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CHINA

PLA conducts warfare drill involving biological chemical and nuclear attack

In late November, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted combat drills simulating [chemical, biological and nuclear attack](#) in the Tibet Military Region. According to a [report](#) cited in *The Hindustan Times*, the drill was executed by a joint military brigade including commandos, armoured assault groups and soldiers trained in chemical warfare. Describing a scene from the drill, the report informed of actions like warnings by a commanding officer of an incoming nuclear, biological and chemical attack and quick movement of soldiers through poisoned zones wearing gas masks. The report added that the drill was focused on key and difficult subjects like day and night manoeuvring and multi-arms coordination. Apparently, it also contained pictures where soldiers are seen wearing gas masks depicting a fight scene in a poisoned zone.

PLA's Z-10 Attack Helicopter at the Forefront

The PLA is revealing more details about the upgraded variant called the [Z-10 helicopter](#) manufactured to shore up its deterrence capability. According to the *Global Times*, the Z-10 can fire up to 16 anti-tank missiles and has capabilities for both 7-barrel and 32-barrel multiple rocket launchers, and 23-millimetre calibre revolver gun, where these specifications could be interchanged according to the mission objectives. Due to its multi-purpose capabilities, it could be charged against different targets using different configurations, and could specifically be used in high-altitude conditions. Earlier, the helicopter could not

be equipped with additional armour if needed. However, after the breakthrough in designs in Z-20 helicopters, it was said that these technologies could be of help to the Z-10 to be fitted with more [powerful engines](#) if necessary.

TAIWAN

Taiwan confident that Chinese invasion of the island would be hard

Just a month after Taiwan's *Annual Defense Report* claimed Taiwan to be in grave danger, the Taiwan Ministry of National Defense (MND) in a later [threat assessment report](#) submitted to the nation's lawmakers in December, claimed that a full-scale Chinese invasion of the island will be difficult. Citing troop landing and supplying problems, the [latest report](#) claimed that China's transportation capabilities are limited at present; it would not be able to land its forces all at once but would have to rely on Taiwan's ports and airports for its ships and aircraft to transport troops. Since the Taiwanese military strongly defends these ports and airports, they will not be easily occupied within a short time. Therefore, landing operations by China will face extremely high risks. Referring to logistical challenges faced by China, the [same report](#) added that landing troops will be required to be resupplied with weapons, food and medicine across the Taiwan Strait. Here, the Taiwan military can use joint intercept operations to cut-off the supply chains and reduce combat effectiveness and endurance of the landing troops. Also, concentrating all its [efforts in war](#) with Taiwan will be difficult for China, as it would have to reserve forces to prevent foreign military intervention and monitor

fractious parts of its border with India and in the South China Sea.

Diplomatic and Strategic maneuvering intensifies around Taiwan

As the year 2021 came to a close diplomatic and strategic maneuvering around Taiwan intensified. On 9 December, Nicaragua switched [diplomatic recognition](#) from the Republic of China (ROC) to the People's Republic of China (PRC) while Lithuania informed on 15 December that it had [shut down](#) its embassy in Beijing. In a separate development continuing the US Congressional support for Taiwan through favorable legislation, the US Senate passed the [National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022](#) on 15 December. The same bill was earlier cleared by the House of Representatives on 7 December 2021. Incidentally, the bill recommended inviting Taiwan to the 2022 Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC). However, reportedly, neither the recommendations nor the sense of the bill related to Taiwan is binding as such. Presently, the bill is pending for presidential assent.

JAPAN

UK and Japan to jointly develop next-generation fighter engines

In a press statement released on [22 December](#), the United Kingdom's (UK) Defence Ministry declared that Japan and Britain are set to develop an engine demonstrator capable of supporting [sixth generation fighter planes](#). The two countries have signed a [Memorandum of Cooperation](#) to team up on the engine demonstrator and other areas of technology. Work on the engine demonstrator is likely to start from early 2022 with the UK

investing an initial £30 million in planning, digital designs and innovative manufacturing developments. Further, London is prepared to invest another £200 million to develop a full-scale demonstrator power system. This [collaboration](#) has been possible largely due to strategic convergence between the two countries. The UK, through its funding initiatives, is keen to design a world-leading Future Combat Air System, and Japan, through its F-X programme, is eager to develop a future fighter aircraft to replace the F-2 aircraft. Reportedly, this work will be led by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) and IHI in Japan, and Rolls-Royce and BAE Systems in the UK.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

North Korea urges troops to show more loyalty to Kim

Pyongyang, while marking the 10th anniversary of Kim Jong-un's accession as supreme military leader, urged its 1.2 million troops to show [greater loyalty](#) to Kim. The official newspaper *Rodong Sinmun*, in a lengthy editorial, urged that North Korea's military soldiers and commanders should become an "impregnable fortress and bullet-proof walls in devotedly defending (Kim) with their lives". Further, it called for building a more modern, advanced military that serves as a "reliable guardian of our state and people". Lastly, it expressed that North Korea's troops and people must uphold Kim's leadership to establish a powerful socialist country.

US-South Korea Defence Chiefs Meet

The United States (US) Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and his South

Korean counterpart Suh Wook led the [53rd Security Consultative Meeting](#) between the two countries on 2 December. Reportedly, during the meeting, US officials spoke about a bigger role for South Korean forces in the Indo-Pacific; however, questions lingered about exactly what Seoul's role will be. Referring to the threat from Pyongyang, the two sides affirmed their commitment to diplomacy and maintaining a combined defence posture when dealing with North Korea. The [Joint Statement](#) released following the meeting, reiterated the US' commitment for defence and extended deterrence towards South Korea. Additionally, the two countries agreed to update the strategic guidance or war plan for defence against a North Korean attack. In a clear indication that the two countries are also looking beyond the threat posed by North Korea, the Joint Statement noted that officials from both countries "acknowledged the importance of preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait".

South Korea, North Korea, the US and China agree to end Korean War in principle

South Korean President Moon Jae-in declared in a joint press conference with Australian Prime Minister in Canberra that North Korea, the US and China have agreed in principle to [end the Korean War](#). The South Korean President contended that he believed that an end-of-war declaration would help revive stalled talks between North and South Korea and North Korea and the US. Earlier in October, the US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan expressing Washington's views on the formal declaration, stated that the US "may have somewhat different perspectives on

the precise sequence or timing of conditions for different steps" for reaching an agreement on a declaration. Meanwhile, recently, one of China's top diplomats Yang Jiechi, pledged his country's [support](#) for "the push for the end-of-war declaration".