

CHINA AND THE PAX AMERICANA

Defense Credit Union Council
Bangkok, Thailand

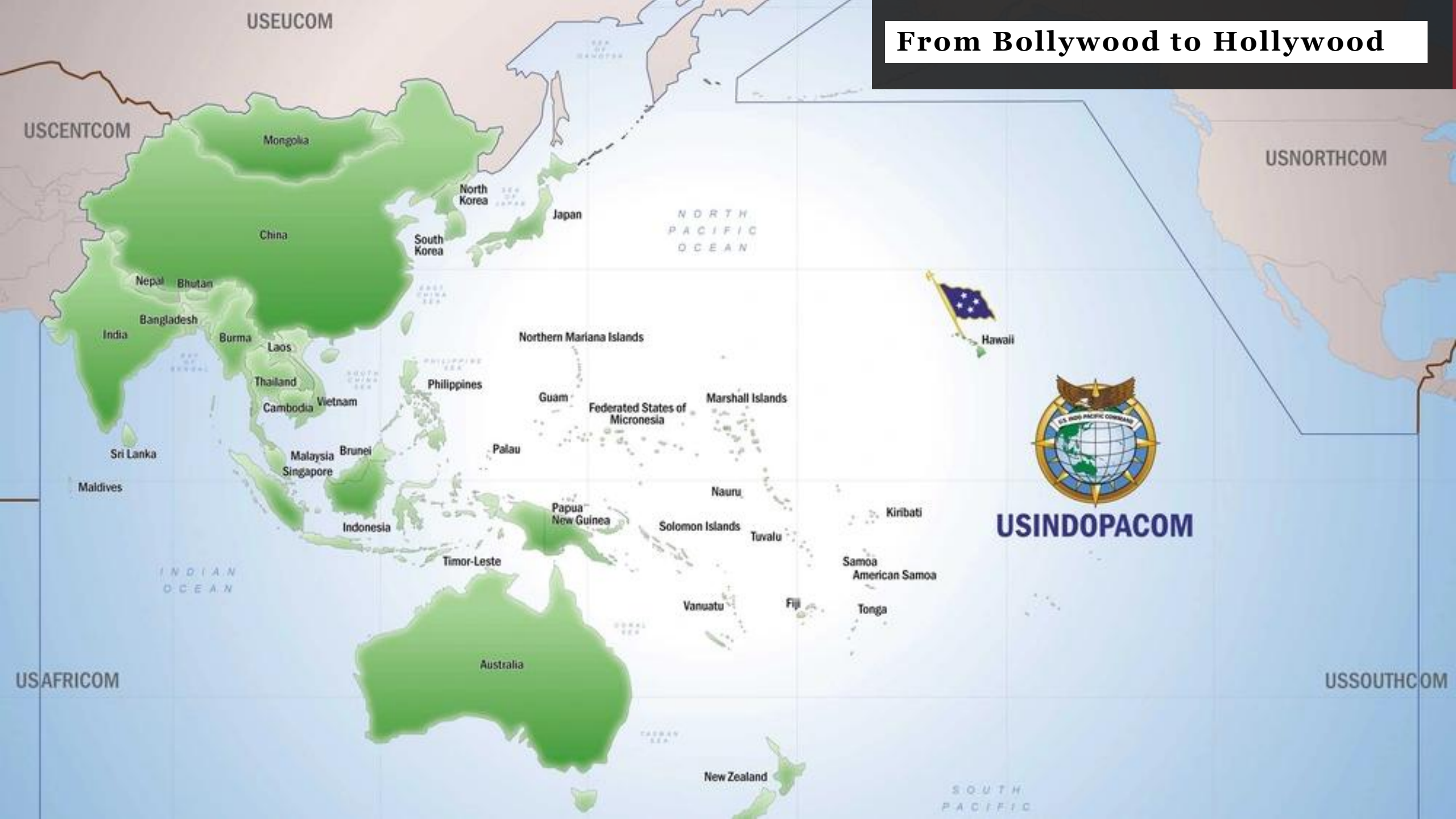
Merrick “Mac” Carey

Chief Executive Officer | Lexington Institute

April 21, 2026



From Bollywood to Hollywood



U.S. Defense Infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific: Background and Issues for Congress

CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

6 June 2023

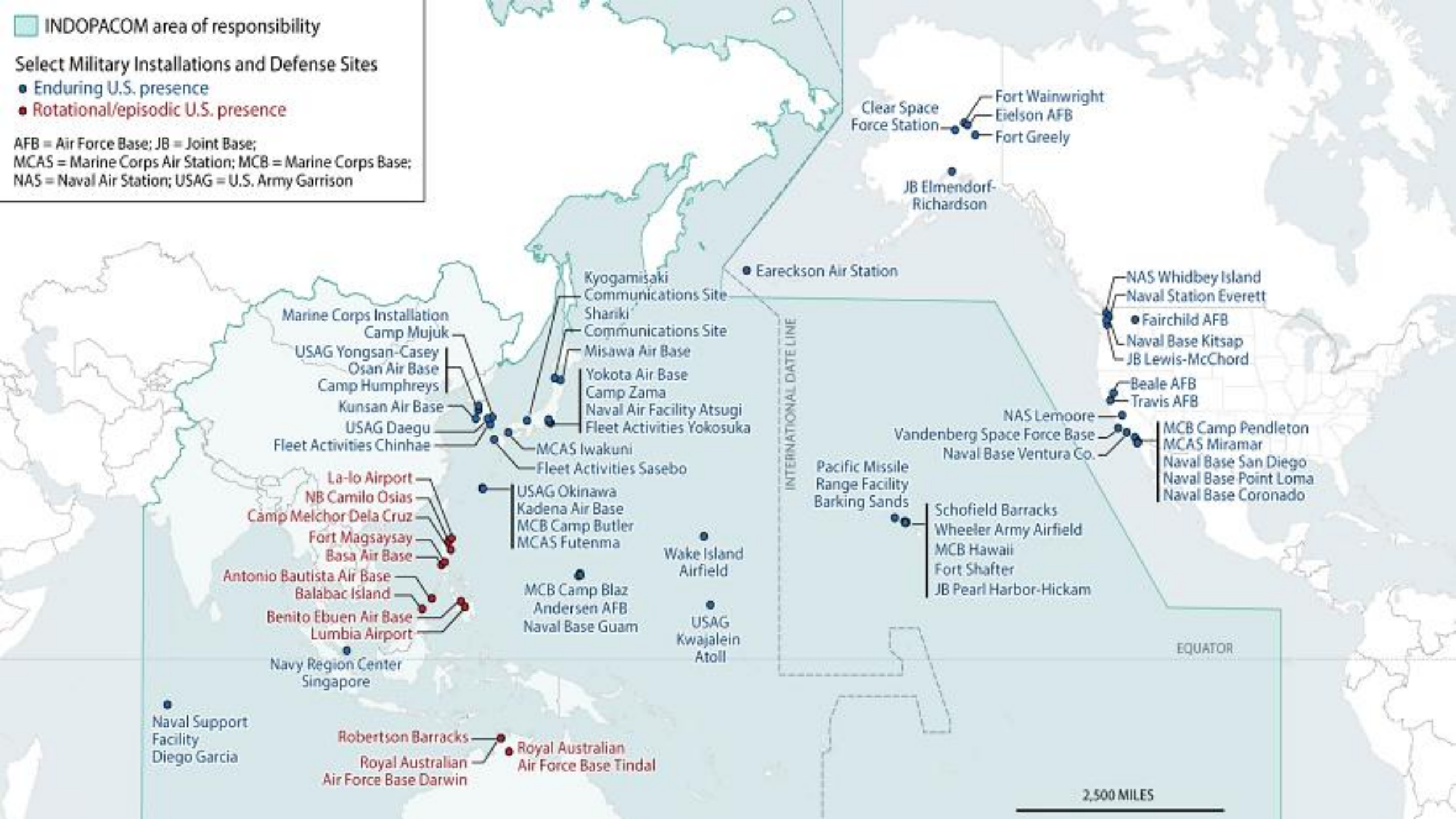
<https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47589>

■ INDOPACOM area of responsibility

Select Military Installations and Defense Sites

- Enduring U.S. presence
- Rotational/episodic U.S. presence

AFB = Air Force Base; JB = Joint Base;
 MCAS = Marine Corps Air Station; MCB = Marine Corps Base;
 NAS = Naval Air Station; USAG = U.S. Army Garrison



