

China sends PLA unit to man overseas base

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China has dispatched People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel to man its first overseas military base at Djibouti in the strategic Indian Ocean region, a move likely to spark concerns in the U.S.

Base at Djibouti:

The establishment of the PLA Djibouti base was a decision made by the two countries after friendly negotiations, and accords with the common interest of the people from both sides. The base is aimed at ensuring China's performance of missions, such as escorting, peace-keeping and humanitarian aid in Africa and West Asia.

The base will also conduct overseas tasks, including military cooperation, joint exercises, evacuating and protecting overseas Chinese and emergency rescue, as well as jointly maintaining security of international strategic seaways.

Why is US worried?

- Base at Djibouti is close to Camp Lemonnier. Established after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Camp Lemonnier is home to 4,000 personnel. Some are involved in highly secretive missions.
- Strategists worry that a naval port so close to Camp Lemonnier could provide a front-row seat to the staging ground for U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa.
- The base, which is run by the Navy and abuts Djibouti's international airport, is the only permanent U.S. military installation in Africa.

About Djibouti:

Djibouti, officially the Republic of Djibouti, is a country located in the Horn of Africa. It is bordered by Eritrea in the north, Ethiopia in the west and south, and Somalia in the southeast. The remainder of the border is formed by the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden at the east.

To be looked in UPSC Paper 2 Topic: India and its neighbourhood- relations