学院报 [Journal of China Maritime Police Academy] Vol. 10, No. 4, 2011, p. 50.

⁷⁰ This logic is outlined in a pseudonymous editorial published in an August 2009 issue of a State Oceanic Administration periodical. CMS was then two years into its campaign to establish a constabulary presence in all Chinese-claimed waters. Just five months earlier, it had taken part in the harassment of the USNS *Impeccable* in the South China Sea. The service faced public criticism for sending defenseless vessels into harm's way. This editorial was a response to critics who reckoned that "all China has to do is equip its law enforcement vessels with cannons and establish a unified command and it would have what it takes to scare away the Americans." The author points out that arming Chinese law enforcement vessels risked "harming the overall stability of China's foreign relations" and creating the conditions for an "inadvertent armed clash leading to an international conflict with an uncertain outcome" See 海易 [Hai Yi] 海上执法谨防武备至上 ["Maritime Law Enforcement Must Be Wary of the Notion That Weapons are Most Important"] 中国海洋报 [China Ocean News] 4 August 2009, p. 2.

⁷¹ For more on this shift, see Ryan Martinson, "China's Great Balancing Act Unfolds: Enforcing Maritime Rights vs. Stability," *The National Interest*, September 11, 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/chinas-great-balancing-act-unfolds-enforcing-maritime-rights-13821>

⁷² 席志刚 [Xi Zhigang] 中国海警局的前路 ["The Way Forward for the China Coast Guard"] 中国新闻周刊 [China Newsweek], 2014, No. 5, p. 67.

⁷³ Sun later left the China Coast Guard. He now serves as Deputy Director of the State Oceanic Administration.

⁷⁴ 冯志 [Feng Zhi] 当前海警巡航急需解决的问题及对策 ["Problem and Countermeasures for Problems Associated with Coast Guard Patrols"] 公安海警学院学报 [Journal of China Maritime Police Academy], 2015, No. 4, Vol. 14, No. 4, p. 73.

⁷⁵ As the 2013 National Defense White Paper points out, in wartime, the PAP “is tasked with assisting the PLA in defensive operations.”

⁷⁶ 蓝志文 [Lan Zhiwen] 全国海警首座渡海登岛训练场在厦门落成 [“Xiamen Has Built the Coast Guard’s First Training Center for Island Landings”] 中国警察网 [*China Police Online*] 11 March 2015, http://bf.cpd.com.cn/n26357304/c27947047/content_2.html See also Cai Rongkun, “An Account of the Ocean Defense Work of the 3rd Detachment of the Fujian Contingent of the China Coast Guard”

⁷⁷ See Lyle J. Goldstein, “China’s New Coast Guard Vessels Are Designed for Rapid Conversion into Navy Frigates,” *The National Interest*, 29 October 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/chinas-new-coast-guard-vessels-are-designed-rapid-conversion-18221>