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CHINA

MILITARY DIGEST

MARCH 2026

- **China Announces Defense Budget of 1.94 Trillion RMB (US\$281 billion)**
- **PLA sent a delegation to Europe to hold multiple defense dialogues**
- **PLA Navy commissioned two Type 055 Guided-Missile Destroyers**
- **Ministerial meeting of China-Vietnam "3+3" strategic dialogue held in Hanoi**
- **10th China-Vietnam Border Defense Friendship Exchange took place**

China Announces Defense Budget of 1.94 Trillion RMB (US\$281 billion) for 2026

On March 10, China's national defense budget for 2026 has been officially [announced](#) at 1.94 trillion RMB, representing a year-on-year increase of 6.9%. This marks the 11th consecutive year that China's defense budget has maintained single-digit growth. In 2016, China's defense budget [saw](#) a 7.6% increase, bringing to an end a five-year period of consecutive double-digit growth. Subsequently over the six-year period from 2021 to the present, the growth rate of China's defense budget has consistently hovered around 7% each year. According to CCTV News, the national defense expenditure is primarily [directed](#) towards the following areas: 1) For the modernization of national defense and armed forces that include integrated development of mechanization, informatization, and intelligentization. 2) For optimization of the joint operations system, systematic development of new-domain and new-type combat forces, and to further develop advanced combat capabilities. 3) To accelerate the development of advanced weapons and equipment, innovation in national defense technology, and to expedite the construction of a modern logistics support system. 4) To further promote political education and rectification, to advance combat-oriented military training, and to build modern military talent pool. This defense budget is [nearly](#) one-third of the United States' national defense spending.

PLA sent a delegation to Europe to hold multiple defense dialogues

China's Ministry of National Defense (MND) [sent](#) a delegation to Europe for seven-day visit to the European Union, NATO, and Switzerland to hold the 15th China-EU Security Policy Dialogue between Defense Departments, the 9th China NATO Security Policy Dialogue, and the 15th China-Switzerland Working Dialogue between Defense Ministers from March 23 to 29, 2026. During these meetings, the delegations discussed issues of mutual concern, including the international and regional security situation. The European Union and China [held](#) their 15th annual consultation on security and defense in Brussels on March 24, 2026. The meeting was co-chaired by Benedikta von Seherr-Thoß, Director for Peace, Security, and Defense at the European External Action Service (EEAS), and Major General Guo Hongtao (郭鸿涛), Deputy Director of the Office for International Military Cooperation of China's Central Military Commission. On Ukraine War, the EU side expressed its support for Ukraine and said that China's stance on this war continues to impact EU-China relations and called upon China to exert its influence on Moscow to stop the war. Besides, the two sides also discussed security issues in Asia, such as maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, including the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait. Moreover, the two sides exchanged views on the situation in Iran and the wider region, nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, and space security. On March 25, Major

General Guo Hongtao, Deputy Director of the Office for International Military Cooperation of the China's Central Military Commission, [held](#) a meeting with Lieutenant General Enrico Barduani, Vice Chairman of the European Union Military Committee. A separate meeting was organized between NATO representatives and the PLA delegation. NATO officials confirmed that the meeting aimed to "maintain regular dialogue through both civilian and military channels to foster mutual transparency, with the objective of safeguarding the Alliance's security interests." Last iteration of the EU, NATO, and China meeting was held in March 2024 in Beijing.

PLA Navy commissioned two Type 055 Guided-Missile Destroyers

In early March, China [commissioned](#) two more Type 055 guided-missile destroyers "Dongguan" and "Anqing" into the PLA Eastern Theatre Command Navy. Soon after the commissioning, the two destroyer warships were sent for combat drills at East China Sea. The Type 055 destroyer is a new generation of guided-missile destroyer developed by China, and it is PLA Navy's largest, most technologically advanced, and comprehensively combat-capable vessel of its kind. The warship is equipped with advanced radar systems, universal vertical launch systems, and integrated radio-frequency technology into a single cohesive platform. With a full-load displacement of approximately 12,000 tons, the Type 055 destroyers is [equipped](#) with a 130mm main gun and a

112-cell vertical launch system. Powered by two gas turbines, the vessel is capable of reaching speeds of up to 30 knots. The ship's primary antennas feature a conformal design, endowing it with a high level of information integration and stealth capabilities. The first warship of Type 055 guided-missile destroyer was launched in June 2017, and it was commissioned as "Nanchang" in January 2020. The warship is known for implementing PLA Navy's strategy of "offshore defense and open-sea protection". With these additions, the total number of Type 055 guided-missile destroyers in the PLA Navy's fleet has reached 10.

Ministerial meeting of China-Vietnam "3+3" strategic dialogue held

The first ministerial meeting of China-Vietnam "3+3" strategic dialogue on diplomacy, defense, and public security was [held](#) in Hanoi on March 16, 2026. The meeting was co-chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong and Minister of National Defense Dong Jun and their Vietnamese counterparts Foreign Minister Le Hoai Trung, Defense Minister Phan Van Giang and Minister of Public Security Luong Tam Quang. The two sides held discussions on changing international landscape, safeguarding political security, advancing defense and law enforcement cooperation etc. In his opening remarks, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that this dialogue represents the first strategic communication platform of its kind globally, and it is a vital initiative to

safeguard political system security and deepen strategic coordination. He suggested to promote an equal and orderly multi-polar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization. Chinese Minister of State Security Wang Xiaohong [pointed](#) out that the public security ministries of the two sides should prioritize political security and enhance efforts to prevent and resist “color revolution”. He suggested to improve law enforcement and security cooperation mechanism in areas such as cybersecurity, combating online gambling and telecom fraud, drug control, and fugitive repatriation and asset recovery. Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun in his remarks said, China is willing to work with Vietnam to enhance mutual trust in military security, further expand cooperation areas, improve the quality and effectiveness of cooperation, jointly safeguard maritime security and stability through positive interaction, and push bilateral defense exchanges and cooperation to a new level. In turn, Vietnamese side said the country is willing to work with China to prepare for high-level exchanges, cooperation in various fields, and strengthen multilateral coordination. The two sides agreed to conduct the second ministerial meeting of the “3+3” strategic dialogue in China.

10th China-Vietnam Border Defense Friendship Exchange took place

The 10th China-Vietnam Border Defense Friendship Exchange [took](#) place from March 16 to 20 in relevant waters, border

ports, and the waters of the Beibu Gulf within China’s Guangxi and Vietnam’s Quang Ninh Province. The two sides organized activities including joint patrols and maritime training exercises, border medical outreach services, joint military-civilian cultural and sports galas, and wreath-laying ceremonies at war memorial monuments. China’s Defense Minister Dong Jun and his Vietnamese counterpart Phan Van Giang jointly [presided](#) over the meeting. In his remarks, Dong Jun said, the event reflects the high level and distinctiveness of military exchanges between the two countries. He suggested to make full use of the border defense exchange activities by maintaining close strategic communication between the two sides. He recommended the two sides to further deepen practical cooperation in areas such as maritime security and personnel exchanges and contribute to building a China-Vietnam community with a shared future of strategic significance. In turn, the Vietnamese Defense Minister Phan Van Giang said the two sides have maintained strong momentum in border defense exchanges, and pointed out that Vietnam has always regarded consolidating and developing relations with China as a top priority and a strategic choice in its foreign policy. Vietnam is ready to work with China to improve cooperation in various fields and to further deepen practical military ties, he noted. The two leaders took part in exchange activities, and attended the closing ceremony of joint patrol and joint maritime training in Beibu Gulf.