

**CENTER FOR
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)**

STATESMEN'S FORUM: GEN. XU CAIHOU

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CHARLES W. FREEMAN III: Good morning, everybody. It's terrific to see so many of you out on a sunny Monday morning here in D.C. I'm very happy to have Gen. Xu here this morning. My job is just to say welcome to everybody and to introduce someone who needs no introduction, and that's our president and my mentor, Dr. John Hamre. Thanks. (Applause.)

JOHN HAMRE: Thank you, thank you. Welcome all of you. I'm glad you're here. This is a great privilege to welcome Gen. Xu. We've had several opportunities in the past when we thought we were going to get close to have the opportunity but things fell through, and it finally happened this time. We're delighted that he can be here. Thank you very much.

Just to let all of you know, we're going to listen to Gen. Xu; he's going to give us his speech. And then we're going to break to see a video that he has brought with him that explains some of the work that China did during the earthquake. And so we thought it would be useful to share that with you; I want you all to be aware of that.

Gen. Xu joined the People's Liberation Army in August of 1963, and he has, over the succeeding years, risen to higher and higher levels. And of course, he is now in a position that makes him equivalent to the secretary of defense in the United States. I've had the privilege this morning to talk with Gen. Xu and he is a fascinating man with an interesting perspective on the world, and a visionary at a time when we need new pathways of cooperation between the United States and China.

China is a great civilization and a rising power; the United States is a great power and a rising civilization. (Laughter.) Historically, when we've had situations like that, it has led to crisis and conflict. It is up to us to make sure it leads to a future of peace and cooperation. It's a great privilege for me to introduce to you, Gen. Xu, and welcome him to CSIS and to the policy community of Washington. Gen. Xu? (Applause.)

(Gen. Xu's remarks delivered via translator.)

GEN. XU CAIHOU: Dr. Hamre, thank you very much for the warm introduction. Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, it is my great pleasure to meet you here at this prestigious think tank today during my visit to your country in the golden season of fall.

The CSIS has long been dedicated to deeper understanding and closer cooperation between our two nations and armed forces. I commend and appreciate that many of you present here today, including Mr. Hills (ph), Amb. Sasser, have made strenuous efforts in enhancing friendship between our two peoples and improving bilateral relations between our two nations.

Today, I feel privileged to share my thoughts with you with an introduction on the Chinese military. But it is quite a challenge for me to present a comprehensive and objective picture of the PLA and help you understand our strategic thinking on the development and

employment of the armed forces within just 40 minutes. My speech is entitled, “The Chinese Military: A Force for Multiple Military Tasks.”

I notice that our concept of multiple military tasks shares some similarities with the six core mission areas articulated in the “Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review” report issued by the U.S. Department of Defense in January this year. I hope what I’m going to talk about will be of interest to all of you.

Since the beginning of the new century, President Hu Jintao has made new conclusions and elaborations on the historical missions of the Chinese military. He further proposes to improve the capabilities in responding to multiple security threats and fulfilling multiple military tasks. Such an important proposition is based on our nation’s reality and is aligned with the PLA’s nature and goal, and answers for the new changes in national interests in security and development. We believe that multiple military tasks include combat operations and military operations other than war.

To deter and win wars remains the top priority of the armed forces and the capability to win local wars in conditions of informatization is vital to the capabilities for multiple military tasks. In keeping with the new trend of world military development and in line with the requirements of national security and development strategy, we have decided that our strategic goal is to build an informatized force that is capable of winning wars in the information era.

We are actively pressing ahead with a revolution in military affairs with Chinese characteristics, and the PLA’s defensive capabilities are greatly strengthened through the emphasis on science and technology, the strategic project for talented people, the reform on military training and the research and development of complete systems of weaponry and equipment.

