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CHINA

China's Foreign Ministry Protest Against Pentagon Report

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs lodged a [strong protest](#) with the United States (US) following publication of the [report](#) "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China" by Pentagon on 19 October. Considering the report's warning against China's growing nuclear capability, a spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs contended that China remains committed to a defensive nuclear strategy and has no intention of engaging in arms race with any country. He added that "No country will be threatened by China's nuclear weapons as long as it does not use or threatens to use them against China". Accusing the report of hyping China threat, the spokesperson urged the US to abandon cold war mentality and hegemonic logic. Along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese Defence Ministry too [denounced the report](#), saying that it distorted the country's security policy and military strategy.

Li Shangfu Removed as China's Defence Minister

Li Shangfu who was serving as the 13th Minister of National Defence of China was [formally removed](#) from office and as State Councillor on 24 October, following his disappearance from public view for months. Li was also removed as the member of Central Military Commission.

While Beijing did not provide any official explanation about the disappearance and removal, [reports suggest](#) that the dismissal could be related to issues of corruption or political disloyalty towards Xi Jinping. As Beijing is yet to appoint another Minister of National Defence, General Zhang Youxia, Vice-Chairman of China's Central Military Commission has stepped in for the moment. Reportedly, General Zhang steered the 10th Xiangshan Forum held in Beijing from 29-31 October and [met with the](#) Defence Ministers of participating countries.

Russia-China Talks on the Sidelines of 10th Xiangshan Forum

On 30 October General Zhang Youxia, Vice-Chairman of Central Military Commission of China [held talks](#) with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu on the sidelines of 10th Xiangshan Forum. During the meeting General Zhang, affirmed China's interest in maintaining a high-level bilateral relationship with Russia and cooperate to actively respond to security threats and challenges. The Russian Defence Minister on his part expressed Russia's willingness to deepen pragmatic exchanges and cooperation with China.

TAIWAN

Taiwan's Media Reports Increase in PLA Aircraft Intrusion

Taiwanese media reported [a substantial 42 percent increase](#) in intrusions by People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone

(ADIZ) in September in comparison to 132 incidents of intrusions in August. It was also reported that 565 Chinese military aircraft were seen flying around Taiwan in September. Reportedly, in view of increasing cross-strait tensions, Japan has been “[considering setting up an evacuation shelter for residents](#)” of Okinawa. The plan was reported when Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno shared it with the Municipality Mayors in Okinawa, who had, in fact, asked for funds for shelter infrastructure. Okinawa prefecture’s Mayors also reminded Matsuno the need for “[the expansion of port functions to accommodate large-scale ships and the construction of underground parking lots that could serve as emergency evacuation sites.](#)”

JAPAN

Joint Air, Sea Drills between Japan, US and South Korea

On 9 and 10 October 2023, the navies of Japan, US and the Republic of Korea (ROK) [conducted](#) a joint naval drill in the East China Sea. The Maritime Self-Defence Forces (MSDF) of Japan announced that a total of seven vessels, five from the ROK and one each from Japan and the US participated in the drills in order to boost “regional stability”. Japan dispatched a *Hyuga*-class destroyer, while the US was represented by the USS *Ronald Reagan*. The three sides conducted anti-submarine drills, and confirmed information sharing procedures in the event of contingencies.

On 22 October, the South Korean Air Force informed media outlets that it had [conducted](#) a joint aerial exercise with its counterparts in Japan and the US on the eve of an unprecedented stopover by a US B-52 strategic bomber in the ROK. This marks the first time such a trilateral exercise took place, which aimed to “enhance defence cooperation amid North Korea’s growing missile and nuclear threats”. The exercise involved six fighter aircraft from Japan Air Self-Defence Forces (ASDF) and South Korean Air Force escorting the US B-52 bomber in its ceremonial flybys at a defence trade show in Seongnam near Seoul.

Japan to Station ASDF Fighters on a Rotational Basis in Australia

Japan’s Defence Ministry is aiming to deploy fighter jets to Australia on a rotational basis from early next year to [conduct joint exercises](#). The objective of the joint exercises is to simulate a security situation where Japan exercises its right to collective self-defence and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) resist a military attack against the Australian forces. In recent years, Japan and Australia have deepened their security cooperation to counter China’s increasing military expansion. The entry procedures regarding the joint exercises have been streamlined after the signing of a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) in January last year. Japan’s Defense Ministry officials have highlighted that the objective of the rotational deployment is to train in a wider airspace.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

US and South Korea Conduct Joint Anti-Submarine Drills near Guam

The US and South Korea conducted an [anti-submarine exercise](#) termed “Silent Shark” in Guam from 6 to 8 October. The exercise was designed to reinforce the countries’ anti-submarine warfare capability against threats from North Korea. During the three-day exercise, joint search, track and attack activities were carried out on a mock submarine. South Korea dispatched the 1,800-ton *Son Won* II-class submarine and two of their P-3C patrol aircraft. Further, the US Navy’s [fast-attack submarine *Topeka*](#) and South Korea’s diesel-electric submarine *Jung Ji* joined hands with reconnaissance aircraft from the US Navy’s Patrol Squadron 8 and South Korea’s Navy Squadron 611. Cmdr. James Fulks, the commanding officer of *Topeka* stated that the exercises were aimed to maintain high-level of readiness. He added that “Our increasing interoperability with ROK submarines promotes democracy and provides security for the region.”

Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov Visit North Korea

On 19 October, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [visited Pyongyang](#) and met the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and North Korea’s Foreign Minister Choe Sun Hui. Reportedly, Lavrov’s visit concerned boosting defence ties between the two countries. While the details of the meeting

were not publicly available, Russian news agency TASS reported that Russia is willing to support regular security talks between China, Russia and North Korea.