

EAST ASIA MILITARY MONITOR

VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 8

August 2023



- **China Replaces Leadership of its Rocket Force**
- **Chinese Coast Guard Use Water Canon on Filipino Supply Boat in South China Sea**
- **Quality Weapons Required for PLA to Win Battles**
- **27th Malabar Exercise Held**
- **Japan's MoD Presents Budget Appropriations Plan for FY2024**
- **Surge in tensions between Taiwan and China**
- **Boosting Taiwan's Defence Preparedness**
- **The US, Japan and South Korea meet at Camp David**
- **North Korea protests against US arms aid to Taiwan**



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES AND ANALYSES

No. 1, Development Enclave,

Rao Tula Ram Marg, Delhi Cantt., New Delhi-110 010

Telephone: 91-11-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191, Website: www.idsa.in

CHINA

China Replaces Leadership of its Rocket Force

The Chinese government made [significant leadership changes](#) within its Rocket Force, the military unit responsible for managing its nuclear arsenal, reportedly due to corruption concerns. According to a report from *Xinhua*, Wang Houbin, a former deputy commander of the Navy, has been appointed as the new commander of the Rocket Force. Further, Xu Xisheng, an Air Force officer and a member of the party Central Committee, has assumed the role of the Rocket Force's new Political Officer. These leadership changes coincide with the disappearance from public view of the former Rocket Force commander, General Li Yuchao, and his deputy, General Liu Guangbin. Li, Liu, and numerous other current and former deputies of the former commander have been under investigation by the Central Military Commission's anti-corruption unit. Beijing has refrained from officially disclosing the whereabouts of Li and Liu. Nevertheless, foreign officials, who have been briefed on intelligence regarding the matter, suggest that the two senior generals are under investigation for alleged involvement in the unauthorized disclosure of military secrets.

Chinese Coast Guard Use Water Canon on Filipino Supply Boat in South China Sea

On 6 August, Philippines [accused](#) China of using water canon to prevent a Filipino supply boat from delivering new troops, water, food and fuel to the Philippines occupied-shoal in the disputed South China Sea. The tense confrontation occurred at the Second Thomas Shoal. Philippines in its

statement informed that China's actions violated the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and prevented one of the two Filipino boats from delivering supplies needed by its troops. The Philippine military also called on the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) and the Chinese Central Military Commission (CCMC) to avoid provocative actions which could lead to miscalculations and accidents. The Chinese Coast Guard Commission [responded](#) that the Filipino supply boats were "intruding into waters near Ren'ai Jiao of China's Nansha Islands". CCG Spokesperson Gan Yu declared that "China has indisputable sovereignty over Nansha Islands, including Ren'ai Jiao, and its surrounding waters. CCG will continue to perform law enforcement in waters under Chinese jurisdiction".

Quality Weapons Required for PLA to Win Battles

In a meeting with military officials on 30 August, General Zhang Youxia, first Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission called on the top military personnel and defence officials to pay special attention to [military procurement and technological development](#) of arms to improve the quality of the weaponry. The Senior General highlighted that quality weapons will be required for the People's Liberation Army to fulfil its modernisation goals and win any battle in the complex global situation. He emphasised that China faces an increasingly challenging environment and advanced arms and better quality control must be the top priority of the officers to strengthen combat capability and protect lives of troops in case of conflict. According to the PLA Daily General Zhang called on the military

officials to focus on “accurately and precisely, provide quality supplies that can meet our needs in any real battles and struggles, deepen rectification of quality controls of active supplies, spur the use of advanced technologies in [weapons] development ... and promote generational upgrades of weapons”.

JAPAN

27th Malabar Exercise Held

The navies of India, the United States, Australia and Japan [held](#) the 27th edition of the Malabar Exercises off the coast of Sydney between 11 and 21 August 2023. The Exercise followed a Sea Power Conference hosted by Australia which was attended by all four Quad members along with other navies of the region. The Exercises commenced at the East Australian Exercise area in the seas near Sydney, and comprised of two distinct phases, a harbour phase between 11 and 15 August, followed by a sea phase between 15 and 21 August. The four navies, represented by surface and submarine assets as well as patrol aircraft, conducted a series of exercises designed to enhance interoperability, including weapons drills and cross-deck landings by shipborne helicopters. India was represented by the indigenously-built destroyer *INS Kolkata* as well as the frigate *INS Sahyadri* in addition to P8-I maritime patrol aircraft, while the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Forces were represented by the Asahi-class destroyer *JS Shiranui*.