2,500 MILES

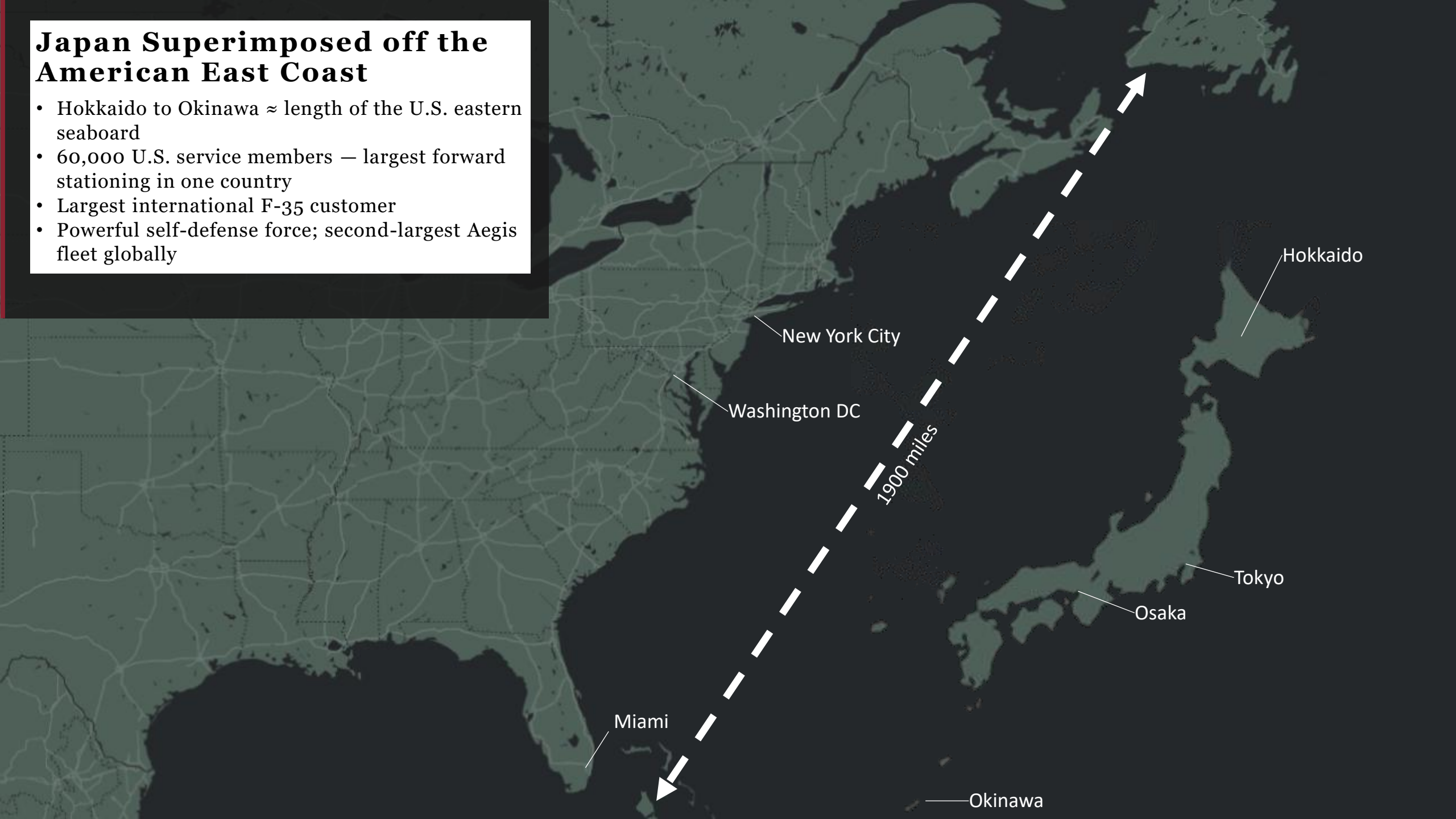
China and the Lower 48

- ~40% of world GDP between U.S. and China
- China has ~65% of U.S. GDP and falling
- U.S. GDP: ~\$30T • China GDP: ~\$20T
- U.S. Pop: ~349M • China Pop: ~1.41B



Japan Superimposed off the American East Coast

- Hokkaido to Okinawa \approx length of the U.S. eastern seaboard
- 60,000 U.S. service members — largest forward stationing in one country
- Largest international F-35 customer
- Powerful self-defense force; second-largest Aegis fleet globally



