

# How able is the United States to conduct military operations against a serious military power?

One of my on-going themes is the idea that war, real terrible war, hasn't been conducted by the United States for around 70 years. The last "real" war that the United States fought; one that required full mobilization of resources, and placed the very existence of the United States on line, was World War II. Since that date, the government of the United States has become corrupt, slothful and a money-making organism. If not trying to milk the citizens as servant-serfs, it is trying to conduct "for profit" global military operations for other interests as proxies. The time is fast arriving that this model will no longer be sustainable.

The Navy has not been in a war for seventy years. It has sat off various shores and launched aircraft, but the fleet has not been engaged. Over decades of inaction, complacency sets in. Unfortunately, wars regularly turn out to be otherwise than expected. Further, the American military's standard approach to a war is to underestimate the enemy (there is probably a manual on this).

-Russia Insider

There are numerous articles on this point. Here is another most excellent one. Posted here for your viewing pleasure.

The article is titled; "Unused Militaries" written by Fred Reed on September 10, 2019. All credit to the author, and please feel free to visit his site for the very interesting and contrary Comments. Presented here will only minor editing to fit this blog venue.

It appears that Washington, ever a seething cauldron of bright ideas, is looking for a shooting war with China, or perhaps trying to make the Chinese kowtow and back down, the pretext being some rocks in the Pacific in which the United States cannot possibly have a vital national interest. Or, really, any interest. And if the Chinese do not back down?

-Russia Insider

## Unused Militaries

"America exists today to make war. How else do we interpret 19 straight years of war and no end in sight? It's part of who we are. It's part of what the American Empire is. We are going to lie, cheat and steal, as Pompeo is doing right now, as Trump is doing right now, as Esper is doing right now ... and a host of other members of my political party, the Republicans, are doing right now. We are going to lie, cheat and steal to do whatever it is we have to do to continue this war complex. That's the truth of it. And that's the agony of it."

- Retired US Army Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, Colin Powell's chief of staff from 2001 to 2005

For a couple of decades I covered the military for various publications, as for example the *Washington Times* and *Harper's*, and wrote a military column for Universal Press Syndicate. I was following the time-honored principle of sensible reporters:

"Ask not what you can do for journalism, but what journalism can do for you."

The military beat was a great gig, letting you fly in fighter planes and sink in submarines. But if you take the study seriously, as I did, you learn interesting things.

Such as that a war with a real country, such as Russia, China, or even Iran, would be a fool's adventure.

A few points:

## Unused militaries deteriorate

The US fleet has not been in a war since 1945, the air forces since 1975. nor the Army in a hard fight since Vietnam. Bombing defenseless peasants, the chief function of the American military, is not war.

Bombing defenseless peasants is not war.

In extended periods of peace, which includes the bombing of peasants, a military tends to assume that no major war will come during the careers of those now in uniform.

Commanders consequently do what makes their lives easy, what they must do to get through the day and have reasonable fitness reports.

- This does not include pointing out inadequacies of training or equipment.
- Nor does it include recommending large expenditures to remedy deficiencies.
- Nor does it include recommending very expensive mobilization exercises that would divert money from new weapons.

This assures reluctance to question the fleet's effectiveness in the face of changing conditions. Such as high-Mach, stealthed, maneuvering, sea-skimming cruise missiles. Or terminally guided anti-ship ballistic missiles. America is accustomed to fighting enemies who can't fight back. This may not include the Chinese.

There is also the fact that the American military simply doesn't matter, which reduces concern with whether it can fight and who it can fight. It doesn't defend the US, since there is nothing to defend it against. (What country has the remotest possibility of invading America?) So the military is used for what are essentially hobbyist wars, keeping Israel happy, providing markets for the arms companies, and for social engineering: we have girl crews who would be a disaster at damage control, but we assume that there will never be any damage to control.

-Russia Insider

Thus an armored command has enough replacement tracks for training, but not enough for tanks in hard use in extended combat.

When the crunch comes, it turns out that getting more track requires a new contract with the manufacturer, who has shut down the production line.

The same is true for air filters, there not being much sand at Fort Campbell but a lot in Iraq.

Things as mundane as MRATs and boots are not there in real-war quantities.

