

Featured *MSP Guest Column*:



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New Chapter in Japan's Amphibious Capabilities
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Naval Development and Policy:

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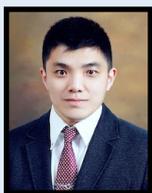
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MSP Guest Columnist

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In April, the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) activated the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB) that works under the direct command of the newly established Ground Component Command. For the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF), the ARDB is a critical piece in enhancing its amphibious capabilities to defend the nation's remote islands.

While amphibious capabilities are logical for an archipelagic nation such as Japan, such capabilities were long deeded as too offensive in the context of the "peace constitution." However, Japan began to take steps to establish amphibious capabilities from the 2000s amid China's growing assertiveness in the areas surrounding the Nansei Shoto. In 2002, JGSDF formed the Western Army Infantry Regiment (WAIR), and began to train with the US Marine Corps (USMC) to learn tactical practices, particularly through joint exercises such as "Iron Fist" that has been held annually since 2005. Further developments were seen with the issuance of the 2010 National Defense Program Guideline that further emphasized the critical role of the JGSDF's amphibious capabilities. Hence the ARDB is the culmination of the last 16 years of developing the JSDF's amphibious capabilities.

Currently, the 2100-strong ARDB based at Camp Ainoura has two Amphibious Rapid Deployment Regiments (with another to be formed next year), Combat Landing Battalion, Artillery Battalion, Reconnaissance Battalion, Engineer Battalion, Signal Company, Logistic Support Battalion, and an Amphibious Rapid Deployment Training Unit. The brigade has a high percentage of ranger-qualified troops. Moreover, the ARDB is under the leadership of Major General Aoki Shinichi who had tenures in the 1st Airborne Brigade and also in the elite Special Operations Group. Thus in structure and the staffing, the ARDB is on a solid start.

While the establishment of the ARDB is significant, there are several issues going forward.

First, there are questions over the "lift" capabilities. Regarding vessels, the Japan

Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) currently only has three Osumi-class landing ships, and even with the Hyuga and Izumo-class that boasts greater capacity and ability to accommodate some transport aircraft, there are questions over whether these are sufficient considering the ARDB's force structure. While some have discussed the need for acquiring amphibious assault ships, such acquisitions will take significant amount of time. Problems are also seen in the 17 MV-22B Osprey that the JGSDF plans to operate from Saga Airport, where controversies surrounding the tiltrotor aircraft has forced it to be temporarily based in Camp Kisarazu located 1200km away.

Second, given that amphibious capabilities are still new to the JSDF, time is still required to achieve optimal readiness. The foremost tasks for the ARDB would be to nurture fluency in their ability to defend the remote islands and to develop its own operational and tactical concepts and cultures. Achieving the above would not only require training, but also working closely with the USMC, and as well as learning from various amphibious operations to date.

Third, inter-branch coordination joint and integration is critical. While many refer to the ARDB as Japan's Marine Corps, there are misconceptions. The ARDB is part of the JGSDF, not the JMSDF, raising issues in the coordination between the two branches. Moreover, the JSDF must formulate new concept of operations to effectively and efficiently mobilize the ground, naval, and air capabilities in a coordinated and integrated manner. New efforts to establish a centralized, integrated command system is a step forward, but much time is required to fully mature the JSDF's joint readiness.

Naturally, much is in the works, and many more developments are expected in coming years. Despite its recent birth and many challenges that lay ahead, the establishment of the ARDB is undoubtedly another milestone in enhancing the JSDF's readiness to defend Japan's independence and sovereignty.



JGSDF Official Twitter

JAPAN | 7 APRIL | THE MAINICHI

Japan's first amphibious fighting force goes into full operation

Japan's first amphibious fighting force went into full operation on Saturday, with its main mission being to defend the country's remote southwest islands in the face of China's growing maritime assertiveness.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 1 APRIL | THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

'Alphabet soup' of Navy missions dots Indian Ocean

Ten months since it re-oriented the mission pattern of its fleet, the navy has told the government it has the Indian Ocean covered with an alphabet soup of acronyms.

