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CHINA

Chinese President Xi Jinping Commands Boosting Force Modernisation in Western Theatre Command

Following his inspection of the Air Force stationed at the Western Theatre Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Chinese Premier Xi Jinping [commanded](#) boosting the modernisation of the armed forces in the Western Theatre Command, facing the South China Sea and Taiwan. Xi who is the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) remarked that it is important that the PLA stay committed to accomplishing the various tasks the Party and the People have entrusted to it. He emphasised the need to “enhance military preparedness and ensure airspace security by thoroughly carrying out regular air defence.” Further, there is also a need to accelerate the pace of integrating new equipment and forces into current combat systems. Finally, he called for continuous efforts to carry out training under real combat situations and maintenance of the “Party's leadership” over armed forces in ideological, political and organisational terms.

In a separate development, a [new anti-corruption](#) drive in China has resulted in detention of several former and current senior commanders in the PLA's Rocket Force, a key element in China's nuclear arsenal. According to a report in the *South China Morning Post*, the CMC's anti-graft body, the Commission for Discipline Inspection, along with its audit office, have been investigating the Force's current commander Li Yuchao, as well as Zhang

Zhenzhong and Liu Guangbin, his past and present deputies. At present, Wang Houbin, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN)'s former deputy commander, has replaced Li Yuchao as the new commander of the Rocket Force.

Chinese and Russian Delegates Attend North Korea's Military Parade

To commemorate the 70th armistice anniversary of the Armistice, North Korea hosted a grand [military parade on 27 July](#) in which delegates from China and Russia participated. The event saw the presence of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chinese Communist Party official Li Hongzhou, who joined North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the festivities. The parade showcased Pyongyang's advanced military capabilities, including newly developed surveillance and attack drones. Of significance note was the unveiling of a nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile with the potential to target the US mainland. Some military analysts speculated on the missile's design, suggesting possible Russian assistance. Following the parade, Kim Jong Un engaged in separate bilateral discussions with the Chinese and Russian delegates. During the talks, Kim expressed solidarity with Russia over the Ukraine conflict and declared his intent of bolstering strategic and tactical collaboration in defense and security matters with China.

Chinese Defence Minister Meets Pakistani Chief of Air Staff

On 25 July, Chinese State Councillor and Defence Minister Li Shangfu met with Pakistan's Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal

Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu. Gen Li Shangfu conveyed that President Xi Jinping attaches great importance to the relations between China and Pakistan and that the two countries should cooperate closely in various fields and promote building of a shared China-Pakistan shared future. He also noted that the two countries should use the *Shaheen* joint training platform to implement exchanges of experience, enhance synergy and expand the depth of cooperation. Air Marshal Zaheer, in his response thanked General Li Shangfu for China's continued assistance to the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and informed that PAF is willing to further deepen cooperation and exchanges with China in combat, equipment and other fields, to jointly address the ever-changing regional security challenges.

JAPAN

Joint Drills Between Japan and Allies

Japan [conducted](#) joint maritime drills with South Korea and the United States on 16 July, where three Aegis vessels from the three militaries took part. These drills were designed to test information sharing and joint missile tracking procedures. The drills were intended to demonstrate the readiness of the three countries' navies to counter North Korean ballistic missile launches, tests of which were repeatedly conducted by the latter country on separate occasions across July.

On 27 July, Japan [conducted](#) its first joint fighter aircraft drill with the French armed forces. Three F-15 aircraft as well as two F-2 aircraft of the Air Self-Defense Forces participated in the drills alongside two

Rafale fighters from the French Air and Space Force, for three days until 29 July. The drills were conducted near Nyutabaru Air Force Base in Miyazaki Prefecture in the south, but the jets also conducted an overflight of the Kanto region surrounding Tokyo, accompanied by transport aircraft and airborne tankers.

Talks Resume Between Japanese and Chinese Militaries

Japanese and Chinese military officials [met](#) in Beijing on 18 July, after four years, during which contact was disrupted by the COVID-pandemic. The Japanese delegation included 13 field-grade officers from the Self-Defense Forces, and spoke with a Chinese military-affiliated think tank, following which they interacted with Jing Jiangfeng, Deputy Chief of the Central Military Commission's Joint Staff Department. The delegation was also escorted to PLA bases in Qingdao, Hangzhou and Xi'an, and participated in unspecified 'cultural events' as well. The exchange programme was launched in 2001 by a private Japanese think-tank, but gained importance after 2012, when clashes around the Senkaku Islands made it more important to maintain channels of communication. The last such exchange took place in September 2019.

TAIWAN

US to Provide More Aid to Taiwan

The US government announced that it would give [NT\\$10.9 billion \(US\\$345\) million worth military aid](#) to Taiwan "from U.S. stockpiles", which would comprise defence equipment and services. This aid will be used for military education and

training. Besides, on its part, the Taiwan government also [proposed NT\\$440 billion \(US\\$14 billion\)](#) for defence expenditure in its Fiscal Year 2024 Central Government Budget. Compared to the last year, this is a 7.5 percent increase. The Taiwanese media has reported that since President Tsai Ing-wen came to power in 2016, the defence expenditure has seen [“a 38% increase over the course of eight years.”](#)

War Games Held Simulating Cross-Strait Conflict

On 24 July, Taipei conducted [war games](#) to test the response of its forces to a cross-strait conflict. The five-day exercise named *Han Kuang* was reported to be the most comprehensive in decades. The exercise was organised largely over fears about PLA's expansion of its missile force and deployment of DF-17 medium-range ballistic missiles in provinces facing the Taiwan Strait. According to Taiwanese Defence Ministry's statements, the drills exhibited the military's ability to maintain air and naval combat strength against a full-scale PLA attack.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Kim Jong Un of North Korea Pledges to Enhance Collaboration with China

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held a meeting with the [visiting Chinese delegation](#) in Pyongyang following the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the conclusion of the Korean War. Reportedly during the meeting, Kim expressed his commitment to elevate the bilateral relationship between the two nations to an unprecedented level. North Korea's State media outlet KCNA, further

reported that, "both sides reiterated their commitment to navigate the intricate international landscape proactively and steadily elevate the camaraderie and cooperative partnership to an unparalleled stage."

ROK Defence Diplomacy in July 2023

The [3rd South Korea-Saudi Arabia Defense Cooperation Committee](#) meeting was held on 10 July in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. South Korea's Vice Defence Minister, Shin Beom-Chul and the Chief of the General Staff of Saudi Arabia, Lt. Gen. Fayyadh Bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili led their respective teams. The objective of the meeting was to strengthen bilateral defence and defence industry cooperation. The meeting between the two countries followed Saudi Arabia [signing a \\$800 million defence deal](#) in March 2022, with South Korean companies, including Hanwha Corp, Poongsan Crop and LIG Nex1 Co. The deal covers supply of ammunition and other defence systems to Saudi Arabia. Reportedly, why Saudi Arabia has turned to South Korea is [due to imposition of ban](#) by the Biden administration on export of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia due to the latter's alleged involvement in Yemen's civil war.

Meanwhile, as a marker of [major success of South Korea's defense diplomacy](#), the country's largest defence company Hanwha, won a \$7billion contract to build infantry-fighting vehicles for the Australian Army. During the process of bidding, Hanwha beat rival German company Rheinmetall Defence. According to Australia's Defence Industry Ministry, the deal will represent one of the largest capability acquisition projects in the Army's history.