

Biden Trip, Dempsey Speech Push Against Asia War Danger

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Carl Osgood

Dec. 8—Vice President Joe Biden has just completed a week-long, three-nation visit to Asia. Although the trip to Japan, China, and South Korea had been planned well in advance, the mission took on a higher priority following China's recent announcement of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) covering much of the East China Sea, including islands claimed by both China and Japan. The United States has a direct interest in the situation on the basis of a binding defense treaty with Japan, added to the fact that frequent U.S. Air Force flights between Guam and Okinawa pass over the ADIZ.

While many of the details of Biden's high-level discussions with leaders of all three pivotal Asian countries have not been made public yet, sources in Washington confirm that the Vice President pressed Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to walk back from the harsh rhetoric against the Chinese actions that had characterized the Tokyo response. Japan has maintained its own ADIZ over much of the East China Sea since the 1960s, and Washington frequently took advantage of that during the height of the Cold War to pressure the Soviet Union against incursions into Asian airspace.

During his visit to Beijing, Biden spent more than five hours in discussions with Chinese President Xi Jinping. During their public appearances, neither Biden nor Xi even mentioned the ADIZ issue. In private, according to Washington sources, Biden did raise the issue, and made clear that the United States, while

bound to defense of Japan under longstanding treaty agreements, has no interest in an escalation of crisis in the region. He did *not* demand that China's ADIZ be rescinded.

In fact, Biden delivered a strong message of gratitude for China's role in securing the interim agreement between the P5+1 and Iran. He also conveyed Washington's recognition that China is playing a constructive role in preventing North Korea from staging any provocations. After the North's sinking of a South Korean Naval vessel and artillery attacks on South Korean security positions several years ago, Washington is concerned that the South Korean Armed Forces will respond immediately to any new provocations from the DPRK. Thus, the peninsula remains on a hair-trigger.

Dempsey Speaks Up

The same national security circles in Washington that have been working overtime to prevent an eruption of war in the Persian Gulf and the regional explosion of the war in Syria have thus weighed in to cool out the situation in the Asia-Pacific.

As Biden was completing his two days of dialogue with Xi and other top Chinese leaders, both Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey were working to resolve the ADIZ dispute. During a joint Pentagon press conference last week, both Hagel and Dempsey expressed confidence that the Chinese were not seeking

to provoke a confrontation with the ADIZ announcement. Hagel recommended that China limit the demand for flight data to only those aircraft traveling through the ADIZ or over sovereign Chinese airspace.

On Dec. 5, speaking at a town hall meeting hosted by Facebook, General Dempsey noted that while he doesn't agree with it, he understands why China established the ADIZ. (The United States has had an ADIZ on both the East and West Coasts and around Alaska since at least 1950, and it stems from similar security concerns, in fact.)

"From a realist perspective, nations will act in their interests all the time," Dempsey said. "China is no different. So as the dynamics in the region continue to change (and they are always changing), we must build stronger military-to-military relationships with the PLA. We must seek avenues and mechanisms to avoid miscalculation." Dempsey added that the United States must continue to maintain its strength in the Pacific and to support its allies there. "We've been clear with the Chinese that territorial disputes should not be resolved unilaterally and through coercion," he said. "We all benefit from stability in the Pacific, and I assess that the Chinese are clever enough to realize that."

Dempsey also made the point, as did a Pentagon spokesman separately, that U.S. military operations in the region, generally meaning flights between Okinawa, Japan and Guam, are proceeding as they did before the zone was announced. So far, there have been no further incidents.

In fact, there is a Pentagon handbook on naval law that goes through rules of engagement for Air Defense Identification Zones. Both Hagel and Dempsey noted that even when two U.S. Air Force B-52 bombers flew unarmed through the Chinese ADIZ, there was no interference from the PLA Air Force.

During a press briefing at the Pentagon on Dec. 4, Dempsey also indicated that he will be pursuing further discussions on the matter with his Chinese counterpart.

Japanese Escalate War of Words

The Japanese, in contrast to Biden, Hagel, and Dempsey, continue to hyperventilate about the situation. The lower house of Japan's parliament passed a resolution Dec. 6, demanding that China "immediately remove all measures that limit the freedom of flight over international waters," according to the *Wall Street Journal*. The resolution said the creation of the zone "raised tensions in the East China Sea more than ever

and by extension is a dangerous action that risks threatening the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region."

A day earlier, a diplomatic source told Japan's Kyodo news agency that Tokyo is trying to push through a joint statement for a Japan-ASEAN summit in Tokyo, next week, about their "concern" about any "threat" posed to international civil aviation. The draft of the statement reportedly doesn't name China, but is clearly aimed at the East China Sea ADIZ, and the possibility that China may establish another zone in the South China Sea. It is by no means clear that the ASEAN countries, most of which have close economic ties to China, will actually go along.

Major Powers Cooperation

It is noteworthy that, while Hagel and Dempsey were all over the ADIZ issue, and Secretary of State John Kerry has been managing the Middle East negotiations, President Obama's National Security Advisor Dr. Susan Rice, an acolyte of Tony Blair's anti-nation-state "humanitarian-interventionist" hoax, has been silent and all-but invisible. Her only high-visibility foreign involvement was her recent trip to Kabul to pressure Afghan President Hamid Karzai to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States. That effort failed miserably.

Sources close to the State Department have further confirmed that, during the recent P5+1 negotiations, one of the biggest obstacles that Kerry had to overcome was President Obama's own hesitation to sign off on the deal. As the result of that and other recent experiences, Kerry has been forced to take a more proactive and independent stand, working closely with Dempsey, Hagel, and other Administration officials with a depth of experience and knowledge, and then to reassure the White House to sign off on the efforts. Kerry has forged a strong working relationship with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and this has served both the United States and Russia well.

Vice President Biden is also an integral part of this Administration bloc, as the role of his staff in the back-channel discussions which led to the interim agreement on the nuclear "issue" with Iran suggests. During Biden's lengthy engagements with President Xi, the two men discussed the evolving "major powers" cooperation. Such an alliance has been long promoted by Lyndon LaRouche, who has argued that only collaboration among the United States, Russia, China, and India can defeat the power of the Anglo-Dutch Empire system.