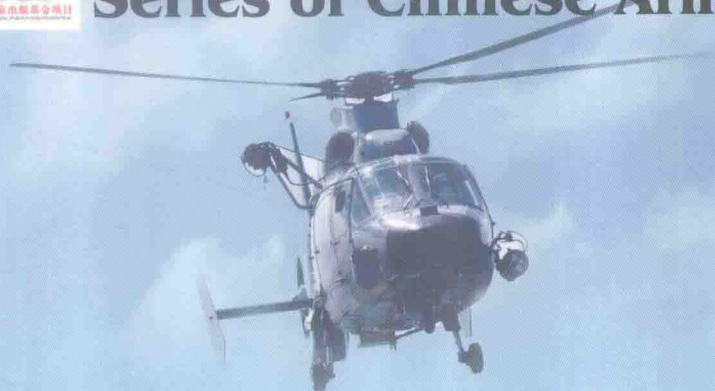




Series of Chinese Army



The Chinese Navy's Maritime Escort Operations

Li Faxin



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The Chinese Navy's Maritime Escort Operations

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Preface

Since the start of the 21st century, with the rise of China's overall national and military strength, China's defense policies, military strategy and military development have increasingly become a hot spot of the world's attention, and many books have been published overseas about the Chinese army. Unfortunately, due to some authors' lack of first-hand accurate information, some of their publications have been somewhat debatable.

What kind of an army is the PLA? What stage of development are the various branches of the Chinese armed forces in? What a level of development does military weapons and equipment have reached? These questions have spurred a lively discussion of great concern to the international community and some overseas media. For this reason, we believe that writing a vivid and accurate series of the Chinese army, for both domestic and foreign readers, would be very pertinent.

There are three books in the first series of books on the Chinese Army, namely *The Chinese People's Liberation Army*, *The PLA Navy*, and *The PLA Air Force*; the second series of three are *The PLA Aviation Corps*, *The PLA Marines*, and *The PLA Airborne Force*. The third series contains four volumes: *The Chinese Navy's Maritime Escort Operations*, *Chinese Peacekeepers Overseas*, *The Chinese Army and International Exchanges*, *The Chinese Army and Humanitarian Relief*. Each volume has from 50,000 to 100,000 words, with hundreds of valuable pictures. The series attempts to focus on the Chinese armed forces' history, current

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situation and future development in the context of its growth, through the use of many interesting examples and details, to show the overall face of the People's Liberation Army from multiple angles.

Throughout the process of planning and writing the series, we invited experts from PLA relevant departments, military academies, and research institutions to participate in order to ensure its authority and accuracy. This series has also had strong support and guidance from the Information Office of the Ministry of National Defense. We believe that the active participation of the military personnels has made the series much more profound.

Due to the knowledge limitations of the editor, in the process of attempting to reflect this great theme of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, inevitably there are some omissions and deficiencies. Readers' criticisms and corrections on these points are welcome.

Editor
May 2013

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADM.	Admiral (Navy Rank)
AOR	Area of Responsibility
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
BIMC	the Baltic and International Maritime Conference
CAPT.	Captain (Navy Rank)
CMDR.	Commander (Navy Rank)
CMRE.	Commodore (Navy Rank)
CMSARC	China Maritime Search and Rescue Center
CNS	Chinese Navy Ship
CO	Commanding Officer
COL.	Colonel (an Army or Air Force rank)
COSCO	China Ocean Shipping (Group) Company
CPL.	Corporal
CSOA	China Ship-Owners Association
CTF	Combined Task Force
DWT	deadweight tonnage
EU	The European Union
FGS	Federal German Navy Ship
FNS	French Navy Ship
GNP	Gross National Production
GOA	The Gulf of Aden
HKMRCC	Hong Kong Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre
HMS	Her Majesty's Ship (UK)
HNLMS	His / Her Netherlands Majesty's Ship
HS	Hellenic (Greek Navy) Ship
HTMS	His Thai Majesty's Ship
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
INMARSAT	International Marine Satellite Communications
IRTC	The International Recommended Transiting Corridor
ITS	Italian Navy Ship