Meanwhile, we believe that in the current era when the tides for peace, development and cooperation are ever more keenly felt, to conduct military operations other than war is becoming an increasingly important form of applying military forces. The routine and constant missions for the military are tasks that involve counterterrorism, disaster relief, peacekeeping, protection of rights and interests, international relief, as well as security and protection.

We have an old saying in China: “Armies are to be maintained in the course of long years but to be used in the nick of time.” Now, it seems more relevant to change it into, “armies are to be maintained in the course of long years and to be used for long years.”

The current situation is that international terrorism is increasingly rampant, and signs of its expansion are conspicuous in recent years. We notice that the United States regards terrorism as today’s major security threat. The threats facing China caused by secessionist, extremist and terrorist forces are also on the clear rise. The East Turkestan separatist forces have made several terrorist attacks within and outside China’s borders. During and around last year’s Beijing Olympic games, they launched four attacks in Xinjiang, causing 49 casualties.

Faced with such a serious situation, we see prevention and strikes against terrorism as an important task, particularly for the People's Armed Police Force, an important component of China's armed forces, which has input enormous resources in this aspect in recent years. During the Beijing Olympics, we contributed 46,000 troops to the land, air and maritime security of the Olympics in prevention of terrorist attacks. The security of the Olympics was thus ensured.

Next year, we will also take up important security tasks for the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai. At the same time, we are actively enhancing international cooperation in counterterrorism and engaging in international technical and intelligence cooperation. Since 2002, we have also conducted 27 bilateral or multilateral joint exercises focused on counterterrorism with 21 countries.

China is among the countries that see most natural disasters. Various kinds of disasters that take place frequently in China often cause severe damages. In the past century, there were about 40 earthquakes measuring 7 or above on the Richter scale, among which nine took place in China and claimed nearly 600,000 lives – 53 percent of the world's total. In the past 60 years, since the founding of the PRC, over 50 severe floods happened in China – far more frequent than that in developed countries.

The Chinese military has been the backbone and vanguard in past relief operations. For the Chinese military, each relief operation was a special battle to protect people's lives and property. You might still have fresh memories of last year's Wenchuan earthquake in China. We activated the emergency response mechanism just 13 minutes after the earthquake, and dispatched troops immediately to disaster-affected areas for the most urgent, difficult and dangerous relief missions.

In order to gain entry into Wenchuan, the epicenter, 15 paratroopers risked their lives by jumping from an altitude of 5,000 meters, despite extremely unfavorable weather conditions and complicated terrains. In order to rescue people's lives, the PLA army aviation helicopters flew through mountains and valleys, and blazed an air corridor of life at the cost of the lives of five crew members.

Through our remaining efforts in search and rescue, we successfully rescued two survivors seven days after the quake. One-hundred-forty-six-thousand military troops were deployed in the relief effort. They rescued 3,338 survivors, evacuated 1.4 million people, repaired nearly 10,000 kilometers of roads and set up over 250,000 makeshift houses.

I want to make a special mention here – that U.S. military aircraft helped transport America-donated aid materials to the quake-hit region at a time when help was most needed during the disaster relief operations. It is greatly appreciated and surely will be remembered by the Chinese people.

China is the largest developing country, with a population of 1.3 billion. Although much has been achieved since reform and opening up, China's per capita GDP still lags behind a hundred countries worldwide. We still have more than 40 million people living in poverty. Development is China's top priority.

To focus on economic growth and improvement of people's livelihood remains the most important task for China at present and in the decades to come. It is imperative for the military to be subordinated to and in the service of the overall development strategy of the country, and make active but unremunerated contribution to national economy.

China's 12 Western provinces and regions remain relatively underdeveloped in terms of economy and social development. In 2000, the Chinese government launched a strategy of Western development. Ever since then, the Chinese military has contributed over 3.7 million troops to over 1,200 national and provincial key projects, including the Three Gorges project, transmission of natural gas from the West to the East, transmission of electricity from the West to the East and the Qinghai-Tibet railway construction.