[Full Report](#)

JAPAN-UNITED STATES | 4 APRIL | ASAHI SHIMBUN

MSDF refueled U.S. Navy ships 17 times to guard against N. Korea

Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels provided fuel at least 17 times to U.S. Navy ships in the Sea of Japan guarding against possible ballistic missile launches by North Korea in 2017, government sources said.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 9 APRIL | SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

China eyes Vanuatu military base in plan with global ramifications

China has approached Vanuatu about building a permanent military presence in the South Pacific in a globally significant move that could see the rising superpower sail warships on Australia's doorstep.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 10 APRIL | DEFENSE NEWS

Amid rising threats, the Corps flexes to the Pacific

The Corps is getting underway with one of its biggest redistribution of forces since World War II as thousands of Marines are shifting to the Pacific and moving around the region in an effort to prepare to counter rising threats from China to North Korea.

[Full Report](#)

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CHINA | 12 APRIL | GLOBAL TIMES

China's largest maritime military parade showcases aircraft carrier battle group

China's Central Military Commission held the country's largest ever maritime military parade in the South China Sea on Thursday, which for the first time featured the country's aircraft carrier strike group and the most advanced weaponry of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 15 APRIL | NEWS NATION (INDIA)

Gaganshakti 2018: Indian Air Force conducts maritime air operation on western seaboard

As part of the ongoing mega combat exercise - 'Gaganshakti-2018', Indian Air Force (IAF) on Saturday conducted a battalion level airdrop on the western seaboard to check its deep strike capability in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

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CHINA | 16 APRIL | GLOBAL TIMES

China activates new precision intermediate, long-range missiles

China has activated new intermediate and long-range missiles capable of precision strikes on medium and large warships.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 17 APRIL | NAVY TIMES

Navy's new West Pacific command to oversee maintenance of Japan-based ships

The Navy last week officially established a new overseas command that will work to ensure that Japan-based ships get the maintenance, training and certification they need.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 18 APRIL | INQUIRER.NET

China military planes land on PH reef

Two Chinese military transport planes have been photographed on Panganiban Reef, marking the first reported presence of this type of aircraft in Philippine territory in the South China Sea and raising the prospect that China will base warplanes there.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 19 APRIL | NEW STRAITS TIMES

Malaysian warship to take part in Rim of the Pacific Exercise for the first time in Honolulu

In a first, a Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) ship will join warships from countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan and India in the Rim of the Pacific

Exercise (Rimpac) 2018 in Honolulu, Hawaii, United States, in July.

[Full Report](#)



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AUSTRALIA | 20 APRIL | SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Turnbull asserts Australia's 'perfect right' to sail South China Sea

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull is insisting on Australia's "perfect right" to sail its fleet through the South China Sea after a robust exchange in the disputed waters between Australian frigates and the Chinese navy.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 21 APRIL | THE MAINICHI

1st Chinese aircraft carrier drill in Pacific confirmed: Japan

Japan's Defense Ministry said Saturday it has confirmed an aircraft carrier drill by China in the Pacific for the first time.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 27 APRIL | STARS AND STRIPES

Air Force sends B-52 bombers over South China Sea during training

A pair of Air Force bombers flew over the South China Sea earlier this week, just days after Beijing showcased its military might in the region.

[Full Report](#)

JAPAN | 28 APRIL | THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Study looked at turning Izumo into a flattop to help U.S. in war

The Defense Ministry commissioned a study into the possible conversion of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's Izumo helicopter carrier into a full-fledged aircraft carrier in case Japan was required to provide rear-line support for a U.S.-led war.

[Full Report](#)



VIETNAM | 11 APRIL | REUTERS

Vietnam weighs law for coast guard to open fire to protect sovereignty

Vietnam wants to give its coast guard more flexibility to open fire at sea, amid tension in the busy South China Sea waterway, a draft law released on Wednesday showed.

