

## Military balance: The US and other key countries

President Barack Obama has announced a future with a "leaner" US military. The country was "turning the page on a decade of war" and faced a "moment of transition", he said. Yet, although thousands of troops are expected to be axed, Mr Obama stressed that the country's military superiority would still be maintained.

Here is how the US's military might compared with that of other global powers in 2011.

### The military balance

Country Military budget Active personnel Key equipment

Source: IISS, 2011

				
US		\$739.3bn	1,569,000	6,302 battle tanks 3,252 fighter/ground attack aircraft 71 submarines 450 land-based intercontinental ballistic missile launchers *****
China		\$89.8bn*	2,285,000	7,400 battle tanks 1,669 fighter/ground attack aircraft 62 submarines 66 land-based intercontinental ballistic missile launchers *****
UK		\$62.7bn	174,000	227 battle tanks 220 fighter/ground attack aircraft 11 submarines 0 land-based intercontinental ballistic missile launchers *****
Russia		\$52.7bn*	956,000	3,310 battle tanks 1,439 fighter/ground attack aircraft 65 submarines 292 land-based intercontinental ballistic missile launchers *****
India		\$31.9bn	1,325,000	3,233 battle tanks 784 fighter/ground attack aircraft 15 submarines 0 land-based intercontinental ballistic missile launchers

## **The military balance**

Country Military budget Active personnel Key equipment

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\*Official budget at market exchange rates. Many analysts say China's actual spending on defence is far higher than the government reports.

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<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-15715446>

**November 17, 2011 – BBC News**

### **Barack Obama says Asia-Pacific is 'top US priority'**



President Barack Obama: "The United States is a Pacific power, and we are here to stay"

**The Asia-Pacific region is now a "top priority" of US security policy, President Barack Obama has said in a speech to the Australian parliament.**

**Mr Obama insisted US spending cuts would not affect the Asia-Pacific, saying the US is "here to stay".**

**His comments are seen as a challenge to China, which is striving to be the main power in the region.**

Mr Obama announced a plan on Wednesday to station a full US Marine task force in Australia by 2016. The measure will eventually see 2,500 US personnel based in the north of the country.

## Defining region

Chinese officials have so far remained quiet on the issue, with a Foreign Ministry spokesman suggesting that installing US Marines was not consistent with the goal of achieving a peaceful rise for the continent.

China is locked in a territorial dispute with allies of the US, including the Philippines and Taiwan, over island groupings in the South China Sea.

### “Start Quote

The message is that America is ensuring it is strategically poised to project power over the vital trade routes that pass through the South China Sea, and it wants to reassure its partners in Asia it is cementing that position”

End Quote



China Correspondent

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Beijing has repeatedly insisted that it will discuss the matter only with those countries directly involved, ruling out US involvement.

But analysts say an increased US presence in the area is bound to embolden its allies, and irritate Beijing.

Speaking in Canberra, Mr Obama said Asia-Pacific countries would play a vital role in shaping the world in the 21st Century.

"With most of the world's nuclear powers and some half of humanity, Asia will largely define whether the century ahead will be marked by conflict or co-operation, needless suffering or human progress," he said.

The US has been slow to recover from an economic slump, and the military is one area earmarked for major spending cuts.

With US troops leaving both Iraq and Afghanistan after long engagements, there was speculation that the Americans might also seek to play a low-key role across Asia.

But Mr Obama said: "As we end today's wars, I have directed my national security team to make our presence and missions in the Asia-Pacific a top priority.

## **“Start Quote**

Born on America's Pacific Islands, raised for a time in Indonesia, President Obama is of course more likely to be a Pacific president than the trans-Atlanticists of the past”

End Quote



North America editor

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"As a result, reductions in US defence spending will not - I repeat, will not - come at the expense of the Asia-Pacific."

He committed the US to playing a "larger and long-term role in shaping this region", before adding that he was keen to work with China.

"We've seen that China can be a partner, from reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula to preventing proliferation," he said.