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KMT	Kuomintang (The Nationalist Party of China)
LHD	landing helicopter dock; amphibious assault ship
LPD	amphibious landing ship, dock
LT. CMDR.	Lieutenant Commander (a naval military rank)
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOD	The Ministry of Defense
MOOTW	Military Operations Other than War
MOT	Ministry of Transportation
MSARCC	Macau Search and Rescue Coordination Centre
MSC-HOA	Maritime Security Center Horn of Africa
MV	Motor Vessel; Merchant Vessel
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OOD	Officer of the Deck
OSC	On-Scene Commander
PLA	People's Liberation Army of China
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
RADM.	Rear Admiral (Navy Rank)
RAS	Replenishment at Sea
RFS	Russian Federation Navy Ship
RIP	Replenishment in Port
ROKS	Republic of Korean Navy Ship
RP	rendezvous point
S. CAPT.	Senior Captain (a Chinese-specific naval rank between captain and rear admiral)
S. COL.	Senior Colonel (an Army or Air Force rank)
SAR	search and rescue
SEF	Straits Exchange Foundation, Taiwan
SGT.	Sergeant
SOF	special operations force
STCS	Support through Civilian Ships

Acronyms and Abbreviations

STSCL	Supply through Self-Carried Loads
TCG	Turkish Navy Ship
TF	task force
TOD	time of departure
UK	The United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	The United Nation
US	The United States of America
USS	The United States Navy Ship
VADM.	Vice Admiral (Navy Rank)
VBSS	visit, board, search and seizure
VHF	very high frequency
Website Mercury	Website of MSC-HOA
WFFG	The Win Far Fishing Group
WFP	The UN World Food Programme
WSBF	Workers Supporting the Battle Front (during the Huaihai Campaign)

Introduction

December 26 of 2012 was the 4th anniversary for China's first dispatch of its naval task force to the Gulf of Aden and off Somalia for escort mission. Just on this day four years ago, the first People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) escort task force weighed anchors at Sanya, Hainan Province, and rushed to the Gulf of Aden 4,400 nautical miles away, drawing back the curtain of PLA Navy's regular escort operations on a rotating basis.

To the Chinese Navy, the journey from Sanya to the Gulf of Aden means the tremendous change from safeguarding China's national interests in coastal waters to maintaining world peace in the distant sea—It was the first time that China had employed its military forces abroad to defend its national strategic interests, the first time that the Chinese military had organized their naval forces overseas to perform its international humanitarian duties, and the first time that the Chinese Navy had proceeded to blue waters to protect China's vital maritime supply-lines.

On December 26, 2008, invited by the Somali Transitional Federal Government, consistent with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and referring to the practices of relevant nations, the Chinese Government dispatched a naval task force to the Gulf of Aden and the waters off Somalia for escort operations. Its main tasks included defending the safety of the Chinese vessels and personnel via this area, protecting

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the safety of the ships that sealift humanitarian materials for international organizations such as World Food Programme (WFP), and providing positive humanitarian relief service for foreign merchant vessels.

In the past four years, the officers and men of the PLAN escort task forces have, with their loyalty, courage and wisdom, written down splendid passages for the protection of China's vital maritime supply-lines and the maintenance of world peace. The escort operations of the Chinese Navy have not only provided effective defense for China's national interests and powerful protection for Chinese vessels, but also offered reliable guarantee of security to the merchant vessels of other nations and regions, which is a full demonstration of the national image of China as a responsible member of the international community, and the good image of the Chinese military as a peaceful, civilized and mighty army. All these have been extensively acclaimed by the international community.

In the four years from December 2008 to December 2012, the Chinese Navy successively sent out 13 escort task forces to the Gulf of Aden and the waters off Somalia, totaling 34 warships, 28 helicopters and nearly 10,000 officers and men. They accomplished the accompanying escort tasks for more than 500 convoys totaling over 5,000 Chinese and foreign merchant vessels, about 50% of which were in flags of foreign countries; they succeeded in providing rescue, relief and/or escort services for over 60 vessels that had been pursued, attacked, hijacked, or released by pirates; and they provided successful escort service for four WFP grain carriers. For all the escorted ships and personnel, the safety was guaranteed one hundred percent.