TAIWAN and MARYLAND

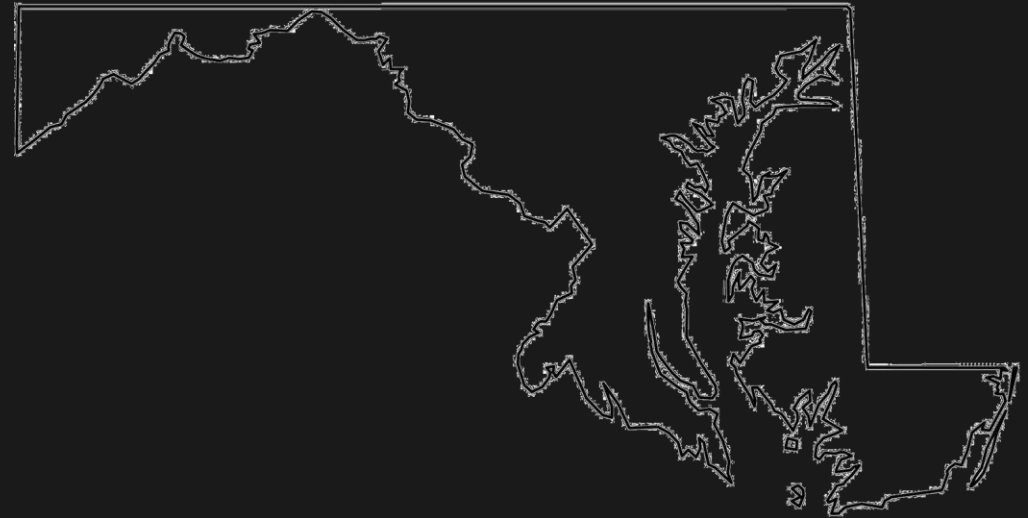
Taiwan (Population 23m)

~250 miles North to South

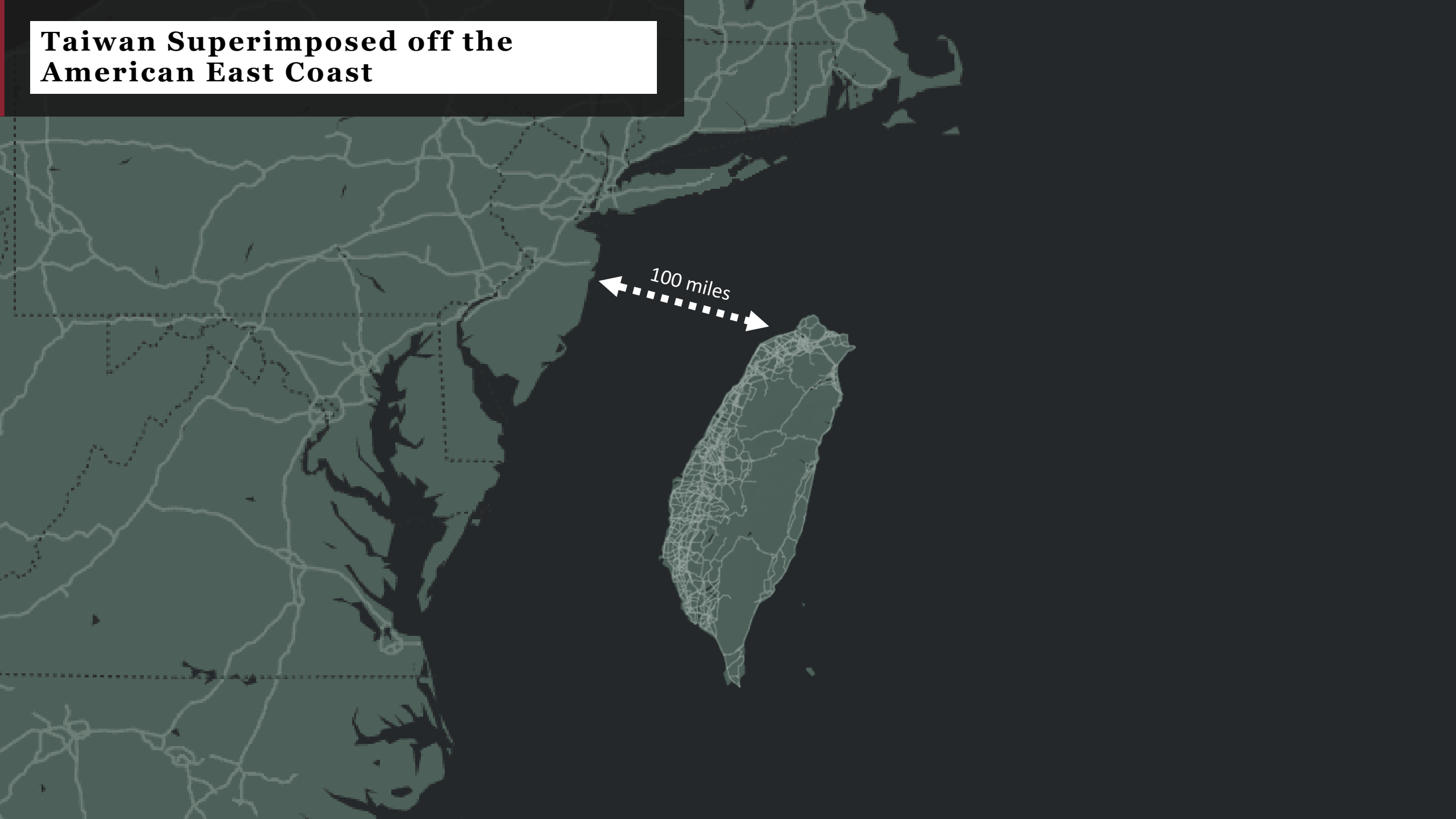


Maryland (Population 6m)

