

China's military 'aimed at preventing US intervention'

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The growth of China's military capabilities is specifically oriented toward countering the US' ability to assist in the defense of Taiwan, a new Heritage Foundation report says.

"China's ability to execute a military action against Taiwan, albeit at high economic and political cost, is improving," the 2016 Index of US Military Strength said, which was published on Wednesday.

According to the annual Index, two of the US' four military branches have declined over the past year and the others were rated only "marginal" in their ability to protect US interests.

It said that growing US weakness, coupled with increasing strength and aggressiveness from North Korea, Russia and China "make for a growing and dangerous instability in regions throughout the world."

"Threats against American interests are stronger and more numerous than a year ago," senior Index editor Dakota Wood said.

"Key regions are more unstable and our military capabilities have weakened further. These are very disturbing trends," Wood said.

The Index says that China's long-standing threat to end de facto independence in Taiwan — if necessary by force — is both a threat to a major US security partner and a threat to peace and stability in the western Pacific.

China continues to employ political warfare against the Taiwan's political and military leadership, the Index said.

"For the Chinese leadership, the failure to effect unification, whether peacefully or through the

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use of force, would reflect fundamental political weakness," the Index said.

"There is no realistic means by which any Chinese leadership can back away from the stance of having to unify the island with the mainland," it said.

As a result, Taiwan remains an essential part of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) new historic mission, shaping acquisitions and military planning.

The Index said that Beijing's anti-access area-denial strategy is aimed largely at forestalling US intervention in support of Taiwan.

By holding at risk key US platforms — particularly aircraft carriers — Beijing seeks to delay or even deter US intervention in support of Taiwan allowing China to achieve a fait accompli.

The Index said the Chinese threat to Taiwan is "never off the table."

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