A large part of Western China is barren mountains or mere deserts. For the improvement of the ecological environment, the Chinese military has helped plant over 1.2 million hectares of trees with an additional 700,000 hectares of trees planted by aerial seeding. Some regions in Western China is in such shortage of water that getting water is awfully difficult for local people. Some villages are even named as water-calling. We have several water-supply engineering units that are routinely tasked with finding water and drilling wells for local population. Over 1,000 wells have been drilled, each of which was met with cheers from local people.

Also in Western China, many children could not go to school because of poverty. The PLA has so far donated over 1.1 billion RMB yuan, built over 1,500 schools and sponsored 200,000 poor students in an effort to support education in Western China. We have also offered intellectual, technological and hardware assistance to more than 500 county or township hospitals in the region.

As a responsible developing country, China, as always, regards it as an important mission to safeguard world peace and promote common development. Since 1990, Chinese military has sent more than 13,000 military personnel to participate in 18 U.N. peacekeeping operations, leading amongst the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. At present, we have about 2,000 peacekeeping personnel serving in nine U.N. mission areas. Each of our men gives their lives in those peacekeeping operations.

The Chinese military has, on 18 occasions, sent rescue teams to participate in international humanitarian rescue and relief missions – during and after the Indian Ocean tsunami, the earthquake in Pakistan, the Yogyakarta earthquake in Indonesia, and the violent tropical storm in Myanmar, et cetera. China also engages in naval escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia.

The Chinese military's commitment to upgrading capabilities for accomplishing multiple military tasks, particularly for fulfilling the demanding obligations when a nation and people are in peril, is fundamentally necessitated by the interests of the nation and the people. Our military is a people's force, whose fundamental goal is serving the people wholeheartedly. It is because of this value that Chinese men and women in uniform always prioritize interests of the country

and people over anything else. Any call by the country and people entails incumbent responsibilities of the military.

Meanwhile, the fulfillment of multiple military tasks wins increasing commendation and appreciation of the people, thus enhancing the PLA men and women's sense of duty and honor. In Guangzhou, capital of China's Guangdong province, local residents voluntarily sponsored a statue entitled "Nine Days and Nine Nights," which was based on a photo about our participation in relief missions in a snow and sleet disaster last year. Four soldiers fell asleep against street rails due to extreme fatigue after days of continuous work. On the base of the statue, two lines are engraved: "While awake, they are walls that protect our lives; while asleep, they are mountains that strike our hearts."

Ladies and gentlemen, this year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. We just concluded a series of celebrations including a military parade. Gen.ly speaking, it was well-received in international public opinion. However, I also noticed some suspicions and misunderstanding in the press. Some reports were not objective enough.

Although remarkable progress has been made since reform and opening up, there is still a huge gap between China and the developed world. We are now predominantly committed to peaceful development and we will not or could not challenge or threaten any other country. The Chinese nation values peace. The central philosophy in traditional Chinese culture is harmony and peaceful coexistence, advocating harmony without uniformity and accommodating diversities. We believe that we should prudently handle current and future international affairs with a way of thinking that seeks accommodation instead of confrontation and win-win instead of zero-sum games.

The essence of the traditional Chinese military culture is prudence in war, termination of war and war in virtue. As early as 600 years ago, China owned the world's largest oceangoing fleet, commanded by Adm. Zheng He. Though he led seven voyages to the Indian Ocean, no territorial expansions were ever sought. His credentials read, "No difference shall be made among everything underneath the heaven and above the earth; there shall be no bullying by the numerically and physically stronger against the weaker."

This is a good testament to China's traditional perception in foreign affairs that emphasizes peace and harmony among neighbors and partners. Today, China's defense policy remains defensive. Strategically, it adheres to the principles of featuring defensive operations – self-defensive – and striking and getting the better of the enemy only after the enemy has started an attack.

