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CHINA

PLA's New Overseas Military Base in Laos

China's Ministry of Defence in an official statement, released on 30 September, informed that the China-Laos Joint Support and Training Centre and the China-Laos Friendship Aviation Academy are now operational at the Ban Keun Airport of Laos. Without providing any details on the personnel or equipment that are to be placed at the airbase, the statement simply mentioned that the two institutions will be jointly maintained and operated by both sides. An inauguration ceremony was held and was attended by Laos' then Deputy Prime Minister Saleumxay Kommasith and Minister of National Defense Senior Lieutenant General Khamlieng Outhakaysone. A delegation from Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) also participated. Observers have noted this development as the PLA establishing a third overseas military base; the other two being Cambodia and Djibouti.

A Military Unit of the PLA Xinjiang Military Command Conducted Drills

According to a news report of 30 September, a combined arms regiment under the Xinjiang Military Command conducted a full-process combat readiness drill. The exercise comprehensively tested the unit's capabilities in rapid response, long-distance maneuvering, and handling special contingencies, as well as its combat readiness awareness, proficiency, and material reserve levels. Simultaneously, the regiment organised mass-participation training competitions. This exercise was part of country-wide military drills carried out by the PLA. Various PLA units conducted training, combat readiness exercises, patrols, and duty assignments to mark the 77th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). For instance, a Rocket Unit of the PLA Eastern Theatre Command and a Radar Station of the PLA Southern Theatre Command Air Force also conducted their respective drills.

JAPAN

JSDF Dispatched to Indonesia for Disaster Relief

In a first-of-its-kind deployment, units of the Ground Self-Defence Forces (GSDF) of Japan were deployed to the Indonesian province of Kalimantan to fight forest fires. Indonesia, which has a Reciprocal Access Agreement in place with Japan and sought assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan on 28 August, which in turn requested the assistance of Ministry of Defence. SDF forces were then dispatched to the region on 16 September, with CH-47 Chinook helicopters. The GSDF undertook fire extinguishment activities in the affected areas. The operation came to an end on 28 September after the Indonesian government informed the Japanese side that the scale of the fires had receded to a level manageable for local authorities and the Indonesian armed forces.

Veer Guardian 2026 Concludes

The second edition of the India-Japan bilateral air exercise Veer Guardian was held from 9 to 22 September 2026, with the highlight being the participation of the Japanese Mitsubishi F-2A fighter aircraft for the first time in India. The F-2A, a licensed variant of the United States of America (USA)'s F-16 Fighting Falcon, is the mainstay of the Japanese Air Self-Defence Forces (JASDF) and has been in operation since 2000.

For the exercise, an aircraft from the 8th Air Wing based in Tsuiki Air Base in Fukuoka Prefecture flew to Air Force Station Jodhpur for the fourteen-day exercise, which saw them engaging in drills with the Indian Air Force's Su-30 MK1, Rafale and indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) platforms. Both air forces undertook advanced operational missions, including combat manoeuvres in the air, and engaged in extensive professional interactions. Mission planning conferences, subject matter expert exchanges, and interactions on engineering and aspects of aerospace safety were also conducted. The aim of the exercise was to foster deep operational synergy between the two Air Forces. On the second last day of the exercise, General Takehiro Morita, Chief of Staff of the JASDF visited the base accompanied by Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, Chief of the Air Staff. The two air chiefs then flew the indigenous Tejas fighter aircraft, with the Air Chief Marshal leading a sortie in a single-seater Tejas, followed by General Morita in a twin-seater Tejas variant. Overall, the exercise provided the means to enhance operation collaboration and strategic depth to the India-Japan defence partnership.

TAIWAN

Taiwan's Defence Expenditure for Military Modernisation

Taiwan's Army will spend US$345 million "to replenish its Stinger missile stockpile" by 2030. The expenditure will be made "under logistics and maintenance spending," not as new purchases. The proposed replenishment will only include missiles to be bought from the U.S. and not launch systems and vehicle platforms. Initially, the replenishment programme was to run till 2031. The revised programme has shortened it by one year, keeping funding amount the same. Likewise, Taiwan's Air Force will begin purchasing Advanced Hit Efficiency and Destruction (AHEAD) rounds and high-explosive tracer rounds for its 35 mm anti-aircraft guns from next year onward. The acquisition will require US$52.76 million. The purchase is to be completed by 2031. Furthermore, the Taiwanese military, which had planned to buy over 1,400 anti-ship missiles, including US-made land-based Harpoon systems, has revised the plan. It has now decided to buy an additional 200 anti-ship missiles over and above those initially planned. The purchase will cost US$693.38 million. Taiwan's National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology will supply the missiles over eight years, beginning from

2027. The new missiles will also include upgraded versions of the Hsiung Feng II and Hsiung Feng III missiles.

In a separate development the Taiwanese media noted that Taiwan's drone industry output is likely to cross US$1.58 billion annually by 2030. The initial estimate was US$1.26 billion. At present, Taiwanese companies manufacture around 70 percent of small drones, 60 percent of medium-sized drones and 30 percent of large drones domestically.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

South Korea's Military Deployment to the Strait of Hormuz

In September, it was reported in the South Korean media that Seoul might deploy military assets to the Strait of Hormuz. A team from South Korea consisting of defence and foreign ministry officials visited the West Asian region to assess the security situation and the possibility of sending military assets to secure the Strait of Hormuz for shipping. Notably, Seoul has been under pressure from the US to support America's military operations against Iran and to keep the Strait of Hormuz free and open. According to the reports, South Korea would probably send mainly the non-combat assets, such as the P-8A maritime patrol aircraft, bomb and sea mine disposal units to secure the Strait of Hormuz. However, Iran vehemently criticised the South Korean plans to send military assets to the Strait of Hormuz and warned of "serious consequences". Later, the South Korean Foreign Minister denied any plans to send military assets to the Strait of Hormuz.

North Korean Leader Praises Army

The North Korean leader Kim Jong-un applauded the role of the military and participation of the North Korean troops in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Kim made his remarks during the 78th anniversary of the founding of the North Korean regime on 9 September. Notably, the military ties between North Korea and Russia has deepened in the recent years, and Pyongyang has apparently sent thousands of troops to support Moscow against Kyiv. Kim Jong-un expressed "special thanks and high tribute" to the North Korean soldiers deployed in the overseas military operations. According to the South Korean estimate, since 2024, the Kim regime had sent about 16,000 troops to join Russia's war against Ukraine and a large number of North Korean soldiers have been assumed to have died in this conflict. According to another report, Ukraine transferred two North Korean soldiers captured by Kyiv to South Korea. It was also reported that sculptures would be installed in Hanoi, Vietnam to honour North Korean soldiers who participated in the Vietnam War.