



“Golden Phoenix”

Twenty-third Secretary of Defense Strategic Policy Forum Examines U.S.-China Relations

–EXERCISE SUMMARY–

February 12, 2008: Five Members of Congress were joined by representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense; the Joint Staff; the Departments of State and Treasury; the National Intelligence Council; and experts from the National Defense University for an in-depth discussion of China’s rise to global prominence and how that rise may affect U.S. policies and interests in the region. Exercise *Golden Phoenix*, hosted by the Strategic Policy Forum (SPF), posits the occurrence of domestic unrest in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and international crises directly involving China that lead to a deterioration in the current cooperative relationship between China and the United States.



The Honorable Ryan Henry, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, opened exercise *Golden Phoenix*.



The Honorable Robert Wilkie, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, closed the exercise.

This 23rd Strategic Policy Forum, conducted at the National Defense University in Washington, DC, allowed participants to consider how the PRC governance structure and domestic exigencies influence Chinese decision-making and foreign policy. The exercise considered the implications of China’s growing national power and influence on U.S. global interests and explored potential flashpoints between the two countries, where the risk of miscalculation could pose a threat to stability in East Asia.

The Honorable Christopher “Ryan” Henry, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, representing the Secretary of Defense, opened the exercise. Mr. Henry stressed that the value of these Strategic Policy Forums is in the interaction the forums promote between the Executive and Legislative branches. He noted that a number of factors have to be weighed in shaping the United States’ strategy vis-à-vis China and expressed hope that the Members of Congress would gain a better understanding of the multifaceted challenges facing the Department of Defense and its interagency partners when dealing with issues

regarding China.

Over the course of exercise *Golden Phoenix*, participants gained an appreciation for the strategic implications of the United States' increasingly complex and interdependent relationship with China. Several themes were discussed in responding to events posited in the exercise scenario, including: how the U.S. can support China in countering its domestic problems in ways complementary to U.S. objectives and interests; operating in an environment of strategic clarity to ensure that China is aware of the U.S. position on matters of significant interest (e.g., nuclear proliferation or security and press freedoms during the 2008 Olympics); working internationally to better communicate concerns regarding nuclear proliferation and a nuclear-armed Iran; and the importance of working with allies, partners, and through multilateral organizations to positively influence China with regard to U.S. interests.

In the plenary discussion following the exercise, one of the Congressional attendees remarked that *Golden Phoenix* was a valuable tool in discussing difficult national security issues and felt the Strategic Policy Forum should be expanded to educate more Members of Congress on similar complex national security issues. The Honorable Robert Wilkie, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, was the senior DoD official participating in the exercise. He closed the morning's event, thanking participants on behalf of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and emphasizing the proven value of gaming critical national security issues.

Golden Phoenix was the first Washington, DC SPF of 2008. SPF's crisis-simulation exercises, an initiative of the Department of Defense, are designed to provide senior government officials insight into the complex world of policymaking in the current global security environment. The total number of Congressional visits to these exercises now stands at 205, with 136 Members of Congress attending at least one exercise. For further information, please contact Mr. Michael Harwood, Director SPF, at (202) 685-4686, or by e-mail at harwoodm@ndu.edu; or Dr. Margaret McCown at (202) 685-2855, or by e-mail at mccownm@ndu.edu.

Please visit us on the web at: www.ndu.edu/INSS/SPF