



A Chinese Perspective on U.S. Force Reductions

OE Watch Commentary: On 10 December, the military news section of *sina.com* published the accompanying excerpted Chinese-language article presenting an opinion on the US reduction of forces in Africa. The article makes the point that the US is planning to reduce the total number of its personnel in Africa by 10 percent. However, it suggests this move is only cosmetic, because the US is not intending to reduce the number of operations it carries out. Therefore, the available, but reduced number of US personnel will be responsible for more operations per individual. The article notes the overall purpose of this decision is to allow for greater US military efficiency.

At the same time, the article stated the US is a lone military superpower, but that it has been unable to score military successes, such as in Syria, and that it has military budget concerns, which also drives the reduction of forces in Africa. The article also sees a clash between the White House and the US military. According to the article, the president's decision to raise military spending after initially intending to cut it has led to internal tensions that have reduced the military's prestige.

While the article recognizes the US military has advantages over Russia and China, such as being able to use its own or allied countries' military bases throughout the world, it argues the US has a broader strategy aimed at Russia and China. The author indicates that US officials' confrontational statements about Russia and China are intended to compensate for military shortcomings. It also cites the NATO Trident military exercises in Norway in October and November 2018 as examples of the US seeking to deter Russia. The article reflects a Chinese perspective, whereby China and Russia are rivals of the US military and face similar pressures. The US military's reduction of forces in Africa is evidently also seen in light of such competition. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “美军新司令未上任先大放厥词：下一步就是对抗中俄 (The new U.S. military commander has not taken the lead in big nonsense: the next step is to take on China and Russia),” *mil.news.sina.com.cn*, 10 December 2018. <https://mil.news.sina.com.cn/china/2018-12-10/doc-ihprknvu0363380.shtml>

The U.S. strategic focus has turned to confronting powerful competitors (China and Russia), so special forces still need to exist. Richard Clarke, who was in high spirits, attended a congressional hearing and pointed out that the Special Operations Command must make full use of its various conditions to deal with countries that may pose a threat. If it is possible to develop a strategy that meets U.S. guidelines but can cope with individual threats through its various theater special warfare commands, this will enable the command to confront China and Russia. Clarke also added that U.S. special forces can engage in global warfare through the bases of allies, thus providing the U.S. with a unique military advantage (to fight against China and Russia).

Even if the United States decides to cut about 10% of its African forces, this would be part of the broader strategy of the U.S. military to turn its attention to competitors such as China and Russia. The plan to reduce the total number of non-U.S. troops will not result in a reduction in the total number of U.S. military operations in the local areas. The purpose is to increase the efficiency of the US military operations.

Successive high-ranking U.S. military officials have attacked China and Russia, showing that the U.S. government intends to adopt a more radical military policy to deal with various issues related to China and Russia. The reason for this is that the overall poor performance of the U.S. military forces in recent times has damaged the image of the “lone global superpower”.

Trump has suddenly violated his promise by increasing military spending after at the beginning of the road demanding a large-scale reduction in military spending. This has caused strong dissatisfaction with the military. This kind of “internal conflict” has greatly reduced the prestige of the US military. Therefore, it is necessary for the U.S. military to “save face” by showing “strength” to China and Russia.

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