

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: CHN31098
Country: China
Date: 8 January 2007

Keywords: China – Taiwan Strait – 2006 Military exercises – Typhoons

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

- 1. Is there corroborating information about military manoeuvres and exercises in Pingtan?**
- 2. Is there any information specifically about the military exercise there in July 2006?**
- 3. Is there any information about “Army day” on 1 August 2006?**
- 4. What are the aquatic farming/fishing activities carried out in that area?**
- 5. Has there been pollution following military exercises along the Taiwan Strait?**
- 6. The delegate makes reference to independent information that indicates that from May until August 2006 China particularly the eastern coast was hit by a succession of storms and typhoons. The last one being the hardest to hit China in 50 years. Could I have information about this please? The delegate refers to typhoon Prapiroon. What information is available about that typhoon?**
- 7. The delegate was of the view that military exercises would not be organised in typhoon season, particularly such a bad one. Is there any information to assist?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Is there corroborating information about military manoeuvres and exercises in Pingtan?**
- 2. Is there any information specifically about the military exercise there in July 2006?**

There is a minor naval base in Pingtan and military manoeuvres are regularly held in the Taiwan Strait where Pingtan is located, especially in the June to August period. However, no information was found on a military exercise near Pingtan in July 2006, although the East China Sea Fleet held exercises in June and early August 2006 (see below).

Information on Pingtan County (平潭县)

Pingtan is the name of a county in the northeast of Fujian province and is an administrative district under Fuzhou City. It is situated in the Taiwan Strait between mainland Fujian and

Taiwan. Pingtan county comprises 126 islands, a population of 390,000, a land area of 309 square kilometres and a sea area of 6,064 square kilometres. (according to the Chinese version of Wikipedia¹: 'Pingtan County' 2006, Chinese Wikipedia

<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%B9%B3%E6%BD%AD%E5%8E%BF> – Accessed 5 January 2007 – Attachment 1, with rough Google translation at Attachment 1A). The main island in the county is Haitan island and Pingtan is also the name of the main town on this island. The economy is based on stone and sand mining and aquatic animals and fish.

Two maps show Pingtan county are attached ('Fuzhou City Communications and Tourist Map' (Section showing Pingtan County in pink) (undated)

<http://www.fujiankids.org/swis/fuzcity/prefectl.jpg> – Accessed 5 January 2006 – Attachment 2; 'Pingtan, Fujian' 1999, Microsoft Encarta Interactive World Atlas – Attachment 3).

Military Exercises in the Pingtan region

Fujian is part of the Nanjing Military Region (see 'China: Military Regions' (undated), GlobalSecurity.org website <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/mr-map.htm> – Attachment 4). According to the website GlobalSecurity.org:

The Nanjing MR covers the Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, and Jiangxi provinces. The Nanjing Military Region is a critical division based in Nanjing, Jiangsu. Its southern section faces Taiwan and as such is home to a substantial number of China's medium-range missiles, as well as the front-line launching point for a joint air/sea assault on Taiwan.

('Nanjing Military Region' (undated), GlobalSecurity.org website

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/nanjing-mr.htm> – Accessed 22 December 2006 – Attachment 5)

Sources indicate that military manoeuvres and exercises are conducted regularly along the Fujian coast, often in June, July or August. The following dates were reported by various news sources:

- **July 1999** (Pomfret, John 1999, 'Chinese Army Directs Tough Talk at Taiwan', *International Herald Tribune*, 19 July <http://www.taiwandc.org/ihl-9907.htm> – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 6)
- **July and August 2000** (Santoli, Al 2000, 'PLA Nanjing Military Region Exercises Target Taiwan', *China Reform Monitor*, (American Foreign Policy Council, Washington, D.C), No. 327, 14 August <http://www.afpc.org/crm/crm327.shtml>; 'China Prepares for War With Taiwan' 2000, *NewsMax.com*, 15 August <http://www.newsmax.com/articles/?a=2000/8/14/210552> – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 6)
- **June 2001** ('China to begin 3-stage war games near Taiwan' 2001, *Kyodo*, 4 June http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDQ/is_2001_June_4/ai_75331382 – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 6)

¹ Users should be aware that Wikipedia is a Web-based free-content encyclopaedia which is written collaboratively by volunteers. Country Research recommends that users of Wikipedia familiarise themselves with the regulatory practices which Wikipedia employs as a preventative measure against vandalism, bias and inaccuracy. For more information, see the recommended background reading available in the Wikipedia Topical Information Package.