I also need to point out that China is yet to be completely reunited while secessionist schemes of Taiwan independence, East Turkestan independence and Tibet independence forces are still underway. China has a vast territory and long border and coastal lines. Uncertainties are also found in its peripheral regions.

China's defense and military development starts from a fairly poor foundation. We are only making early steps in informatization of the force, while our plan for mechanization is yet to be accomplished. Our input in defense building and development of armaments, including those displayed in the national day military parade, is merely for meeting the minimum requirement of national security.

Here, I would like to quote from the solemn statement of President Hu Jintao in his address on the 60th national day celebration: "We will unswervingly maintain an independent foreign policy of peace. We will follow a path of peaceful development. We will seek a strategy of opening up and win-win cooperation based on the five cardinal principles of peaceful coexistence. We will develop friendly relations and cooperation with all nations. We will join hands with people from all over the world in pushing forward the lofty cause of making the world more peaceful and progressive, and building a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity."

This reaffirms the unequivocal position and sincere aspiration of the Chinese government now and in the future. No matter how modern and developed China would be, we will never seek hegemony, military expansion or arms race. The Chinese military will continue with its military strategy of active defense, earnest observation of relevant international obligations and engagement in exchanges and cooperation with foreign militaries. The Chinese military will always be a staunch force for preserving world peace and promoting common development.

Ladies and gentlemen, since the beginning of the new century, profound and complex changes have been taking place in the international landscape. Although peace and development remain the themes of the time, global challenges are growing. Local wars and armed conflicts remain common, and hotspot issues keep cropping up. The situation in nuclear proliferation is complicated and grave. International terrorism remains rampant. The financial crisis has far-reaching consequences.

Issues such as energy security, information security, public health security, natural disasters, climate change, and cross-border crimes are increasingly prominent. Instabilities and uncertainties in the international situation pose severe challenges to world peace and development. Common interests and interdependence are growing, and the call for cooperation in joint response to challenges is ever more urgent.

Last month, in the general debate of U.N. Gen. Assembly, President Hu Jintao delivered a speech entitled, "Unite as One and Work for Brighter Future," which expounded our proposals for building a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity. The new security concept of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination was reiterated.

It was suggested that the international community should join hands in sharing opportunities for development and making concerted response to various challenges. This is based on the scientific conclusions on the changes in world strategic configuration and in relations among major powers. The Chinese people and the military stand ready to work with other countries and militaries in making due contribution to the lofty cause of peace and development for mankind.

Both China and the United States have significant influence in the world. We have shared interests in various areas and in major global and regional issues. The China-U.S. relationship is one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world. Exchanges and cooperation between China and the United States are important for world peace and development, as well as for the fundamental interests of the two nations.

We are heartened to see that, with concerted efforts since President Obama took office, China-U.S. relations have achieved a smooth transition and maintained a positive momentum of development. President Hu and President Obama reached important consensus on building a positive, cooperative and comprehensive bilateral relationship for the 21st century in their meeting in London in April this year. The two heads of states met again in September, and reaffirmed the orientation of this relationship. It marks the beginning of a new stage of development in China-U.S. relations.

The military-to-military relationship constitutes an important part of the overall bilateral relations. It is important not only to strategic trust and comprehensive and practical cooperation between our two countries, but also to regional stability and world peace. The Chinese military is positive towards developing mil-to-mil relations with the U.S. military. We will not forget that over 60 years ago for a just cause of mankind, China and the United States fought shoulder-to-shoulder against fascist forces.

Here, I want to draw your attention to military archive cooperation between our two nations. Archivist Dui Chen (ph) of the PLA archives, while suffering from cancer, has been working tirelessly even after retirement, searching through tens of thousands of archives for clues of U.S. MIA personnel. He has found a large amount of valuable information.

The photo and ID of U.S. Air Force Captain Gilbert Tenney that I bring with me were discovered by Dui Chen and his colleagues through strenuous work. His dedication is a testimony to the great value that the Chinese military personnel place on China-U.S. mil-to-mil relations.

