

# Country Briefing – Joint Task Force (JTF)

## *Political Briefing*

### **Introduction**

In reaction to China's violent seizure of Pratas Island of Taiwan and Minami Kojima of Japan, the states of France, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have formed a joint coalition in response to the aggression.

While geographically distant from East Asia, both France and the United Kingdom hold several concerns in regard to China's annexation of Taiwan, particularly in regard to their commitment with the United States. The relationships these states have with the United States is a strong one held together by years of alliances. Like France and the UK, Australia and New Zealand are also closely allied to the United States and while these states are much closer to China, Australia has staunchly opposed Chinese ambitions and New Zealand has been highly critical of Chinese human rights abuses. Canada is a NATO partner of the US, and while often overlooked maintains forces for the Pacific.

### **National strategy**

Diplomatically Australia is part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (a diplomatic and military alliance between Australia, the US, India, and Japan built to combat Chinese influence and the Belt and Road Initiative). France, the United Kingdom, and Canada also have close ties to the United States via NATO and have also taken part in military drills organized by the QSD.

The convenient location of Australia and New Zealand, as well as France's territories in Polynesia can serve as useful forward operating points, allowing the placement of forces in the region. Diplomatic ties with local powers such as Japan and Korea are also quite good, allowing the potential basing of forces in these states with their permission.

France and the United Kingdom both possess some of the strongest navies in Europe, comprising modern amphibious warfare ships, frigates, destroyers, and submarines allowing the prosecution of naval, terrestrial, and submarine targets. These powers can furthermore count on their carrier groups: the French Navy's nuclear-powered *Charles de Gaulle* and the Royal Navy's *HMS Queen Elizabeth* providing remarkable capabilities of force projection.

While Australia, New Zealand, and Canada do not possess carrier groups, their joint naval capabilities are not to be neglected. Canada's Pacific fleet contains a number of frigates and submarines. The 'Kiwis' operate several patrol vessels and two frigates, constituting a relatively small force. Australia, on the other hand, possesses remarkable naval capabilities for its size: several diesel-powered attack submarines, two helicopter carriers as well as about a dozen destroyers and frigates, allowing both states to conduct anti-aircraft, anti-submarine, and mine warfare missions.

The Joint Task Force's air assets are also quite good, including modern fighter aircraft like France's Dassault Rafale, and with the Australians and UK operating the American made F-35. The contribution of the other states particularly is useful in anti-submarine warfare and maritime patrol: indeed, Canada and New Zealand's P-3 Orion and Australia's P-8 Poseidon aircraft as well as Australia's MH60R Seahawk and MRH-90 helicopters specialize the tracking and the neutralization of surface and submerged targets.

Finally, while the intrinsically naval/amphibious nature of this conflict limits the applicability of most conventional ground forces, some specific units are well-adapted to these environments. The Joint Task Force provides a bevy of elite forces, including France's prestigious *Commandos Marine* or the UK's legendary Special Boat Service, while Australia

and New Zealand also have their own specialized units, the New Zealand SAS and the Special Air Service Regiment, while Canada brings the appropriately named Joint Task Force 2. These units can be used for reconnaissance, sabotage, hostage rescue, pathfinding, or any other number of tasks. France and the UK both maintain larger formations that they can move to the Pacific to provide additional combat power if need be, though air transport capacity is limited.

The multinational nature of this crisis is a complicating factor in the decision-making of the members of this delegation; while this task force brings together allied states, the latter are not compelled to act in a united fashion, as each state remains responsible for the pursuit of its own interests.

### **Strategic Objectives**

In 2013 China added a 10<sup>th</sup> dash to its previous 9 dash line to include the east of Taiwan. This extension allowed increased Chinese military aggression and further worsened the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Soft and hard power measures may be used to influence Chinese actions such as sending troops, conducting military drills, sanctions, and sending back students. In all scenarios it is critical to avoid nuclear threats or nuclear use.

The Joint Task Force therefore must aim to prevent the collapse of Taiwan; economically, politically, but most importantly, militarily. Allowing the passage of tankers into Taiwanese ports by breaking the Chinese Coast Guard blockade around the Taiwanese coast is the immediate priority, subordinate to limiting Chinese naval power and influence on Taiwan. Diplomatically the Joint Task Force must also aim to abolish the “customs inspection zone” and work alongside allies to present a united front to the Chinese to force them to back down.