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Indications & Warning for Amphibious Ops against Taiwan: Philosophy, Methodology, Applications, Results

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NPS NRP Executive Summary

Indications and Warning for Amphibious OPS against Taiwan: Philosophy, Methodology, Applications Results

Period of Performance: 10/23/2021 – 10/23/2022

Report Date: 10/03/2022 | Project Number: NPS-22-N180-A

Naval Postgraduate School, National Security Affairs (NSA)



NAVAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

INDICATIONS AND WARNING FOR AMPHIBIOUS OPS AGAINST TAIWAN: PHILOSOPHY, METHODOLOGY, APPLICATIONS, RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Additional Researcher(s): No additional researchers participated in this research project.

Student Participation: No students participated in this research project

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Project Summary

Meeting likely challenges in the Western Pacific will require the United States to generate forces, especially U.S. Navy units, in the region. Although indications and warning (I&W) intelligence is now central to current and future U.S. Navy strategy and operations across the Indo-Pacific, today's officers and intelligence analysts have limited experience with managing the I&W system in general or with I&W intelligence in particular. This research explored several potential warning scenarios in the Western Pacific, identified likely efforts at denial and deception that could be used to mask force generation from observers, and described necessary courses of action to mitigate I&W failure. The analysis found that it is unclear if commanders understand the difference between I&W intelligence and intelligence reporting offering specific event predictions; confusion in this regard might lead them to disregard warnings in the expectation that more specific estimates are in the offing. The Office of Naval Intelligence should take responsibility for monitoring the status of the Navy's I&W system. Intelligence officers should monitor the synchronization of I&W realities with operational plans and necessities.

Keywords: *indications & warning Intelligence, I&W, surprise attack, deterrence, maritime deterring*

Background

The Department of National Security Affairs (at the Naval Postgraduate School) is eager to support the work of the Office of Naval Intelligence and the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in particular and the U.S. Navy in general to meet the threat of great power conflict and geopolitical upheaval, especially as pertains to the maritime threat in the Western Pacific in its many forms. The U.S. Navy has responded to the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) activities in the South China Sea and the Western Pacific, especially a series of so-called Gray Zone activities. Concerns about PLAN area denial and anti-access weapons and doctrine have accompanied the rise of these Chinese activities in the South China Sea, although these actions are part of a timeless cycle of adaptation and reaction between ship vs. shore-based combatants.

The ongoing threat posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC) is focused on a longstanding desideratum: gaining sovereignty over the island of Taiwan. Beijing regards Taiwan as a sort of breakaway territory, which it has vowed to control. There is no timeline set for this "reunification"—at the moment all parties (the PRC, United States, and Taiwan) still abide by it and acknowledge the "one country, two systems" principle, whereby all concerned recognize that Taiwan is not a separate "country" from China. By contrast, the residents of Taiwan tend to see themselves as an independent country, with its own constitution, democratically elected leaders and a military force of upwards of 300,000 soldiers, sailors and airmen and women. At the moment, the Democratic Progressive Party, which leans towards eventual official independence from the mainland, currently holds sway on the island.

In recent years, concerns have grown about the possibility that Beijing might take matters into its own hands by mounting some sort of operation to cross the Taiwan Strait and launch an amphibious assault against Taiwan. In early 2021, the PLAN and the People's Liberation Army launched a series of air incursions into Taiwanese air space, suggesting that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan is an increasing threat. I&W intelligence detects changes in the operational posture of the opponent to warn that the possibility of dangerous or otherwise unwanted activity is growing. I&W provides a risk assessment to warn military forces to move to a heightened state of defensive alert and that the time has arrived to take action (Belden, 1977).



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The purpose of this research is to explore how I&W intelligence can help bolster deterrence in the Western Pacific. The research discusses three scenarios to illustrate how they each present a unique set of I&W requirements. It also explores the various stratagems that might be adopted to complicate the efforts of I&W analysts to generate warnings and associated efforts to help commanders develop accurate situational awareness during a crisis. The research then addresses I&W intelligence as a system, identifying issues that can prevent both intelligence analysts and commanders from playing their designated parts.

Findings and Conclusions

Three “scenarios” regarding Taiwan in the Western Pacific suggest themselves as targets for I&W intelligence: conventional I&W, Gray Zone activities, and accidents.

Senior officers have “grown up” in a world in which U.S. forces enjoyed command of the sea and air in any given theater of operations, giving them an opportunity to project power ashore, maintain unfettered logistics, and to deny the opponent an opportunity to wreak havoc on U.S. interests and allies in the region. They also enjoyed their ability to “command the sea” without little need for indications and warning intelligence. The U.S. Navy could deal with most challenges with forces in-theater on a day alert, peacetime status. Senior Navy commanders always saw their intelligence officers as an important source of information, but it is not entirely clear if they also served as an important source of warning. Today this is no longer the case.

The analysis found that it is unclear if commanders understand the difference between I&W intelligence and intelligence reporting offering specific event predictions; that is, operators might disregard or misinterpret I&W intelligence because they expect intelligence analysts to provide detailed predictions of impending action undertaken by the opponent.

To be effective, I&W intelligence needs to exist as a system that links together analysts and operations, warning and response, intelligence realities to strategic and operational requirements. The research found that the failure to create this system is a universal cause of intelligence failure, facilitating surprise attack. Intelligence analysts and managers need to take responsibility for this “system.” Analysts and operators need to take steps to create an I&W system to bolster deterrence in the Western Pacific.

Recommendations for Further Research

The Naval Research Program should sponsor a workshop on indications and warning (I&W) as a system to bring together scholars, intelligence analysts and operators. Recognizing I&W as important and treating I&W as a system raises important questions that are directly related to the effectiveness of U.S. deterrence across the Indo-Pacific and the availability of credible combat capability during a nascent crisis. For example, should the Office of Naval Intelligence take responsibility for monitoring the status of the Navy’s I&W system? Should intelligence officers monitor the synchronization of I&W realities with operational plans and necessities? Who is going to take responsibility for rebuilding the Navy’s I&W system after a thirty-year strategic and intelligence hiatus through ongoing training, education, and research?



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Belden, Thomas. (1977). Indications, warning, and crisis operations. *International Studies Quarterly*, 21(1), 181-198.

Acronyms

I&W	indications and warning
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China