- **August 2002** ('PLA to Simulate Landings, Attacks' 2002, *People's Daily Online*, 5 August http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200208/05/eng20020805_100920.shtml – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 7; Chen, Lyn 2002, 'Mainland's War Exercises Aim at Capturing Taiwan', CND, 20 August <http://www.cnd.org/Global/02/08/21/020821-2.html> – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 6)
- **June, July, August 2004** ('Taiwan: Chinese Army Preparing Military Exercises Aimed at Taiwan' 2004, *Agence France Presse*, 1 June <http://www.unpo.org/article.php?id=724>; 'Militia, PLA Play War Games on Fujian Coast' 2004, *China Daily*, 27 July <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2004/Jul/102250.htm> – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 6)

According to Globalsecurity.org, there is a minor naval base on Pingtan island ('South Sea Fleet Naval Bases' 2005, Globalsecurity.org website, 27 April <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/plan-fac-south.htm> – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 8). Only one brief report was found of military exercises in Pingtan itself, in August 2002 ('PLA to Simulate Landings, Attacks' 2002, *People's Daily Online*, 5 August http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200208/05/eng20020805_100920.shtml – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 7). Most reports of exercises do not mention the exact location and those that do more frequently mention Dongshan Island in the south of Fujian province, far from Pingtan.

2006 exercises

On 4 August 2006, the *People's Daily* reported a series of exercises in the Taiwan Strait, during the typhoon season: "to improve the combat capability in extreme weather, the unit carried out hard drills at East China Sea in early August" ('East China Sea Fleet of PLA Navy carries out hard training' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 4 August http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200608/04/eng20060804_289980.html – Accessed 21 December 2006 – Attachment 9).

Other reports noted exercises in the East China Sea in 2006:

- **April** ('PLA holds maneuver in East China Sea' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 25 April http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200604/25/eng20060425_260978.html – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 10).
- **Mid-May** ('Amphibious landing drill by PLA South China Sea Fleet' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 18 May http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200605/18/eng20060518_266764.html – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 10).
- **Late June** ('PLA Navy's maneuver on the East China Sea' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 4 July http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200607/04/eng20060704_279932.html – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 10).

No information was found on the exact location or dates of these exercises.

3. Is there any information about "Army day" on 1 August 2006?

The Chinese news agency *Xinhua* carried a number of reports about Army Day, 1 August 2006. One of these relates to the Taiwan issue ('79th Anniversary of the Founding of PLA Marked' 2006, *Xinhua*, 1 August <http://www.china.org.cn/english/GS-e/176556.htm> – Accessed 22 December 2006 – Attachment 11). It states:

Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan said Monday that China will promote the peaceful development of the cross-Straits relations, and work for the prospect of peaceful reunification. Cao, also vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission and state councilor, made the remarks when addressing a reception in the Great Hall of the People to mark the 79th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which falls on August 1.

...

"We will never tolerate 'Taiwan Independence' and will never allow the secessionist forces seeking 'Taiwan Independence' to make Taiwan secede from the motherland by any means or under any pretext," Cao stressed.

No reports were found regarding Army Day in Pingtan or the Taiwan Strait.

4. What are the aquatic farming/fishing activities carried out in that area?

According to the Chinese version of Wikipedia²: ('Pingtan County' 2006, Chinese Wikipedia <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%B9%B3%E6%BD%AD%E5%8E%BF> – Accessed 5 January 2007 – Attachment 1, with rough Google translation at Attachment 1A), Pingtan has the following aquatic resources:

Aquatic animals including fish, shrimp, crabs etc, totalling some 679 species, including 242 species of marine fish, sea shrimp, 73 species of crab and sea mollusc (shell) and 266 species of biological drift.

[translation by Chinese speaker at the RRT]

Very little specific information was found on aquatic farming/fishing activities in Pingtan. The most notable aquacultural feature of Pingtan mentioned in a number of reports is its production of laver (also called purple laver or *zicai*) which is a type of edible seaweed, but it is quite probable many other marine plants and creatures are also cultivated.