GAU-8

ammo is in short supply because theory says the F-35 will do tank busting. The Navy runs out of TLAMs early on and discovers that manufacturing cruise missiles takes time. Lots of it.

And

of course some things simply don't work as expected. Military history buffs will remember the Mark XIV torpedo, the Mark VI exploder of WWII, and the travails of the Tinosa.

Come the war, things turn into a goat rope. FUBAR, SNAFU.

## Conscription

The United States cannot fight a large land war, as for example against Russia, China, or Iran.

Such a war would require conscription.

The public would not stand for it.

America no longer enjoys the sort of patriotic unity that it did at the beginning of the war against Vietnam. It will not accept heavy casualties.

People today are far more willing to disobey the federal government.

Note that many states have legalized marijuana in defiance of federal law, that many jurisdictions across the country simply refuse to assist federal immigration enforcement.

Any attempt to send Snowflakes and other delicates to fight would result in widespread civil disobedience.

## The Navy

The existing fleet has never been under fire and does not think it ever will be.

Most of its ships are thin-skinned, unarmored. One hit by an antiship missile would remove them from the war.

Being something of a technophile, I took all of this in with admiration, but I thought—what if it gets hit? As a kid in my preteens I had read about the battleships of WWII, the Carolinas but in particular the Iowa class, fast, brutal ships with sixteen-inch belt armor and turrets that an asteroid would bounce off of. The assumption was that ships were going to get hit. They were built to survive and continue fighting.

By contrast, the Vincennes was thin-skinned, hulled with aluminum instead of steel, and the radar, crucial to combat, looked perilously fragile. A single hit with anything serious, or perhaps even a cal .50,

but certainly by anything resembling a GAU-8, and she would be hors de combat until refitted.

One hit.

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I do not know a great deal about the Chinese Navy, having been out of that loop for years. I do know that the Chinese are smart, and that they have optimized their forces specifically to take out carrier battle groups near their territory. They do not try to match the US ship-for-ship in the kind of war America wants to fight. They would lose fast, and they know it. The key is to swarm the fleet with cruise missiles arriving all at once, accompanied perhaps by large numbers of aircraft. Would this work? I don't know, but that is certainly the way I would bet.

-Russia Insider

This is as true of the Tico-class Aegis ships as of the newer Arleigh Burkes.

An aircraft carrier is a bladder of jet fuel wrapped around high explosives. The implications are considerable.

A plunging hypersonic terminally-guided ballistic missile, piercing the flight deck and exploding in the hangar deck, would require a year in the repair yards.

The Russians and Chinese are developing—have developed—missiles specifically to take out carriers.

Note that the range of some of these missiles is much greater than the combat radius of the carrier's aviation. Oops.



USS Stark, 1987, after being hit by a pair of French Exocet missiles.

The USS Stark, 1987, after being hit by a pair of French Exocet missiles fired by an Iraqi Mirage.





The USS Forrestal in 1967 after a five-inch Zuni land-attack missile was accidentally launched on deck.

### The USS Forrestal

in 1967 after a five-inch Zuni land-attack missile, a pipsqueak rocket, accidentally launched on deck. It hit another fighter. The resulting fire cooked off large bombs. One hundred thirty-four dead, long stay in repair yards.

The Navy is assuming that it cannot be hit.

- The US Navy can be sunk (Russia).

# The Milquetoast Factor

Through Vietnam, America's wars were fought by tough kids, often from rural backgrounds involving familiarity with guns and with hard physical work. I know as I grew up and went to Marine boot with them.

Discipline, if not quite brutal, came close.

Physical demands were high. In AIT—Advanced Infantry Training—at Camp Lejeune, it was “S Company on the road!” at three-thirty a.m., followed by hard running and weapons training until midnight. Yes, oldsters like to remember how it was, but that was how it was.

Today America has a military corrupted by social-justice politics.

Recruits are no longer country boys who could chop cordwood.

Obesity is common.

The Pentagon has lowered physical standards, hidden racial problems, softened training. The officers are afraid of the large numbers of military women who are now in combat positions.

One complaint about sexism and there goes the career.

# Officer Rot

In times of extended peace the officer corps decays.

