

China faces arduous national security tasks

By: Wu Jiao, Zhang Yunbi, and Zhang Yuwei – March 5, 2013

China faces more arduous national security tasks as significant changes have taken place in the international strategic situation and in the balance of power in recent years, and pressure is mounting on the country's peripheral security environment, Chen Zhou, a senior military researcher told China Daily on Tuesday.

"(These factors) place higher requirements on China's military," Chen said.

Chen, one of the main contributors to China's defense white paper and a member of the first session of the 12th National People's Congress — China's top legislative body — made the remarks after reports emerged about the country's defense budget figures.

According to the draft budget submitted to the NPC, China's defense budget in 2013 will increase by 10.7 percent year-on-year, a drop of the annual growth rate for three years in a row — the figures in 2012 and 2011 were 11.2 percent and 12.7 percent, respectively.

According to Chen, the scale of the defense budget should follow two key rules — "to correspond to the demands from national defense", and "to correspond to the development of the national economy".

"Compared with major global military powers, the Chinese military is still lagging behind in the field of informationization," Chen said. Major military powers are now seeking strategic commanding points, and China should enhance funding in those dimensions to ensure a space in future competition.

"The appropriate increase of China's defense budget also stems from the need to shoulder more international duties," Chen said.

Chen added that China, as a responsible emerging power, has worked on missions in fields such as peacekeeping, joint terrorism combat, humanitarian aid and naval escorts.

The expert said China will unswervingly embark on a path of peaceful development and pursue a national defense policy that is defensive in nature.

Ted Galen Carpenter, a senior fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, told China Daily that China's defense spending levels "are not unusual for a re-emerging great power", and they remain far below the United States military-spending levels.

"Furthermore, most of the spending seems directed at improving the country's defensive capabilities, especially to discourage encroachment on China's core interests in its immediate neighborhood, not for distant power-projection capabilities. In other words,

there is little evidence that China intends to compete militarily with the United States on a global basis," Carpenter said.