The Chinese military's execution of multiple military tasks provides a broader space for Chinese-U.S. military exchanges and cooperation. We will continue to make unremitting efforts in invigorating mil-to-mil relations on the principles of mutual respect, mutual trust, reciprocity and mutual benefit.

Ladies and gentlemen, I visited Mount Vernon yesterday. It is said that, among the – (inaudible) – trees there, some were planted by President George Washington himself. Before I conclude my speech, I join you in thinking about the future of our bilateral relations. And I'd like to quote President George Washington.

“True friendship is a plant of slow growth and must undergo and withstand the shocks of adversity before it is entitled to the appellation.” I believe that the friendship between Chinese and American people and cooperation between our militaries might have to withstand some shocks of adversity, but it is our concerted care for its growth that calls for our dedication.

You are all accomplished experts in strategic studies. I invite you to visit my country to gain a deeper understanding of the country and the military. I expect your wisdom, sensibility and influence would enable you to render continuous contribution to the state-to-state and mil-to-mil relations between China and the United States. That concludes my speech. Thank you for your attention. (Applause.)

MR. HAMRE: We're going to show this brief video at this stage.

(Begin video clip, music.)

NARRATOR: An earthquake measuring 8 on the Richter scale struck Sichuan province, China, at 14:28, May 12, 2008. The earthquake jolted over 440,000 square kilometers, with its strong seismic wave felt in half of Asia. After the earthquake, the central committee of the Communist Party of China Central Military Commission and Chinese President Hu Jintao made an immediate decision to deploy PLA forces for quick rescue and relief operations.

Thirteen minutes after the quake, the PLA emergency management mechanism was activated. One hour after the earthquake, 16,000 troops were dispatched for rescue operations. Within 72 hours, 146,000 troops from the army, navy and air forces and the armed police force were instructed to march towards the epicenter area, day and night, from various directions.

More than 10,000 square kilometers of buildings were destroyed in the epicenter, Beichuan county; the most severely damaged one was squeezed and buried from rocks rolling from mountains on both sides of the county. Many new hills were formed, and underneath were numerous buried victims.

MR. : (In Chinese.)

NARRATOR: Despite numerous aftershocks, collapsed bridges and blocked roads, the PLA forces did whatever they could to enter the quaint areas. An armored regiment, led by its divisional commander, Wan Kai (sp), was the first unit to reach Beichuan, one of the worst-affected disaster areas.

MR. : (In Chinese.)

NARRATOR: The soldiers, who arrived on foot, tried their best to rescue injured people right away. Severe aftershocks threatened the lives of those officers and men at any time. Rescue work was extremely difficult, with complicated and changing terrains. Regardless of possible landslides caused by aftershocks, the soldiers were relocating the injured to the top of the hills, a safer place.

Communications with Maoxian county, merely 100 kilometers from Beichuan county, were disrupted. Forty-eight hours after the earthquake, there was still no information about Maoxian. Even airdrops of supplies were difficult, with no specific locations identified. Fifteen paratroopers made petitions for the mission in Maoxian, leaving their death wills behind them.

They flew over Maoxian amid extremely unfavorable weather conditions and jumped out of the frozen cabin door from a height of 5,000 meters. They assembled in 20 minutes and then quickly guided landing and airdrops in the county town and surrounding villages. Around 100,000 wounded and affected people were saved from potential dangers. At the most critical moment of disaster relief operations, President Hu Jintao visited the disaster areas of Sichuan.

Saving lives first was the priority of the Chinese government at that moment. It was also the number-one order issued by the central military commission to the deployed troops. Premier Wen Jiabao established his earthquake relief command post right in the disaster area. Central military commission vice chairman, Gen. Guo Boxiong and Gen. Xu Caihou were also there inspecting and supervising the rescue operations.