[Full Report](#)

THAILAND | 1 APRIL | THE STAR ONLINE

Official: Boat carrying Rohingya stops on Thai island en route to Malaysia

A boat carrying dozens of Rohingya refugees trying to reach Malaysia briefly stopped on a Thai island, an official said on Sunday (April 1), as fears grow about overcrowded camps for the stateless minority fleeing violence in Myanmar.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 2 APRIL | NEW STRAITS TIMES

MMEA beefs up patrol to detect boat ferrying Rohingya refugees

The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) has beefed up patrolling the country's waters following a report that a boat ferrying Rohingya refugees was heading to this country.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 2 APRIL | GLOBAL TIMES

Deep sea tests signal major advances in unmanned submersibles

China's unmanned submersible Hailong 11000 completed its second deep sea test in the western Pacific Ocean on Sunday, marking a steady advance in the country's deep ocean exploration project.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 8 APRIL | LIVE FIST DEFENCE

India's 1st Private-sector Offshore Patrol Vessel Ready For Military Service

If this week's DefExpo show near Chennai is all set to see India flaunt its frontline naval shipbuilding prowess with greater energy than ever before, an event scheduled to take place on the show's first day not far from the venue will be heavy with significance.

[Full Report](#)

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UNITED STATES | 9 APRIL | SEAPOWER MAGAZINE

Research Aims for Clearer Picture of Marine Mammal, Vessel Interactions

In an effort to provide a more complete maritime domain awareness picture, a Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) project is studying ways to integrate data on marine mammal migration with vessel traffic information in order to prevent their interactions.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 11 APRIL | SEAPOWER MAGAZINE

Congressmen: 355 Ships Still Important, Naval Safety Prime for Oversight

At a breakfast session hosted at the Sea-Air-Space Exposition April 11, Reps. Rob Wittman, R-Va., and Joe Courtney, D-Conn., co-chairs of the House seapower and projection forces subcommittee, focused on boosting the Navy's sea power, now enabled by the most recent National Defense Appropriations Act and omnibus bill.

[Full Report](#)

GLOBAL | 16 APRIL | THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

Governments Start Formal Talks on High Seas Treaty

After more than 10 years of debate and discussion, the United Nations is meeting this week to launch an intergovernmental conference to negotiate a treaty on global protections for critical marine biodiversity on the high seas.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 17 APRIL | NEW STRAITS TIMES

Upgraded app for monitoring ships, reporting emergencies at sea expected to be a hit

Sea Alert, a feature of homegrown mobile application K3M 2.0 is expected to be a hit among fishermen, and, shipping and oil and gas companies.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 18 APRIL | THE STAR ONLINE

Surveillance saves money by preventing illegal trade and fishing, says Navy chief

The country potentially losses around RM10bil in illegal trade and fishing if no surveillance action is taken.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 19 APRIL | GLOBAL TIMES

South China base for deep-sea vessels under discussion

A South China base for deep-sea research vessels is under discussion and pending approval for completion in Hainan Province by 2019, project organizers said on

Thursday.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 20 APRIL | BLOOMBERG

Google Is Indonesia's New Weapon in War on Illegal Fishing

Indonesia's Fisheries Minister Susi Pudjiastuti deals with some dangerous men in her role, but they don't rattle her. She has an equally intimidating weapon on her side: Google.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 25 APRIL | THE SUN DAILY

MMEA rescues fishermen from attempted kidnapping by pirates

The Southern Region Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) has rescued a local fishing boat from an attempted robbery and kidnap case by five armed foreigners, in the waters off Batu Pahat on Tuesday evening.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 27 APRIL | NAVY TIMES

Fired 7th Fleet admiral speaks out on what caused the Fitzgerald and McCain collisions

The former head of the Japan-based 7th Fleet who was fired in the wake of two fatal destroyer collisions in the west Pacific last summer is for the first time offering his take on what led to the disasters, while at times questioning Big Navy's account of what transpired.

[Full Report](#)



KOREAN PENINSULA | 28 APRIL | THE MAINICHI

Australia, Canada to join surveillance on N. Korea sanctions evaders

Japan said Saturday Australia and Canada will join the multilateral effort to monitor North Korean attempts to evade U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions through maritime smuggling operations.