~250 miles East to West



Taiwan Superimposed off the American East Coast



Major U.S. INDOPACOM Installations West of International Date Line

JAPAN (~60,000 total)

- Yokota Air Base (U.S. Forces Japan, 5 AF HQ): 3,000
- Fleet Activities Yokosuka (7th Fleet HQ): 7,000
- Misawa Air Base: 3,000 • Atsugi Naval Air Station: 3,000
- Fleet Activities Sasebo: 2,000
- Kadena Air Base: 20,000 • Camp Butler/
Futenma Marine Corps Air Station: 20,000

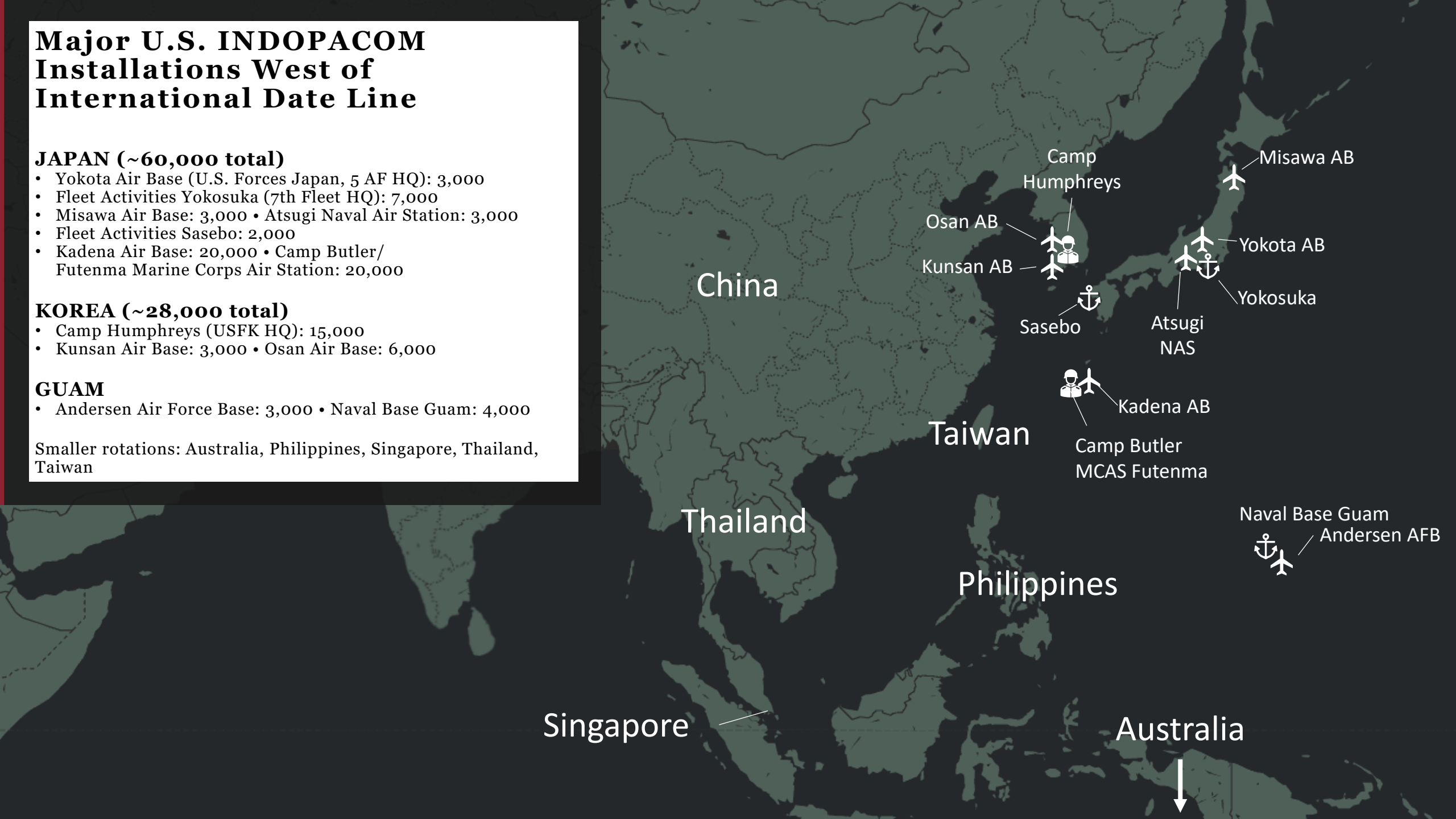
KOREA (~28,000 total)

