



# Flashpoint China: Chinese Air Power and the Regional Balance

by Andreas Rupprecht and Tom Cooper

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**F**rom Mongolia, the South China Sea, to the borders of India and Kazakhstan-potential conflict areas that affects the People's Republic of China, in this short but in-depth analysis prolific aviation writers Andreas Rupprecht and Tom Cooper looks into the regional balance and on Chinese airpower which would play a pivotal role in the event of conflict in any of the aforementioned places.

As noted on the introduction, the book is the background of the author's earlier work on Modern Chinese Warplanes which covers a complete presentation of the aircraft, weapons and equipment of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and the People's Liberation Army Naval Air Force (PLANAF). Neither, a prequel or sequel, covers the four theater commands organized geographically covering potential crisis areas.

The Northern Theater Command & Central Theater Command which has responsibility for the countries of Mongolia, North Korea/South Korea, Russia and the former Soviet Republics and Japan is the coverage of the next chapter where in a brief introduction is provided on the most previous and recent security and border situation between the PROC and countries indicated there it. A capabilities and intentions analysis follows as the authors examine the military balance through an airpower perspective of PLAAF and PLANAF units, notably look into of what could be Beijing's moves if and when a conflict arises between North and South Korea as exemplified during the August 2015 crisis, as well as the US response and defiance of China's declared ADIZ in the East China Sea region.

Taiwan on the other hand, is the foci of the Eastern Theater Command which has a top priority in the Chinese armed forces modernization drive. As with the earlier chapter both historical and contemporary security issues are tackled along with the capability assessment and of the PLA forces arrayed against Taiwan should hostilities erupt in the straits.

The Southern Theater Command by far has the longest coverage within with 18 pages though still following the pattern of the first and second chapters, logically understood of a much wider coverage is that it covers the areas of Hong Kong, Macau, portions of Taiwan and the South China Sea specifically the

Philippines and Vietnam and disputed islands of the Spratly's. Readers would learn a lot on this section from that of the historical to the current situation (April 2016) on this contested region of Southeast Asia.

The penultimate chapter covers Laos and Myanmar that extends to the former Soviet Union's Central Asian republics including Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and the Himalayan countries. Again border demarcation lines and disputes are discussed as well as the capabilities, intentions and security cooperation among the above mentions countries.

A table of aviation units of the PLAAF and PLANAF assigned to each theater command is listed on the end of each chapter with emphasis on the unit, base of operations and aircraft in use. A map for each chapter is also provided for readers to identify key theater command headquarters, airbases, command post and naval aviation bases. A seven page bibliography divided by chapter supplements the book.

Apart from the books in-depth and timely analysis it is supported by about 70 photographs of PLAAF, PLANAF, ROKAF, JASDF, Pakistan Air Force and the Fixed and Rotary wing aircraft of the former Soviet Central republics, Indian Air Force, ROCAF and the Nepalese and Bhutan air arms. Vignettes of information on the photo captions provide readers additional datum on a particular air forces aircraft. 12 tables and 6 maps adds to the books illustration.

An extremely informative tome which would be of value to current serving Air Force and Naval Aviators of the countries covered, as well as for Defense and Security analyst, service colleges and academy professors, Staff Officers for Intelligence, Operations, Logistics, Plans and Special Studies. The authors are again to be commended for this valuable apt reference on Chinese air power.

**CDR Mark R Condono** PCGA, is the Pioneer Book Review Writer of the PAF Review and initiated the Professional Readings Section of the magazine in 2003. He is currently the Officer in Charge of the PEFTOK Museum under the Department of National Defense-Philippine Veterans Affairs Office.



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