"We'll seek more opportunities for co-operation with Beijing, including greater communication between our militaries, to promote understanding and avoid miscalculation."

## **Crocodile insurance**

After his speech, the president flew from Canberra to the northern city of Darwin, where many of the US military personnel are likely to be based.

In a light-hearted end to his trip, Mr Obama, the first sitting US president to visit the city, was given crocodile insurance as a gift from a local politician.

"I have to admit when we reformed healthcare in America, crocodile insurance is one thing we left out," he joked in an address to about 2,000 soldiers.

The president has now left Australia on his way to a regional summit on the Indonesian island of Bali.

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who is also under pressure with domestic political issues, said the partnership between Australia and the US had been a "bedrock of stability" in the region.

Mr Obama's trip came as the two countries marked the 60th anniversary of their military alliance.

**See Key Graphic Below**

## Key US bases around the Asia-Pacific region



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Gulf Times News - June 2, 2012

## US to move naval fleet to Asia-Pacific

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### AFP/Singapore

The US will shift the bulk of its naval fleet to the Pacific by 2020 as part of a new strategic focus on Asia, Pentagon chief Leon Panetta told a summit in Singapore yesterday.

The decision to gradually deploy more ships to the Pacific Ocean, along with expanding a network of military partnerships, was part of a “steady, deliberate” effort to bolster the US role in an area deemed vital to America’s future, he said.

The move reflects US concern over China’s rising economic and military might but Panetta insisted the strategy was not a challenge to Beijing.

Panetta said “by 2020, the Navy will re-posture its forces from today’s roughly 50/50% split between the Pacific and the Atlantic to about a 60/40 split between those oceans.

“That will include six aircraft carriers in this region, a majority of our cruisers, destroyers, littoral combat ships, and submarines.” The US Navy currently has a fleet of 285 ships, with about half of those vessels deployed or assigned to the Pacific.

Although the total size of the fleet may decline in coming years depending on budget pressures, Pentagon officials said the number of naval ships in the Pacific would rise. The US also planned to expand military exercises in the Pacific and to conduct more port visits over a wider area extending to the Indian Ocean. Panetta spoke to mainly Asian defence officials and officers from 27 countries at the Shangri-La Dialogue, an annual summit organised by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Unlike previous summits, China chose not to send a high-level delegation to the event, prompting speculation as to what lay behind the move.

But China’s official news agency warned yesterday it was no time to “make waves” in the disputed South China Sea and suggested Washington may have “emboldened” some states to make claims in the area. “As regards the South China Sea tensions, it is some other claimants, whether emboldened by the US’



This file photo shows US fighters off from the flight deck of the taking Nimitz-class USS George Washington military exercises between for joint the US and South Korea in South Korea’s East Sea. The US will shift the majority of its naval fleet by 2020 as of a new strategic of a new part strategic focus on Asia.

new posture or not, that sparked the fire and have been stoking the flames,” said Xinhua. Since President Barack Obama unveiled plans in January to shift towards Asia, the Pentagon has offered up few details about how it intends to achieve its goal.

Yesterday’s announcement provided the clearest evidence yet of a shift to Asia, and the speech appeared designed to reassure allies that Washington will back its much-publicised “pivot” to Asia with tangible action.

Singapore’s Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen praised the plan to send more US warships to the Pacific, describing it as a “sizeable commitment.” Singapore later said it had agreed in principle to allow four new US naval vessels to deploy to its ports, though officials from both governments stressed the littoral combat ships would not be permanently based there.

With America’s military budget under mounting pressure, some analysts and lawmakers questioned if the US Navy had the resources to carry out Obama’s vision. Panetta said budget woes in Washington would not affect the plan to tilt towards Asia. As part of its Asia strategy, the US has already started to deploy up to 2,500 US Marines in northern Australia, a move that has rankled China.

Military spending is steadily rising in Asia-Pacific states but Australian Defence Minister Stephen Smith said the US deployment of Marines to his country would not feed tensions. “We don’t in any way see this initiative causing either instability or in any way an arms race,” Smith said at the conference.

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