- Camp Humphreys (USFK HQ): 15,000
- Kunsan Air Base: 3,000 • Osan Air Base: 6,000

GUAM

- Andersen Air Force Base: 3,000 • Naval Base Guam: 4,000

Smaller rotations: Australia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan



China

Camp Humphreys
Osan AB
Kunsan AB
Sasebo
Atsugi NAS
Yokota AB
Yokosuka
Misawa AB

Taiwan

Kadena AB
Camp Butler
MCAS Futenma

Thailand

Philippines

Naval Base Guam
Andersen AFB

Singapore

Australia

5th Generation Fighter Comparison

UNITED STATES and Allies vs CHINA



USAF F-35

Inventory: ~600 (U.S.) 72 (Australia)
~50 (Japan) ~40 (Korea) | 5th Generation



PLAAF J-20

Inventory: ~300 | 5th Generation

PLAAF has gone from obsolete 3rd-gen fighters in the 1990s to the 2nd most powerful air force in the world
Both U.S. and Chinese 5th-gen fighters are stealthy and highly advanced

Guided Missile Destroyer Comparison

UNITED STATES vs CHINA



USN Arleigh Burke

~75 active | 9,700 tons | 96 VLS cells



PLAN Type 052D

~35 active | 7,500 tons | 64 VLS cells

China has gone from essentially no modern combatants in the 1990s to nearly 50 major guided missile surface ships comparable to U.S. Arleigh Burke-class destroyers

The First Island Chain

- Network of nations running north to south along the entire Chinese coast
- 100 to 500 miles offshore — boxes China in
- **North:** Japan (700mi East China Sea border)
- **Center:** Taiwan (Taiwan Strait)
- **South:** Philippines (1,100mi South China Sea border)



Japan / East China Sea

- Southern Japan envelops Shanghai sea lanes
- Half of Chinese economic activity occurs along the Yangtze River
- China's economy heavily dependent on foreign oil imports
- A loaded gun pointed at the heart of the Chinese economy



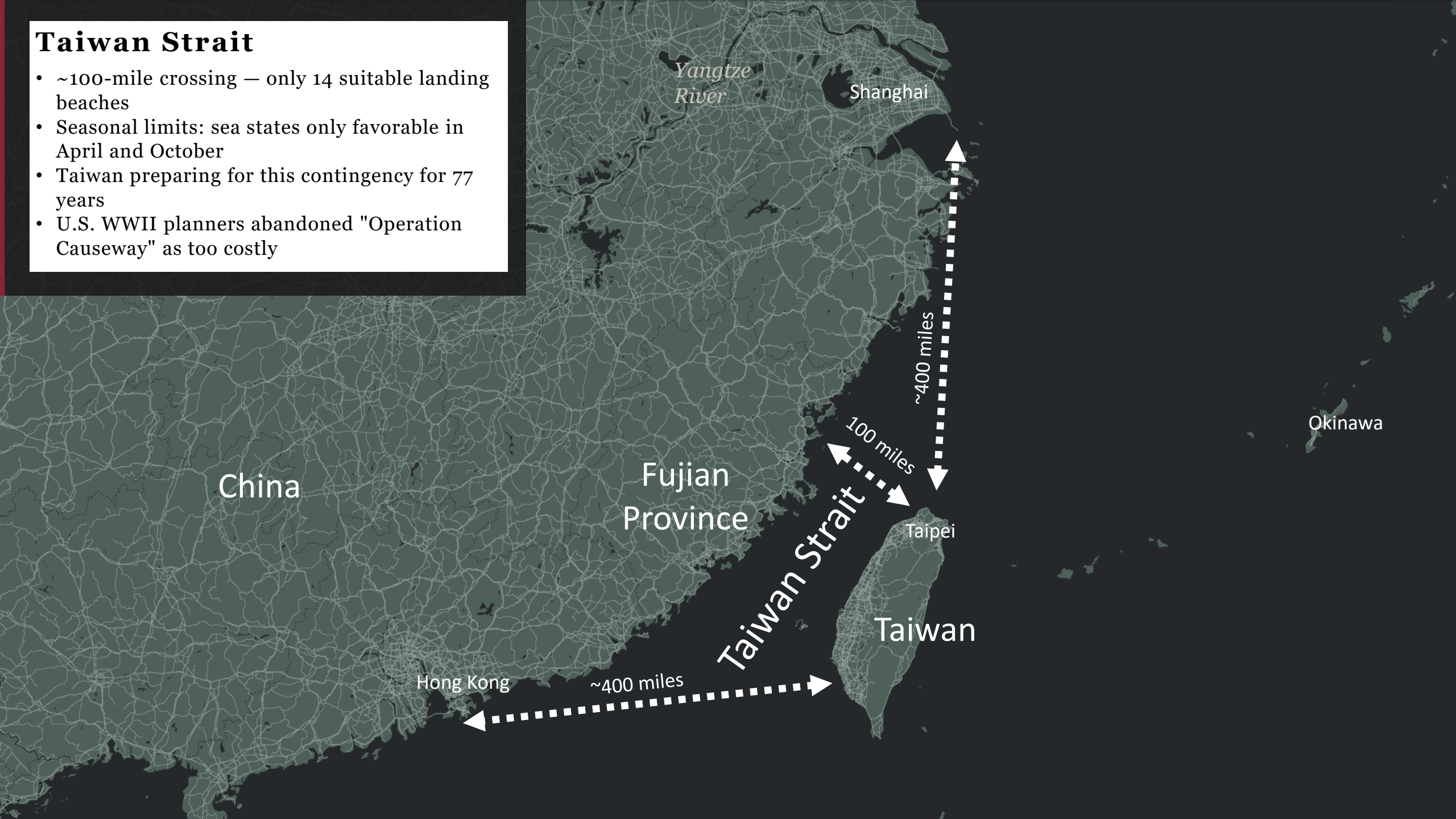
Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC)