Officers and soldiers swore that no life would be abandoned, and leaving no one behind became their motto. An artillery regiment – (inaudible) – continuous aftershocks and rolling stones. The rescue operations were extended to more remote areas. The troops checked each village and each family. They never gave up.

MR. : (In Chinese.)

MR. : (In Chinese.)

MR. : (In Chinese.)

MS. : (In Chinese.)

MR. : (In Chinese.)

MR. : (In Chinese.)

NARRATOR: The buried girl is 11-year-old Li Yue. Soldiers did whatever they could, but failed. They were so worried about her leg, since they'd learned that this little girl also loved ballet.

MR. : (In Chinese.)

NARRATOR: All the rescuers wanted was to keep her leg intact. They knew her lifelong dream was attached to it.

MR. : (In Chinese.)

NARRATOR: There's no more time. The rescuers made the hardest decision: surgical operation on the spot. The amputation only lasted 10 minutes. Li Yue, buried for over 70 hours in the ruins, was rescued. So were five other children underneath her. (Pause.) The natural disaster cost thousands of lives. At the same time, it also heightened the great strength and resilience among the people who were fighting against it. The fight continued.

Yingxiu town was the epicenter of the earthquake. A large number of injured and affected people from surrounding villages gathered here. Shortages of food and medicine made the situation extremely urgent. Arriving vanguard units first opened up a piece of flat ground so that helicopters could fly in. Then more and more rescuers arrived. The search for lives was extended to the remote villages.

Yingxiu became the center of the rescue with its air-links to surrounding villages. One of the army aviation regiments, with an average of 21 sorties a day, transported large quantities of relief materials into, and thousands of wounded out of, the disaster region. (Pause.) Rescue operations were still underway. As long as there was any sign of life, the soldiers would never give up. The rescuers found Yu Jinhua (sp) and Ma Guanjiang (sp) still alive under the ruins of the Yingxiu power station.

They were working on shifts in order to pull them out, however they were so deeply buried by collapsed beams, and no breakthroughs were made. Then came May 18th, a critical day. At 20:10, May 18, Yu Jinhua was successfully rescued after having been buried for 150 hours. So far, the rescuers had worked for 56 hours. Nevertheless, without any break, they began to rescue the other survivor. Two days later, 31-year-old Ma Guanjiang was rescued after having been buried for 178 hours and 22 minutes – a true miracle of life.

Nearly 300 PLA medical and quarantine teams were also working tirelessly in the disaster area. The surgical cubes they'd used greatly improved medical conditions and medical support was being provided faster and faster. The state council announced May 19-21, 2008, as national mourning days for those who died in the Wenchuan earthquake. (Pause.) Officers and soldiers were mourning for the children who'd perished in the ruins of the Beichuan middle school.

Continuous and strenuous work could have worn everyone out without such a strong resolve to save one more life. Wu Wenben (sp), a probationary NCO, suddenly fell and never stood up again after his 35 days and nights of rescue operations. When local people learned he'd died from pulmonary vascular rupture resulting from extreme fatigue, they gathered from everywhere to bid him farewell. They said, "his death is like a quake to our souls."

During its 64th mission, helicopter number 734, piloted by Ju Guanghua (ph) of army aviation regiment encountered strong fog and heavy current on its way from Leshan to Yingxiu. Its contact was lost forever. No information was obtained, despite continuous searches by aircraft and ground personnel. On June 10th, the wreckage of the helicopter was finally found in the mountains 7.5 kilometers from Yingxiu to Leshan county. All crew members had died. Their lives were sacrificed so others could live.

The earthquake caused landslides and created 35 quake lakes. The Tangjiashan quake lake was the largest. Once it broke, the whole greater Mianyang area, with over a million people, would be in danger. PLA army aviation units played a critical role in transporting armed police troops, specialists and machines uphill. Then armed police units spared no time and effort in digging out a diversion channel.

