

INTERPRETING CHINA'S NEW STRATEGIC FORCES: MOTIVATIONS, DOCTRINAL SHIFTS, IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT:

This project is an early but in-depth effort to interpret the major organizational restructuring of the strategic forces of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) announced in late 2015 and put in motion in early 2016. The work focuses on the newly-established "PLA Rocket Force" (PLARF) and the "PLA Strategic Support Force" (PLASSF). Drawing from open-source publications and interviews, including those from Chinese sources, the project examines the strategic rationale motivating the formation of these newly-established elements of the PLA, discerns possible doctrinal shifts related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and weapons of mass effect (WME) which the PLARF and PLASSF may undertake, and assesses the implications of these developments for the United States.

With the development of the PLARF and the PLASSF, China's leaders may be better positioned to impose costs on the U.S. public and private sectors, both in wartime and peacetime. As such, it is an imperative public interest for the United States to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations, doctrines, and implications in connection with the newly-formed PLARF and PLASSF. The findings of this work will inform not only the Department of Defense, but will be useful to the National Security Council, members of Congress and their staffs, the Department of State, the Department of Homeland Security, and other U.S. government agencies, as well as the U.S. private sector.

Research in Progress describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information please contact INSS@usafa.edu.