All second-tour officers are politicians, especially above the level of lieutenant colonel. You don't get promoted by suggesting the the senior ranks are lying for political reasons, as by insisting that the Afghan war is being won.

Peacetime encourages careerists who advance by not making waves. Such Pattons of PowerPoint invariably have to be weeded out, at a high cost in lives, in a big war.

Today's military is not going to fare well in anything resembling equal combat against Afghans, Russians, or Iranians.

The US military has not been able to defeat Afghan villagers in eighteen years with an immense advantage in air power, gunships, armor, artillery, medical care, and PXs. What do you think would happen if they had to fight the Taliban on equal terms—sandals, rifles, RPGs, and not much else?

## Unrealism

The future is the enemy of the present.

What would happen if in a shooting war the Chinese crippled the American fleet? Washington is rampant with large egos, especially that of John McCain, the senator from PTSD. If it were discovered that China could disable the Navy, many other countries might conclude that they could do it too. They most certainly would think of this. Washington could not accept the discovery: Fear of the carriers is a large element in Washington's intimidation of the world. To save face, the US would be tempted to go nuclear, or seriously bomb China proper, with unforeseeable results.

The Air Force and Navy could hurt China badly by conventional means, yes, for example by cutting off oil from the Mideast, or destroying the Three Gorges dam. For a variety of reasons this would be playing with fire. The economic results of any of these bright ideas would be godawful.

-Russia Insider

The military is not ready for a real war now because its focus is always on things down the road.

For example, the Navy cannot now defeat hypersonic antiship missiles but will be able to, it thinks, someday, maybe, world without end, with near--magical lasers still in development.

These will funnel lots of money to Raytheon or Lockheed Martin or somebody whether they work or not. Which isn't important since nobody really believes there will be a serious war.

This is common thinking.

America is in process of acquiring B-21 intercontinental nuclear bombers for a frightening price. These will be useless except in a nuclear war, when they would still be useless because the ICBMs would already have turned targets into glowing rubble when the B-21s got there.



B-21

What the B21 will look like. It has a seat for Robin. The appeal of such things for adult twelve-year-olds is underestimated.

Why build them?

Because Northrop-Grumman has so much money that its lobbyists use snow shovels to fill Congressional pockets.

In my days of covering the Pentagon, whenever a new weapon was bought, the

AH-64 for example, the prime contractor would hand out a list of subcontractors in many states—whose congressmen would support the weapon to get the jobs. It is all about money.

Sometimes Congress forces the military to buy weapons it explicitly says it doesn't want, such as more M1 tanks from the factory in Lima, Ohio. Jobs.

In short, many weapons are bought for economic reasons, not for use in war. In my day, I saw many not-for-use weapons. The B1, B2, DIVAD, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the M16, the V-22, the LAW.

Nothing has changed.

## The Blank Ignorance Factor

The landscape outside of the Five-Sided Wind Tunnel is at least as bleak as that within.

A friend, very much in a position to know, estimates that ninety percent of the Senate does not know where Burma is. Think Hormuz-Malacca-South China Sea.

The likelihood that Trump knows what countries are littoral to the Caspian is zero.

When I covered the military very few in Congress and nobody in the major media knew anything at all about weaponry and it uses: surface duct, deep sound channel, convergence zones, pseudo-random beam steering, APFSDS, staring receivers, chirp coding.

These are the first-grade small talk of people who pay attention.

These do not include minor lawyers-become-Congressmen from East East Jesus, Nebraska. Yet hey vote on military policy.

## The Arrival of the Maintenance Hog

Being in a real war is hard on equipment.

There are battle damage and heavy wear and tear. This doesn't matter in the wars today's military fights.

America cannot really lose, only be worn down and leave.

If the US "loses" in Afghanistan or Syria, it won't matter to Americans and few will even notice. Because America always fights from well-protected bases and airfields, it can afford to use weapons that require a lot of maintenance, often including high-tech work.

In a real war, no.

In

WWII, a fighter plane was just a malformed truck: engine, windshield, tires, motor, stamped metal. If one came back full of holes, repair crews with reasonable training could repair them fast on the hangar deck. It wasn't quite pop rivets and Bondo, but close.