- Displacement: ~300,000 deadweight tons
- Capacity: ~2 million barrels of crude oil
- Length: ~1,100 ft
- China imports ~12 million barrels/day



Taiwan Strait

- ~100-mile crossing — only 14 suitable landing beaches
- Seasonal limits: sea states only favorable in April and October
- Taiwan preparing for this contingency for 77 years
- U.S. WWII planners abandoned "Operation Causeway" as too costly



Yangtze River

Shanghai

China

Fujian Province

Taipei

Taiwan

Okinawa

~400 miles

100 miles

~400 miles

Taiwan Strait

PLA Amphibious Exercise



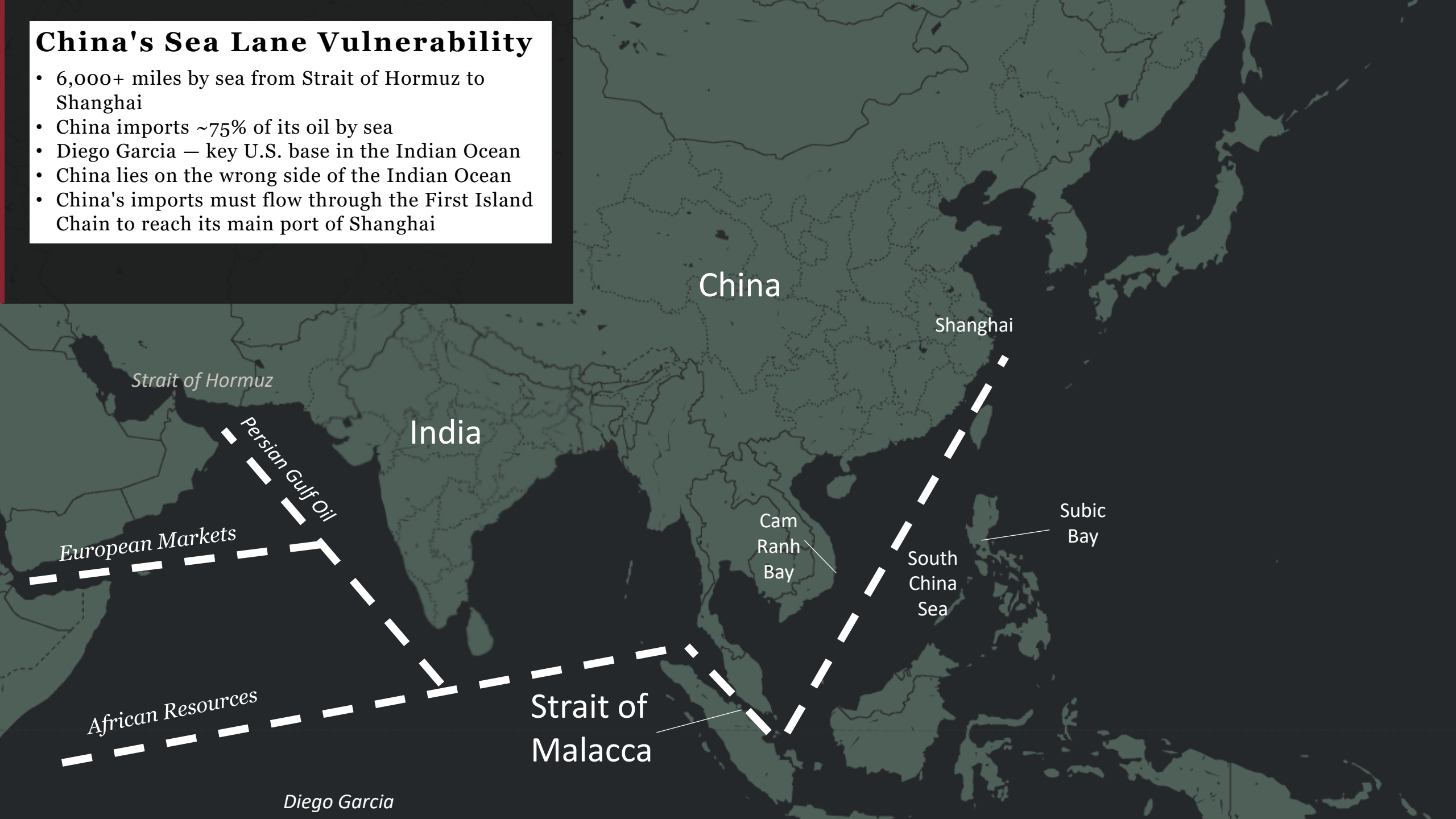
South China Sea

- Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam border this sea
- China has competing territorial claims with all peripheral South China Sea nations
- China building man-made island military bases