Nearly 10 tons of explosives were carried on foot by armed police units. At 7:08, June 7th, the water of Tangjiashan quake lake was successfully diverted downhill. One million residents of Mianyang were safe and sound. The success of Tangjiashan signified victory of the rescue operations. The heroic deeds of the PLA and armed police forces left a deep impression in people's hearts and minds. The international community was also extending helping hands. The first batch of American relief goods was transported to the disaster area by United States Pacific Command.

There has been so much to ponder for both the victims and the participants of rescue operations. This is Li Yue. Rescued from the rubble, she still has her ballet dreams. Her beautiful dance is a testimony to her remarkable strength. It is also the best reward for the PLA officers and soldiers who saved her life.

(End video clip.)

MR. FREEMAN: Thanks, everybody. What we're going to do now, if we can, is I'm going to ask the audience for three or four questions. And we'll ask those in a row and then I'll allow Gen. Xu to answer. So if I could – if there are questions, please raise your hand, identify yourself, and we've got mikes, I believe, that will come to you. Eric, we'll start with you.

Q: Gen. Xu, I'm Eric McVadon in the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis. I'm a retired Navy officer. You mentioned both disaster relief and military-to-military relations. I wonder if you would agree that we need more cooperation between our navies in disaster relief and that we, maybe, should begin some exercises so we get better at it together and for the next disaster, the U.S. Navy and the PLA Navy can respond as a team.

MR. FREEMAN: Gen. Xu, I'm going to ask four different questions first and then allow you to respond.

Q: Gen., Tony Capaccio with Bloomberg News. Many analysts in the United States, reviewing China's weapons, are wondering why China is developing anti-ship cruise missiles and anti-ship ballistic missiles to use against the United States Navy if, in fact, your goal is cooperation with the United States Navy.

Q: Gen. Xu, I'm Lincoln Bloomfield. I am a former government official in the Department of Defense and then the Department of State. My question, sir, has to do with the U.S. military, which is now cooperating much more closely with the non-defense agencies and working as one team. My experience, sir, is that the State Department is in charge of arms transfers and weapons sales and in charge of subjects such as controlling landmines, controlling small arms and light weapons, controlling shoulder-fired missiles.

And yet, when the State Department is visiting Beijing, the PLA is not allowed to speak to them directly. The response always comes from the foreign ministry, which is a very excellent group. Is it possible to have an open conversation where the PLA will speak directly to the other parts of the U.S. government? Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: And the final question back there.

Q: Gen., my name is Tom Sanderson. I work in terrorism here at CSIS and you raised the topic quite often in your discussion. As you know, al-Qaida considers the United States “the far enemy” and targets us, in part because of our policies and presence in the Middle East and our relationship with traditional Muslim and Arab countries.

Much of that’s centered around resource issues – oil and gas. China has obviously been increasing sharply its relationship with these same countries. In that context, and given what’s going on in Xinjiang and the recent statements by al-Qaida, do you feel that China is ascending to the level of a “far enemy” along the lines of the United States?

TRANSLATOR: Sorry, the last – excuse me – the question part?

MR. FREEMAN: Do you believe that China is becoming a far enemy to al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, as the United States is?

TRANSLATOR: Thank you.

GEN. XU: It’s a pleasure to answer your questions. First, I’ll address the question related to China-U.S. mil-to-mil cooperation. Gen.ly speaking, China-U.S. mil-to-mil exchange and cooperation is moving in a positive direction. In their meeting in London in April, our two heads of state also reached agreement, or common understanding, on further promoting and improving our relations in the defense and military field under the changed situation. And that will certainly include exchange and cooperation between the two navies.

And the fact is that the two navies have made quite some progress in cooperation in this regard. For instance, the two navies have conducted joint maritime search and rescue exercises on several occasions. In addition, in our respective nations’ counter-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia, the two taskforces also have contacts and exchanges.