In escorting modes, the Chinese escort task forces, focusing on convenience, rapidness and efficiency, adjusted their operations from the initial temporarily-grouped convoys to planned periodically-grouped convoys, which greatly simplified the procedures and increased the number of beneficiaries from the escort operations.

In escorting methods, to make flexible use of their picked troops, the

Chinese task forces added quite a few methods such as relay escort and on-call escort to the existing accompanying escort, area patrolling, and on-board protection, effectively improving the availability of the escort forces.

In escorting areas, the PLAN task forces emphasized safety and reliability. They constantly studied the characteristics and laws of piracy according to the weather and piracy changes in the area, timely extended the escorting routes both eastward and westward, and expanded the escorting area to the waters east of Somalia, which broadened the escorted areas.

In the support to escort missions, the Chinese escort task forces stressed powerfulness and reliability. They combined self-support with in-port replenishment, establishing a comprehensive support mode of supply through self-carried loads (STSCCL), replenishment at sea (RAS), replenishment in port (RIP) plus support through civilian ships (STCS).

In foreign exchange and cooperation, the PLAN task forces took openness, cooperation and harmony as their basic philosophy, and developed positive exchanges and cooperation with foreign escort vessels. They had information exchanges and mutual visits successively with US CTF 151, EU CTF 465, the Russian Navy task forces, the NATO Navy CTF 508 and the Korean escort vessels. Meanwhile, they worked with foreign navies on such cooperative programs as China-Russia Joint Escort Service, China-Russia Joint Exercise, China-Netherlands Young Officers Exchange Program, and China-US Joint Exercise.

In the living of the escorting officers and men, the Chinese naval task forces, through continued exploration and summary, overcame all sorts of difficulties to steadily improve their conditions, and to enrich and invigorate the life of the officers and men, progressively establishing the escort living mode of "Home at sea, Guest onshore".

Now the orderly rotating and regularly operating escort operations of the Chinese Navy are still under way.

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The Chinese Navy will continue to strengthen the exchanges and cooperation with the escort vessels of other nations, protect the safety of China's vital maritime lifelines, provide necessary humanitarian relief positively to foreign vessels via this area, and, as always, fulfill its international obligations as a responsible member of the international community.

Coauthors

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Chapter 1

PLA Navy Escort Operations: Reasons and Causes

On December 26, 2008, the attention of the world's and China's major news media was focused on the same place: a naval port in the Sanya City, Hainan Province, China. Right from here, the first escort task force of the Chinese Navy would weigh anchors and proceed to the Gulf of Aden and off Somalia for escort operations.

The Sanya in winter was bathed in bright sunshine and joyful warmth. On the long jetty, colored flags were waving in the cheering music played by the naval band. All the warships in the naval port were in full dress, and the people ashore lined up in their splendid attire. On board the three modernized warships about to go on the expedition, the officers and men in their trim navy whites were manning the rails on the deck—which is the most solemn navy-specific ceremonial action—exceptionally high in spirits.

ADM. Wu Shengli, Member of Central Military Commission and Commander of PLA Navy, and ADM. Liu Xiaojiang, Political Commissar of the Navy, together with other naval chiefs and the dignitaries from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Transport, paid a special trip here to see off the officers and men for the escort mission. The grand



On December 26, 2008, PLA Navy's first escort task force weighed anchors.

sailing ceremony raised fervent gusts of air over the broad naval port.

“Weigh up anchors!” Along with the order of the task force commander, the naval band began playing the majestic melody of *The People's Navy Is Making Headway*, and the awe-inspiring warships slowly bore off the jetty, ploughing up long arcs of rolling waves.

The history will always remember that moment: 1345 local time, December 26, 2008.