



## AS IT IS

# General: China's Naval Expansion Creates Threat from Atlantic

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General Stephen Townsend is the top U.S. commander for Africa. He warns that a growing threat from China may come not just from the waters of the Pacific but from the Atlantic as well.

Townsend told The Associated Press that China is looking to establish a large navy port on Africa's western coast. The port would be able to host aircraft carriers and submarines. Townsend said China has talked with countries from Mauritania to the south of Namibia to build the port.

The port would permit China to base warships in its expanding Navy in the Atlantic as well as Pacific oceans.

Townsend said, "they're looking for a place where they can rearm and repair warships. That becomes militarily useful in conflict." He said China is a long way toward building such a base in Djibouti, so they are looking at the Atlantic coast.

Townsend's warnings come as the U.S. military is beginning to move from the wars against terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq. The attention will be on the Indo-Pacific area and threats from China and Russia. The Biden administration views China's fast-expanding economic influence and military power as America's long-term security threat.

U.S. military commanders around the world warn that China's growing power is happening in more than just Asia. They argue that China is aggressively **asserting** economic influence in countries in Africa, South America, and the Middle East. They are pushing for bases and other positions there.

Townsend said that the Chinese are outperforming the U.S. in some African countries. They are investing in building ports and transportation and economic projects in those countries. He fears the relationship will lead to greater **access** for China in the future.

China's first naval base in a foreign country was built years ago in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa. China has been increasing the size of the base since it was built.

Townsend said there are as many as 2,000 military workers at the base, including hundreds of Marines who are responsible for security. He said the U.S. military thinks they will soon be adding aircraft, including attack helicopters.

For some time, the U.S. believes that China was working to establish a base in Tanzania. But Townsend said he was not worried because the African country is on the Indian Ocean side.

The Chinese search for a naval base on the Atlantic coast, Townsend said, concerned him "greatly." The general pointed to the shorter distance from Africa's Atlantic coast to the U.S.

I'm Dan Friedell.

*Lolita C. Baldor reported on this story for the Associated Press. Gregory Stachel adapted the report for VOA Learning English. Hai Do was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**assert** – *v.* to demand that other people accept or respect (something)

**access** – *n.* a way of being able to use or get something

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