After the Big War, American aircraft almost always flew from relatively safe bases.

For example, in Vietnam the carriers were never in danger. After Vietnam the aerial forces seldom even suffered battle damage. Since the US was always attacking utterly inferior enemies, sortie rates and repair time ceased to matter.

And the military came to expect such luxury.

But

now we have the F-35, the latest do-everything fighter of grotesque cost. It seems to be a real dog, poorly designed and suffering from endless problems. By accounts in the technical press, it is a hangar queen with very low sortie rates, poor readiness, and requiring complex electronic maintenance often at remote echelons.

This isn't how you fight a real war.



# How Wars Turn Out

Typically, not as planned. I've said this before but it is worth repeating.

Look at history:

- The American Civil War was supposed to last a day at First Manassas; wrong by four years and 650,000 dead.
- Napoleon thought his attack on Russia would end with the French in Moscow, not the Russians in Paris—which is what happened.
- WWI was supposed to last weeks and be a war of movement; wrong by four bloody years of trench warfare.
- The Japanese Army did not expect WWII to end with GIs buying their daughters drinks in Tokyo, nor the Germans that it would end with the Russian infantry in Berlin.
- The Americans did not think they would lose in Vietnam, nor the Russians that they would lose in Afghanistan. And so on.

This happens partly because militaries are overconfident as a job requirement.

You can't tell the Marines that they are at best mediocre light infantry or the Navy that it is essentially a target set. Instead the American armed forces are always said to be the best equipped, best trained, bravest, most formidable military that the world has ever seen.

Except they aren't.

Assume that Bolton gets his war against Iran.

Advisers tell him it will be short and sweet, surgical, a cake walk. Have we heard this before?

The Navy says it can keep Hormuz open, grrr, woof. But somehow Iran doesn't follow the script, doesn't surrender.

The Navy to its surprise cannot find the deeply dug-in and truck-borne anti-ship missiles that keep hitting tankers. These keep burning.

Soon nobody will insure them.

They stop coming.

Three weeks into the war the world is screaming for oil, there is no end in sight, Trump can't admit that he has blundered, and Bolton wants to nuke Tehran.

Or Washington pushes too hard in the South China Sea, an accidental collision turns into a shooting incident, and the Pompeo-Boltonian-Bannonites order the fleet to teach the Chinks a lesson.

Unfortunately the Chinese antiship missiles turn out to be rather better than expected, a carrier is disabled and three destroyers rendered scrap.

Now what?

Huge and uninformed egos in Washington could not accept defeat.

For one thing, it would end American credibility as a hegemon, and everybody and his herd of goats would want to buy Chinese antiship missiles.

Vanity plays a larger in world affairs than the textbooks say.

Washington, stupidly but inevitably, would double down and start an all-out war with China. At that point things would become unpredictable.

Washington seems not to realize that it wields far less military power than it thinks it does, and that the power it does wield is ever less useful than before. As a land power, it is very weak, being unable to defeat Russia, China, or peasants armed with rifles and RPGs. Air power has regularly proved indecisive.

If Washington somehow won a naval war with China, so what? It would provide the satisfactions of vanity, but China's danger to the US imperium lies in increasing economic power and commercial expansion through Asia, where it holds the high cards: it is there, Washington isn't.

-Russia Insider

# Nuclear War

Men of incalculable stupidity and likely sexual inadequacy talk about nuclear war as winnable.

Dream on.

Reflect: American cities cannot feed themselves. Three days without food shipments and New Yorkers would clear the supermarket shelves. A week and they would kill for cans of tuna fish. Two weeks and they would be eating each other.

A very few nuclear bombs on transportation hubs would prevent distribution of food for months.

Even fewer cobalt bombs, designed to produce a maximum of lingering radiation, would make the farm belts lethally radioactive for a decade.

"Defense Intellectuals," usually stupid enough that they ought to live in trees, chatter about escalation dominance and the intimidation factor and airtight missile defense.

They are nuts.

What they really need is a codpiece and a subscription to Pornhub Premium.

This is why it is a really, really, bad idea to have a psychopathic cocka-too, two loon Christians, and a pathologically aggressive momma's boy in a position to start a war.



Trump neocon negotiation team takes on China.

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