A report from the UN FAO organisation gives an overview of aquatic farming/fishing activities in China (Jia, J. and Chen, J. 2001, *Sea Farming and Sea Ranching in China*, FAO Fisheries Technical Paper 418 <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y2257E/y2257e00.htm> – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 12). In this report:

- There is a list of some common aquatic marine species farmed and ranched in China in Table 8 on pages 6-9 of section 1.1.4.
- Pingtan is mentioned on page 12 Section 1.3.1 in relation to the cultivation of the purple laver or *zicai*. It notes:

Useful seaweed were farmed in China for ages using the traditional "rock cleansing method". Farmers knew by experience that in certain parts of the coastal region and during certain seasons, spores of these seaweed would abound. Just before such season, they first cleaned the rocks known to have regularly good growths of the desired seaweed, scraping off barnacles and other sessile organisms, including

² Users should be aware that Wikipedia is a Web-based free-content encyclopaedia which is written collaboratively by volunteers. Country Research recommends that users of Wikipedia familiarise themselves with the regulatory practices which Wikipedia employs as a preventative measure against vandalism, bias and inaccuracy. For more information, see the recommended background reading available in the Wikipedia Topical Information Package.

seaweed. Then, they limed the scraped rocks during low tide. These rocks provided favourable substrates for seaweed spores to settle and develop.

- Section 2 contains information on methods of farming seaweed, including laver, as well as shrimp, scallops, mud crabs, sea scallops and fish.
- Section 3 gives explanations and diagrams of different farms systems, according to the following table:

Table 27. Sea farming and sea ranching systems in China

System	Cultured organisms	Production scale
Pond culture	Fish, shrimp, crab, molluscs, <i>Gracilaria</i> spp.	Commercial
Floating raft culture	Seaweed, scallop, oyster, abalone	Commercial
Mud flat culture	Laver, razor clam, hard shell clam, oyster	Commercial
Pen culture	Abalone, shrimp	Commercial
Inshore cage culture	Fish	Commercial
Offshore cage culture	Fish	Commercial and trials
Tunnel culture	Abalone	Small scale
Submerged cage culture	Abalone, fish	Small scale (trials)
Indoor tank culture with water recirculation	Flounder, turbot and other fish, abalone	Commercial and trials
Sea bottom culture and sea ranching	Abalone, Japanese scallop, giant cockle, sea cucumber, sea urchin	Commercial
Stock enhancement	Chinese shrimp, red sea bream, flounder, large yellow croaker, mullet, jellyfish	Trials

5. Has there been pollution following military exercises along the Taiwan Strait?

No reports of such pollution was found in the sources consulted.

6. The delegate makes reference to independent information that indicates that from May until August 2006 China particularly the eastern coast was hit by a succession of storms and typhoons. The last one being the hardest to hit China in 50 years. Could I have information about this please? The delegate refers to typhoon Prapiroon. What information is available about that typhoon?

According to a useful compellation of typhoons by Wikipedia³ ('2006 Pacific typhoon season' 2007, Wikipedia, updated 7 January http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Pacific_typhoon_season – Accessed 8 January 2007

³ Users should be aware that Wikipedia is a Web-based free-content encyclopaedia which is written collaboratively by volunteers. Country Research recommends that users of Wikipedia familiarise themselves with the regulatory practices which Wikipedia employs as a preventative measure against vandalism, bias and inaccuracy. For more information, see the recommended background reading available in the Wikipedia Topical Information Package.

- Attachment 13), China was hit by the following seven typhoons and major storms between May and August 2006:

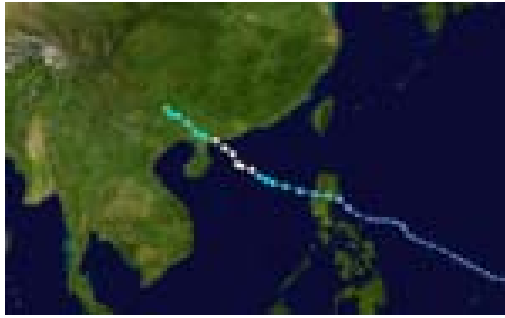
- Typhoon Chanchu (Caloy) May 9 - May 19, 2006
Hit Fujian – “made a final landfall along the southeastern seaboard of China on May 18 resulting in at least 25 deaths and a direct economic loss of 7 billion yuan”
- Tropical Storm Jelawat (Domeng) June 26 - June 29, 2006
Hit W Guangdong “The depression made landfall in southern China at 7:40 a.m. CST on June 29 and dissipated later that day. The storm dropped heavy rainfall across southern China and Haikou recorded a rainfall of 309.7 mm (12 inches) during the storm passage”
- Typhoon Ewiniar (Ester) June 29 - July 11, 2006
“Ewiniar was responsible for at least 30 deaths in China, which it brushed as a typhoon.”
- Severe Tropical Storm Bilis (Florita) July 8 - July 15, 2006
“After moving over northern Taiwan, Bilis made landfall in Fujian, China at 12:50 p.m. CST on July 14, weakening into a tropical depression inland the next day. JMA carried the system as a tropical depression until July 17. Bilis brought very heavy rain, widespread flooding, landslides, and strong winds to the Philippines, Taiwan and areas of mainland China, causing 672 deaths and \$4.4 billion (2006 USD) in damage.”
- Typhoon Kaemi (Glenda) July 18 - July 26, 2006
“Kaemi made landfall in Jinjiang, Fujian at 3:50 p.m. CST on July 25 as a minimal typhoon. Heavy rainfall in Taiwan caused flooding and four minor injuries. Rain also fell heavily in the northern Philippines. The storm has also killed at least 32 people in China, while another 60 people are missing.”
- Typhoon Prapiroon (Henry) July 28 - August 5, 2006 (see more below)
“In Hong Kong, the flag raising ceremony at the Golden Bauhinia Square was cancelled due to strong wind. Prapiroon made landfall at 7:20 p.m. CST on August 3. The strong winds due to the storm resulted in 70% of flights being cancelled, delayed or diverted in the Hong Kong International Airport, the highest since the opening in 1999. However, the airport remained open throughout the storm passage and many flights successfully landed or took off on August 3. Inbound flights were rerouted to nearby airports and outbound flights were cancelled or postponed. On landfall in Guangdong province, China, it forced the evacuation of some 660,000 people and caused an estimated 5.4 billion Chinese yuan worth of damage. 77 people were reported killed. It also affected Hunan, Guangxi and Hainan.”
- Typhoon Saomai (Juan) August 4 - August 11, 2006
“Saomai made landfall in Zhejiang, China on August 10 with maximum sustained winds of 115 knots (1-minute mean), stronger than Chanchu earlier this season. Saomai was responsible for at least 458 deaths, mostly in China, and \$2.5 billion (2006 USD) in damage”

Typhoon Prapiroon

Wikipedia (‘2006 Pacific typhoon season’ 2007, Wikipedia, updated 7 January
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Pacific_typhoon_season – Accessed 8 January 2007

- Attachment 13) gives this information about Typhoon Prapiroon:

Typhoon Prapiroon (Henry)
Typhoon 07W 1



Duration July 28 - August 5, 2006
Intensity 65 kt (10-min), 970 hPa[24]

PAGASA named a system east of the Philippines as Tropical Depression Henry later on the same day that the JMA recognised it as a tropical depression on July 28. The JTWC upgraded this system to a tropical storm on the morning of August 1. Hong Kong Observatory also did so and issued the Tropical Cyclone Signal No. 1 that same afternoon, and shortly after the JMA upgraded the system to Tropical Storm Prapiroon. The name Prapiroon was submitted by Thailand and is the name of a Thai rain deity. The JMA upgraded the storm to a severe tropical storm on the morning of August 2. PAGASA ceased advisories on the storm shortly after as it moved out of its area of responsibility. The JTWC and the HKO upgraded Prapiroon to a typhoon at 3 a.m. UTC, while the JMA officially upgraded it to a typhoon at 12 p.m. UTC (8 p.m. HKT). Prapiroon necessitated the first Tropical Cyclone Signal No. 8 in Macau this year.[25] In Hong Kong, the flag raising ceremony at the Golden Bauhinia Square was cancelled due to strong wind.[26] Prapiroon made landfall at 7:20 p.m. CST on August 3.[27]

The strong winds due to the storm resulted in 70% of flights being cancelled, delayed or diverted in the Hong Kong International Airport, the highest since the opening in 1999. However, the airport remained open throughout the storm passage and many flights successfully landed or took off on August 3.[28] Inbound flights were rerouted to nearby airports and outbound flights were cancelled or postponed.[29] **On landfall in Guangdong province, China, it forced the evacuation of some 660,000 people and caused an estimated 5.4 billion Chinese yuan worth of damage. 77 people were reported killed.[30] It also affected Hunan, Guangxi and Hainan.**

Two Chinese media reports of the typhoon are attached ('Typhoon Prapiroon slams into S. China' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 7 August http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200608/04/eng20060804_289852.html – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 14; 'Death toll in Prapiroon rises to 77 in China' 2006, Xinhua, 6 August http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-08/06/content_4925398.htm – Accessed 8 January 2007 – Attachment 15).

7. The delegate was of the view that military exercises would not be organised in typhoon season, particularly such a bad one. Is there any information to assist?