This year also marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PLA Navy. A number of navy leaders and naval ships around the world have been invited to celebrations on that occasion. During that celebrations, we put forward the concept, the idea, of building a harmonious ocean. To achieve that purpose, however, close cooperation among all nations is called upon.

Related to this, however, I want to be very frank with you and refer to the recent incident that happened between our two navies in China’s exclusive economic zones. That was caused by the intensive reconnaissance missions conducted by U.S. naval ships in China’s EEZ, which infringed upon Chinese interests.

We are – it is encouraging to see that both sides have recognized that we should not allow such incidents to damage our state-to-state and mil-to-mil relations. One testament to that is the recent round of MMCA between our two navies held earlier in Beijing this year. Neither of us

want to see this happen again, so I believe that the two navies should continue our consultation and discussion in maritime military security in a spirit of friendship and mutual understanding.

Now I want to address the question related to suspicions about China's research and development of weapons and equipment. I want to make clear that the limited weapons and equipment of China is entirely to meet the minimum requirement for maintaining national security. The research and development of weapons and equipment, including that of our cruise missiles and ballistic missiles, some of which were on display on our National Day military parade, is entirely for self-defense.

In my meetings with my foreign friends, both within China and on my overseas tours, I've heard similar suspicions or misgivings about China's effort in developing advanced weapons and equipment, so I want to add, here, that given the vast area of China, the severity of the challenges facing us and the heavy responsibility on the part of the PLA to guarantee national security, territorial integrity, it is – the limited capabilities and limited weapons and equipment is merely for the minimum requirement of national security. As you also know, China has yet to realize complete unification.

So I believe it is simply necessary for the PLA to have an appropriate level of modernity in terms of our weapons and equipment. Another reason is that in recent years, with the increase in China's overall national strength, we have moderately increased our national defense expenditure. But either in absolute amount and in terms of the share of the defense expenditure in the GDP, China's defense military spending is quite low.

Let me give you some figures. In the U.S. defense expenditure in 2008 was \$68.3 billion; that of China was \$6.12 billion, representing 8.8 percent of the U.S. defense expenditure. In terms of the share in the GDP, China has a defense expenditure that is 1.4 percent of the GDP, compared to 4.8 percent in the case of the United States. So again, the limited input of China in developing equipment and weapons is not intended to threaten any other country, certainly not the United States.

As to the third question, honestly, I do not have – I don't have much information about this. In terms of control of light weapons and small weapons, I can tell you in principle that the People's Liberation Army is not engaged in issues related to arms trade. Departments under China's state council is responsible for protection of defense equipment, and some companies affiliated to it are engaged in trade in this area. So I hope you will understand that there was no direct contact between the PLA and the State Department delegation because the PLA does not engage in work in this area, because it is China's ministry of foreign affairs who is in charge of arms control.

As to the last question, I fully agree with you that terrorism has become a common menace to countries around the world, and in this connection, China is ready to cooperate with the United States in counterterrorism. In my speech, I did mention that China also suffers from terrorism. One of the latest examples was during and around the Olympics last year. Four terrorist attacks inflicted heavy losses, both in people's lives and property, on China.

One other fact is that terrorist groups in China's periphery have colluded with the separatist forces within China and posed a severe threat to China's security and unification. We noted that in the Middle East, and in Afghanistan and Pakistan, there is still a lot to do in counterterrorism. We've also noted the enormous efforts the United States has been making in this region. We are ready to continue our exchange and cooperation with the United States in this regard.

In the meantime, we believe that such efforts should address both the symptoms of terrorism and its root causes. That is to say that while cracking down on terrorist groups, we shall work even harder to help countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan develop their national economies, improve the peoples' livelihood and achieve stability within those countries. And China, again, is ready to make our contribution to that end. Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: Please join me in thanking Gen. Xu and his delegation. (Applause.)

MR. HAMRE: Thank you all very much for coming. We're delighted you're here. Would you please let the general and his company exit, because we need to get to the elevators for the next meeting? Thank you.

(END)