[Full Report](#)



SINGAPORE | 25 APRIL | CHANNEL NEWS ASIA

Singapore to step up development assistance for other countries in maritime sector

Singapore will step up development assistance for other countries in the maritime sector, with the launch of an enhanced five-year technical cooperation and training package for the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and its member states.

[Full Report](#)

JAPAN | 2 APRIL | SPLASH 24/7

Three to ONE: Japan's Ocean Network Express starts operating

To little fanfare the world's newest container line officially started operations Sunday.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 3 APRIL | REUTERS

COSCO Shipping's takeover of OOCL to complete by end-June: vice chairman

COSCO Shipping's (601919.SS) planned acquisition of Orient Overseas Container Line (OOCL) is on track to be completed by the end of June, the company's vice chairman Huang Xiaowen said on Tuesday.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 4 APRIL | SPLASH 24/7

Jakarta to ditch controversial coal and palm oil shipping ruling until 2020

The Indonesian government has taken the decision to postpone until 2020 controversial plans to make all exports of coal and crude palm oil be carried on Indonesian-flagged vessels.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTH KOREA | 6 APRIL | MARITIME EXECUTIVE

South Korea to underwrite hundreds of ship orders

On Thursday, South Korea's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries said that it is looking to underwrite 200 ship orders to help the nation's maritime industry recover from a multi-year slump.

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THAILAND | 11 APRIL | BANGKOK POST

Fisheries boss speaks out against new rules

New regulations to please the European Union (EU) will not lead to sustainable fishing, a major commercial trawler association said on Tuesday.

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CHINA | 14 APRIL | REUTERS

China to set up Hainan free trade zone by 2020, port by 2025 - Xinhua

China aims to establish a free trade zone in Hainan by 2020 and will encourage multinationals to set up their international and regional headquarters there, as part of plans to open up the province's economy to foreign investors .

[Full Report](#)

SINGAPORE | 16 APRIL | THE STRAITS TIMES

New maritime traffic technologies in the works to cut risk of collisions

On Monday (April 16), technology firm Fujitsu Limited, Singapore Management University (SMU) and the Institute of High Performance Computing at the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*Star) announced that they are collaborating on innovative new technologies for vessel traffic management.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA-UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | 20 APRIL | SEATRADE MARITIME NEWS

Chinese companies investing \$1bn in Khalifa Port Free Trade Zone

Chinese companies have signed agreements to invest \$1bn in Khalifa Port Free Trade Zone (KPFTZ), Abu Dhabi in the UAE.

[Full Report](#)

GLOBAL | 20 APRIL | WORLD MARITIME NEWS

APL launches new India, Middle East-Europe service

APL has launched a new weekly service that directly connects India, the Middle East and five major North European ports.

[Full Report](#)

GLOBAL | 25 APRIL | SEATRADE MARITIME NEWS

CMA CGM grows its logistics presence

French liner company CMA CGM has reached an agreement to acquire an equity stake of nearly 25 percent in CEVA Logistics AG (CEVA), a global player in the logistics sector.

[Full Report](#)

SINGAPORE | 25 APRIL | REUTERS

Singapore awards \$1.1 billion contract for second phase of mega-port project

Singapore on Wednesday announced a \$1.1 billion plan to expand and modernize its port, the world's second-biggest, but which is in fierce competition with several Chinese harbors including Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou.

[Full Report](#)

AUSTRALIA | 26 APRIL | SBS NEWS

\$400m Great Barrier Reef rescue plan reportedly in federal budget

A \$400 million rescue plan for the Great Barrier Reef will be a centrepiece of next month's federal budget.

[Full Report](#)

PHILIPPINES | 26 APRIL | HELLENIC SHIPPING NEWS

Philippines accedes to air pollution and energy efficiency rules

The Republic of the Philippines has become the latest country to accede to the IMO instrument providing rules for the prevention of air pollution from ships and energy efficiency requirements.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 30 APRIL | BLOOMBERG

Biggest Indian Cargo Company Wants to Build an Uber for Shipping

Allcargo Logistics Ltd. is emulating Uber Technologies Inc. to boost its business of sharing marine containers.

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