The lists presented in [Question 1 above](#), show that military exercises are regularly undertaken in typhoon season between May and August and in August 2006, "to improve the combat capability in extreme weather, the unit carried out hard drills at East China Sea" ('East China Sea Fleet of PLA Navy carries out hard training' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 4 August http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200608/04/eng20060804_289980.html – Accessed 21 December 2006 – Attachment 9).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

<http://www.stratfor.biz/> Stratfor Strategic Forecasting

<http://jir.janes.com/public/jir/index.shtml> *Janes Intelligence Review*

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. 'Pingtan County' 2006, Chinese Wikipedia
<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%B9%B3%E6%BD%AD%E5%8E%BF> – Accessed 5 January 2007
2. 'Fuzhou City Communications and Tourist Map' (Section showing Pingtan County in pink) (undated) <http://www.fujiankids.org/swis/fuzcity/prefectl.jpg> – Accessed 5 January 2006
3. 'Pingtan, Fujian, 1999, Microsoft Encarta Interactive World Atlas
4. 'China: Military Regions' (undated), GlobalSecurity.org website
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/mr-map.htm>
5. 'Nanjing Military Region' (undated), GlobalSecurity.org website
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/nanjing-mr.htm> – Accessed 22 December 2006
6. Articles on military exercises 1999-2004:

Pomfret, John 1999, 'Chinese Army Directs Tough Talk at Taiwan', *International Herald Tribune*, 19 July <http://www.taiwandc.org/iht-9907.htm> – Accessed 8 January 2007

Santoli, Al 2000, 'PLA Nanjing Military Region Exercises Target Taiwan', *China Reform Monitor*, (American Foreign Policy Council, Washington, D.C), No. 327, 14 August
<http://www.afpc.org/crm/crm327.shtml> – Accessed 8 January 2007

'China Prepares for War With Taiwan' 2000, *NewsMax.com*, 15 August
<http://www.newsmax.com/articles/?a=2000/8/14/210552> – Accessed 8 January 2007

'China to begin 3-stage war games near Taiwan' 2001, *Kyodo*, 4 June
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDQ/is_2001_June_4/ai_75331382 – Accessed 8 January 2007

Chen, Lyn 2002, 'Mainland's War Exercises Aim at Capturing Taiwan', *CND*, 20 August
<http://www.cnd.org/Global/02/08/21/020821-2.html> – Accessed 8 January 2007

- 'Taiwan: Chinese Army Preparing Military Exercises Aimed at Taiwan' 2004, *Agence France Presse*, 1 June <http://www.unpo.org/article.php?id=724> – Accessed 8 January 2007
- 'Militia, PLA Play War Games on Fujian Coast' 2004, *China Daily*, 27 July <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2004/Jul/102250.htm> – Accessed 8 January 2007
7. 'PLA to Simulate Landings, Attacks' 2002, *People's Daily Online*, 5 August http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200208/05/eng20020805_100920.shtml
 8. 'South Sea Fleet Naval Bases' 2005, Globalsecurity.org website, 27 April <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/plan-fac-south.htm>
 9. 'East China Sea Fleet of PLA Navy carries out hard training' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 4 August http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200608/04/eng20060804_289980.html – Accessed 21 December 2006
 10. Articles on military exercises 2006:

'PLA holds maneuver in East China Sea' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 25 April http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200604/25/eng20060425_260978.html – Accessed 8 January 2007).

'Amphibious landing drill by PLA South China Sea Fleet' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 18 May http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200605/18/eng20060518_266764.html – Accessed 8 January 2007).

'PLA Navy's maneuver on the East China Sea' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 4 July http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200607/04/eng20060704_279932.html – Accessed 8 January 2007).
 11. '79th Anniversary of the Founding of PLA Marked' 2006, *Xinhua*, 1 August <http://www.china.org.cn/english/GS-e/176556.htm> – Accessed 22 December 2006
 12. Jia, J. and Chen, J. 2001, *Sea Farming and Sea Ranching in China*, FAO Fisheries Technical Paper 418 <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y2257E/y2257e00.htm> – Accessed 8 January 2007
 13. '2006 Pacific typhoon season' 2007, Wikipedia, updated 7 January http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Pacific_typhoon_season – Accessed 8 January 2007
 14. 'Typhoon Prapiroon slams into S. China' 2006, *People's Daily Online*, 7 August http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200608/04/eng20060804_289852.html – Accessed 8 January 2007
 15. 'Death toll in Prapiroon rises to 77 in China' 2006, *Xinhua*, 6 August http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-08/06/content_4925398.htm – Accessed 8 January 2007