

EAST ASIA MILITARY MONITOR

VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 8

AUGUST 2024



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CHINA

China's PLA's 97th Anniversary

On 1 August, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) celebrated the 97th anniversary. China's President Xi Jinping as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) in a party leadership study session called for the PLA to develop into a [world-class military](#). In the party study session, Xi urged the PLA to modernise border, coastal and air defence. The Chinese defence minister Dong Jun also made remarks at the grand reception organised in the Red Hall by the Ministry of Defence. He emphasised that the PLA would be [vigilant](#) towards any separatist activity and would work towards realising the PLA's 2027 centenary goal.

Tibet Military Region Uses VR Simulation Technology to Improve Military Training

Reportedly, in late August, a brigade of the Tibet Military Region organized a comprehensive training of tank offensive tactics. During the training, it was pointed out that troops stationed in the snowy Tibetan plateau experienced difficulty in combat training in the harsh weather. In order to overcome this problem, the PLA built more than [10 simulation training rooms](#) with VR equipment and technology, so that officers and soldiers can carry out professional military training of various themes inside the camp. The soldiers used VR equipment for combat drills and for real time screen monitoring and data

analysis. The system also helped in evaluating the performance of the soldier participating in the simulated training and the quality of the exercise. According to media reports, the VR system simulated various sudden, dangerous special situations to improve the emergency response capabilities of officers and soldiers. PLA considers the simulation training as a pre-adaptation to the battlefield, as actual exercises were also conducted in training sites.

JAPAN

Japan's Defense Minister Visits Vietnam, Cambodia

Japanese Minister of Defense Minoru Kihara [visited](#) Cambodia and Vietnam on 5 and 6 August, respectively, in a bid to boost defence cooperation with the two Southeast Asian states. He [started](#) his tour with Phnom Penh, where he paid a courtesy call on Senate President Hun Sen and his son, Prime Minister Hun Manet. Kihara also later met with his counterpart General Tea Seiha. The two leaders [held](#) the Japan-Cambodia Defense Ministers' Meeting, where they applauded the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2023 and agreed to work together to bolster Japan-Cambodia defence cooperation. The two ministers also concurred on the need to strengthen Japan-ASEAN military cooperation through the Japan-introduced Japan-ASEAN Ministerial Initiative for Enhanced Defense Cooperation (JASMINE).

The next day Kihara visited Hanoi, where he [paid](#) respects to the country's founder Ho Chi Minh and [held](#) discussions with his Vietnamese counterpart General Phan Van Giang. At the meeting the two sides expressed positive expectations for the continuous upgradation of Japan-Vietnam strategic ties after their elevation to the level of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. They also welcomed developments in Japan's transfer of equipment and technology to Vietnam, including decommissioned material handling vehicles expected to be transferred to the latter under a 2021 agreement. The Memorandum of Implementation (MoI) and Letter of Arrangement for these vehicles was signed by the two ministers at the end of the meeting. Kihara rounded out his visit by visiting Hanoi's National Defense Academy and paying a courtesy call to Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh.

Record Budget for Japan's Defense Ministry

On 30 August, the Japanese Defense Ministry submitted a budget exceeding 58 billion USD in view of [strengthening its deterrence against China](#). The budget request included proposal, outlining the ministry's intent to modernise Japanese armed forces. Reportedly, the increased budget will be utilised to boost Japan's counter-defence capabilities through incorporation of small attack drones, long-range stand-off missiles and small satellites to Self Defense Forces' (SDF)

military assets. Further, the Ministry plans to form a new Maritime Self Defense Force (MSDF) information group consisting units with intelligence, cyber, communications, meteorology and oceanography functions, similar to the United States (US) Navy's 10th Fleet cyber unit. Furthermore, anticipating renaming of the Air Self Defense Force to Space Self-Defense Force in fiscal 2027, the Ministry intends to create a space operations brigade which will be responsible for the space domain.

TAIWAN

Taiwan's Military Modernisation

Recently, Taiwan [test fired](#) its indigenous *Tien-Kung* III (Sky Bow III) land-based surface-to-air missile and U.S.-made Patriot PAC-II surface-to-air missiles. This was demonstration of its precision missile capabilities. The unconfirmed reports [suggested](#) that it also tested advanced version of *Hsiung Feng* II-E (Brave Wind II-E). Furthermore, the media [reported](#) that Taiwan's BGM-71 TOW 2A missiles repeatedly missed their targets during a military drill. It was observed that out of 17 TOW 2A missiles fired, "only seven hit their intended targets." This has underlined the problem of aging ordnance of Taiwan. In another development, the US has [confirmed](#) that delay in delivery of F-16 jets to Taiwan is not due to the "COVID-19-related supply chain issues cited previously." Instead, the reasons behind the delay are "complex developmental challenges."

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

South Korea-US Military Partnership

South Korea and the US conducted their annual [joint military exercise](#) called “Ulchi Freedom Shield” during 19 to 29 August. This military exercise was conducted to strengthen the [combined response](#) against the North Korean ballistic missiles threat, cyberattacks and the jamming of GPS signals by Pyongyang at the inter-Korean maritime borders. It was also reported that the joint military exercise held drills simulating response to a [potential North Korean nuclear attack](#). South Korea has also [planned to buy](#) 36 AH-64E Apache helicopters worth 3.5 billion USD from the US to bolster its defense capabilities against North Korea.

North Korea Inaugurates New Weapon Systems

North Korea announced that the military will deploy 250 new kinds of tactical [missile launchers](#). The North Korean leader Kim Jong-un appreciated the hard work of engineers and workers for achieving self-reliance in developing this new weapon system. It was also reported that North Korea has produced “[new suicide drones](#)” which are similar to the Russian Lancet-3 drones. Pyongyang also [tested](#) 240mm Multiple Rocket Launcher System (MRLS) which is claimed to have a new guidance system.