- Philippines rivals Japan in geographic significance vis a vis China's sea lanes (1,100mi)
- Blocks China's access to open Pacific waters



China's Sea Lane Vulnerability

- 6,000+ miles by sea from Strait of Hormuz to Shanghai
- China imports ~75% of its oil by sea
- Diego Garcia — key U.S. base in the Indian Ocean
- China lies on the wrong side of the Indian Ocean
- China's imports must flow through the First Island Chain to reach its main port of Shanghai

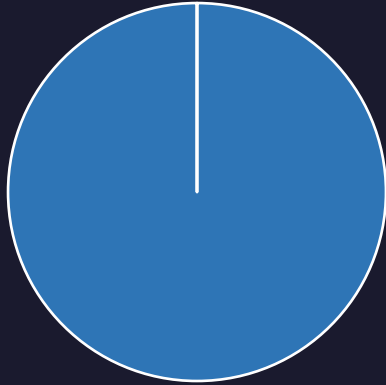


Import Dependence: Oil & Food

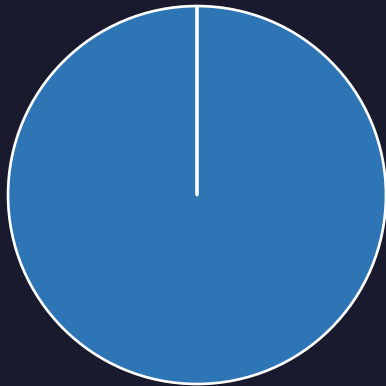
UNITED STATES vs CHINA · NET BASIS

UNITED STATES

Oil Supply
Net Exporter

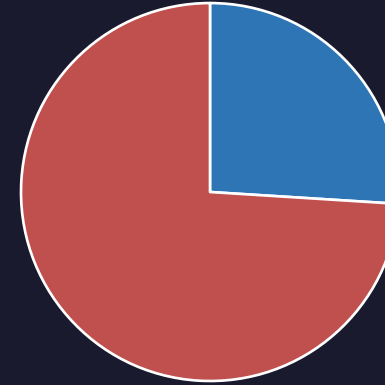


Food Supply
Net Exporter

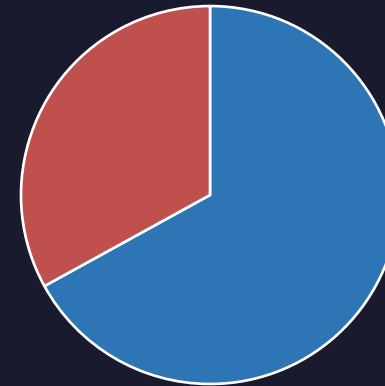


CHINA

Oil Supply
74% Imported



Food Supply
~33% Import Dependence



From Bollywood to Hollywood

