

China Military in Africa: Setting Up Shop Just A Few Miles From U.S. Base

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Global Research, March 05, 2017

[Activist Post](#) 2 March 2017

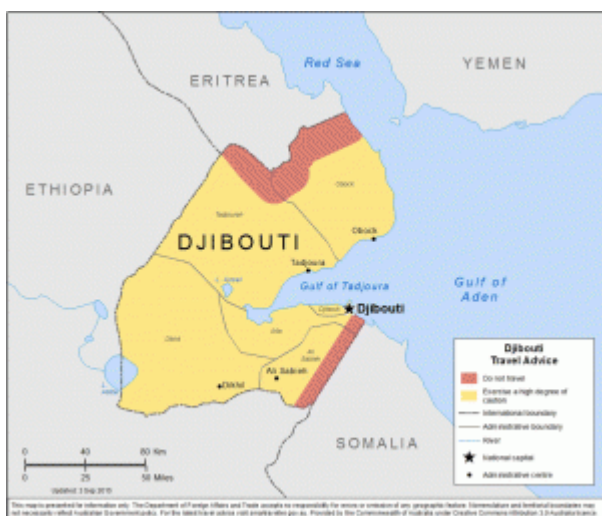
Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

Over the weekend, the *New York Times* [reported](#) on the fact that China is building its first ever overseas military base.

“A low-rise encampment built adjacent to a new Chinese-owned commercial port,” the *Times* [wrote](#), “the 90-acre base is designed to house up to several thousand troops and will include storage structures for weapons, repair facilities for ships and helicopters, and five berths for commercial ships and one for military vessels.”

But the fact that China is building a military base overseas isn’t the real story. The real issue is *where* the base is being constructed — just a few miles down the road from a U.S. installation in Djibouti, a tiny country in the Horn of Africa.



“It’s like having a rival football team using an adjacent practice field,” Gabriel Collins, a Chinese military expert, told the *Times*. “They can scope out some of your plays.”

Camp Lemonnier, a U.S. base established after 9/11, is home to 4,000 military personnel and is often employed for covert operations, including targeted drone strikes in the Middle East.

As [highlighted](#) by *The Diplomat*, “The thrust of the *Times*’ look at China’s upcoming facility in Djibouti is the broader effect it could have on the United States’ presence in the country.”

What’s meant, of course, is the U.S. *military* presence in the country. And the “broader effect” the *Times* wants its readers to consider is, quite clearly, all-out war with China. This, for instance, is how the piece [opened](#):

The two countries keep dozens of intercontinental nuclear missiles pointed at each other's cities. Their frigates and fighter jets occasionally face off in the contested waters of the South China Sea.

With no shared border, China and the United States mostly circle each other from afar, relying on satellites and cybersnooping to peek inside the workings of each other's war machines.

Another analyst took a more level-headed approach to analyzing the development, however, and in doing so pointed out that news like this — and the manner in which the *Times* reported on it — plays directly into the hands of warmongers.

That analyst was Dr. Ron Paul.

On the *Ron Paul Liberty Report* on Tuesday, the former congressman and presidential candidate, along with his former advisor and now-executive director of the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity, Daniel McAdams, took a [closer look](#) at what might really be going on in Djibouti.

"The people who want to really paint it in a bad light," Dr. Paul said Tuesday, will claim China is about to "put nuclear missiles" at the [under-construction](#) base. "I don't think that's their purpose."

Without question, Djibouti is a strategically [important](#) region for China. Half of the country's oil imports [pass through](#) the Mandeb Strait, a waterway chokepoint right off the coast of Djibouti. That straight connects the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea.

China claims, as it continually has, that the new naval base will be mostly used for combating piracy and providing security for its traveling citizens.

"The support facility will be mainly used to provide rest and rehabilitation for the Chinese troops taking part in escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia, U.N. peacekeeping and humanitarian rescue," China's Defense Ministry [told](#) the *New York Times* in a written response to questions.

The current strategic importance of Djibouti for the U.S. is — for those who have been paying attention — quite obvious. Noting the tiny nation's coastline, Dr. Paul [pointed out](#) that "The distance between that and Yemen is a total of 18 miles. And that's why we're there."

Since 2015, the U.S. has been [supporting](#) ally Saudi Arabia in its war in Yemen as the Saudis attempt to wipe out allegedly Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. The humanitarian crisis now taking place in the North African country has many analysts comparing it to the situation in war-torn Syria.

While doubting the Chinese motivation for building a naval base in such close proximity to a U.S. installation is rooted in an attempt to militarily provoke the United States, Dr. Paul conceded there may be a little bit of muscle flexing going on.

"I would think the Chinese government, because they get bashed a bit from our policies — you know, China is rigging their currencies and they're bad people and their building islands

— they’re on the receiving end,” Dr. Paul [said](#). “Maybe they just feel like [they] ought to just express themselves, and this is convenient for them and they can use it. So it’s to show they’re not a bunch of pussycats.”

Bringing the conversation back to the notion of crafting news items to fit political agendas, Daniel McAdams stated:

And, of course, the neocon interventionists love stories like this because it feeds into their desire, their need, to have an enemy figure overseas.

Continuing, he cited the *Times* article directly:

And this is how the New York Times put it. I think this captures the interventionist perspective. The Chinese base’s construction ‘is a milestone marking Beijing’s expanding global ambitions.’

Dr. Paul chuckled at this, to which McAdams replied, “One base overseas is the only one they have. And how many do we have? 800.”

Noting that President Trump just recently [outlined](#) his plan for one of the “greatest military buildups in American history,” McAdams also pointed out how such news items work for the war machine itself.

“This is also a big windfall for the military-industrial complex,” he [said](#), “because it’ll be used as an excuse.”

Agreeing, Dr. Paul lamented that a growing coalition of pro-war factions from both sides of the aisle are making continuous warfare under Trump all the more likely, and that those against this potentiality should unite.

“We have to get together, who are anti-imperialistic,” said Dr. Paul. “Because the coalition against us, they don’t agree on all the economic issues. Matter fact, they just come together for one thing — to be pro-war. We need to build a coalition against this senseless war that continues to go on. So, right now, I am not all that optimistic that the troops will be coming home soon.”

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