Japan's MoD Presents Budget Appropriations Plan for FY2024

Officials of the Japanese Ministry of Defence [told](#) Jiji Press that the Ministry has

decided to add 380 billion yen to its budget request for fiscal 2024 in order to construct two Aegis-equipped warships that are expected to play a role in Japan's missile defence strategy as envisaged in the National Security Strategy of 2022. The appropriation request also includes funds earmarked for the establishment of permanent "joint headquarters" that will collectively command the three Self-Defense Forces.

The Ministry of Defense plans to increase its budget appropriation to a record high of 7.7 trillion yen, a significant increase from the current fiscal year's budget of 6.8 trillion yen. The government plans to secure a defence budget of around 43 trillion yen from fiscal 2011 to fiscal 2027 in order to strengthen its defence capabilities.

TAIWAN

Surge in tensions between Taiwan and China

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence [highlighted](#) the possibility of surge in tensions following renewed Chinese activity around Taiwan on 29 August. Taipei's warning came in the backdrop of China sending fighter jets near the sensitive Taiwan median line. According to the Ministry's statement, Beijing as part of its “joint combat patrol” sent 24 aircraft including fighter jets, bombers and drones, as well as five warships close to Taiwan. Reportedly, some warplanes crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's south-west air defence identification zone (ADIZ). The Ministry also called on China to immediately halt “unilateral acts” which could deteriorate the security environment of the region.

Boosting Taiwan's Defence Preparedness

According to media reports, the United States (US) military is negotiating with the Philippines “[to develop a new civilian port on the Batanes Islands](#).” These islands are north of the Philippines and south of Taiwan in the South China Sea and are at a distance of 200 kilometres from Taiwan. Taiwanese media described the development as important for Taiwan as it “[would bolster the U.S. presence in a strategic sea lane on Taiwan's south flank](#).”

Amidst an increasing threat perception from China, Taiwan is developing light frigates. Reportedly, two frigates will be ready [by October 2026](#). Separately, Taiwan's newly released Defence White Paper informed that Taiwan will “[produce 7,700 unmanned aerial vehicles \(UAVs\) for military use by 2028](#).” In order to boost Taiwan's defence preparedness, the US “[approved the sale of 108 \[M1A2T\] Abrams in 2019 for US\\$2.2 billion](#).” Taiwanese Defence Ministry has informed that out of the 108 tanks, Taiwan will receive 38 in 2024, 42 in 2025, and 28 in 2026.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

The US, Japan and South Korea meet at Camp David

On 18 August, the US President Joe Biden convened a trilateral summit between the US, Japan and South Korea at Camp David. The summit is expected to pave a way for [trilateral cooperation](#) between these three countries. Reportedly, these meetings will extend to foreign ministers, defence ministers, national security advisors, and other cabinet-level officials on an annual basis. During the summit a commitment was made to enhance their collaborative efforts to address global challenges, which

was dubbed the “[Spirit of Camp David](#).” President Biden highlighted that this alliance is not limited to Asia but had global significance. [A joint statement](#) and fact sheet were released, pledging cooperation in advanced technology, batteries and critical minerals. The two documents also informed of the leadership's willingness to sustain dialogues within shared forums and institutions, and cooperate in addressing what was referred to as “economic coercion.” However, not all sections of the [South Korean population](#) were [unequivocal](#) in their support for this meeting, as stated by the [Chosun Media](#). Additionally, historical issues cast a shadow over cooperation with Japan.

North Korea protests against US arms aid to Taiwan

On 4 August North Korea [protested](#) against the US supplying of weapons to Taiwan, criticising it as an attempt to escalate tensions in the region towards a potential conflict. Reportedly, Pyongyang has claimed that the US is pushing the situation to the brink of war.

The US recently unveiled a support package for Taiwan valued at up to US\$ 345 million. In response, Maeng Yong Rim, the Director-General of North Korea's Foreign Ministry's Chinese Affairs Department, conveyed in an official statement that the plan constitutes a “dangerous political and military provocation” and a blatant violation of the One-China principle.

The statement also claimed that the US harbours sinister intentions to make Taiwan a forward base against China, positioning it as the frontline in executing its strategy to deter China.