

The Death of the Marine Corps

The war in 2039

by GySgt Benjamin Knight

The Marine Corps was rendered combat ineffective during the opening weeks of the U.S.-China War in December of 2039. First, Second, and Third MarDivs were systematically engaged by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) navy, air, and ground forces, which resulted in the reduction of these divisions by a combined 75 percent. China had used a specific and effective strategy to cripple the U.S. military. This process was the development of a worldwide trade route controlled by them, ceasing all trade with the United States and forcing military funding cuts.

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the development of the Belt and Road Initiative. Seventy-one countries pledged to join in the endeavor.¹ China quickly began making deals with these countries to build rail lines, improve roads, and build seaports in strategic locations. They would loan the money to the host country to build each project with only one stipulation, Chinese contracted companies would be hired to assist in the construction. China knew these countries would not be able to repay the accrued debts which allowed China to employ debt-trap diplomacy to gain strategic advantages in some of these areas.² By 2017, the countries along the Belt received 35 percent of global foreign direct investments and accounted for 40 percent of global merchandise exports.³ This had all been part of China's bigger concept of *Tian Xia* or world domination.⁴ The ground and maritime trade routes expanded their reach throughout the entire globe. This opened the trade routes and al-

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lowed China to influence a dominating portion of the trade deals made in the world. China began slowly arranging for resources to be acquisitioned from the countries along the Belt to reduce the number of materials they would need from U.S. suppliers.

During a press release in 2036, President Xi Jinping announced China would no longer receive any imports from the United States effectively gouging the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) by fourteen percent. China again used debt-trap diplomacy to convince many of its partner countries to do the same. In total, the U.S. GDP was reduced by 24 percent over the next two years. This drastically affected the markets in the United States and caused an unexpected recession for which the American people were not prepared. Many companies that relied on exports went bankrupt and millions of Americans were laid off. The unemployment rate rose to eleven percent and the government was forced to start cutting its spending. By 2038, the defense budget was reduced by fifteen percent forcing the different branches to begin tightening their belts.

Due to these budget cuts much of the equipment the military used, including ships, could not be maintained. The Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to reduce the number of personnel in each of

the branches to free up some funds to maintain its gear. The Marine Corps was reduced to 165,000. This forced the Marine Corps to disband all three battalions of the Fourth Marine Regiment and both battalions of the Eighth Marine Regiment as well as numerous support battalions. The Navy was also required to put 30 ships in long-term storage. The Third and Seventh Fleets took the brunt of the reduction as their ships had seen more use and required the most maintenance. This left a crucial gap in the maritime defenses in the Pacific, which Chinese military leaders exploited when they attacked the West Coast of the United States.

On 7 December 2039, U.S. Navy ships from the Third and Seventh Fleets came under fire from Chinese DF21D anti-ship ballistic missiles. These missiles were simultaneously launched from PLA Navy ships, cargo ships, and ground bases. The missiles were controlled by the Yaogan family of defense satellites they had launched between 2009 and 2012. The PLA Navy was able to target U.S. ships by monitoring their electronic emissions from the 8G personal electronic devices used by sailors aboard the ships. This attack successfully rendered both fleets' combat ineffective. The PLA Navy then moved eight group armies (approximately 650,000 troops) from

the PLA Ground Force to the West Coast of the United States unimpeded by utilizing ships that had been pre-staged and trade routes they had already established. Simultaneous with the attack on the U.S. Navy, the PLA Air Force conducted a massive aerial bombardment of Marine Corps Base Hawaii and Camp Butler Okinawa Japan. This raid was conducted by Xian H-6 long-range bombers launched from the Chinese Xi Jinping Air Station on the man-made Mischief Reef Island in the South China Sea. The raid effectively targeted the infrastructure and equipment of 3rd MarDiv resulting in a reduction of 90 percent. The PLA Ground Force invasion was contested by the 1st MarDiv as well as the U.S. Army's 40th Infantry Division and the California National Guard. This joint task force, named Task Force Bear, was able to hold the PLA Ground Force in California until they could be reinforced by the 2nd MarDiv and the

rest of the U.S. Army but not before being reduced by 85 percent. The 2nd MarDiv took 50 percent casualties during the intense fighting that followed. The loss of two of the three divisions was a fatal blow to the Marine Corps as a fighting force.

In the aftermath of the bloody U.S.-China war, Congress established a policy to prevent the country from becoming reliant on exports for such a large percentage of the GDP. This would prevent an adversary country from being able to reduce our GDP and defense budget just by monopolizing trade. When it came to the Marine Corps, Congress was also left with a choice. Re-constitute the divisions or amend Title X thereby dissolving and abolishing the Marine Corps. Ultimately, they chose the latter. On 10 November 2040, the Marine Corps Colors were retired for the final time. The remaining personnel and equipment were absorbed into the other branches.

Notes

1. Lily Kuo and Niko Kommenda, "What Is China's Belt and Road Initiative?" *The Guardian*, July 30, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/ng-interactive/2018/jul/30/what-china-belt-road-initiative-silk-road-explainer>.
2. Ibid.
3. Caroline Freund and Michele Ruta, "Belt and Road Initiative," *The World Bank*, March 29, 2018. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative>.
4. Howard W. French, *Everything Under the Heavens: How the Past Helps Shape China's Push for Global Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 2018).



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