

EAST ASIA MILITARY MONITOR

VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 9

SEPTEMBER 2022



- **China expanding submarine base on South China Sea**
- **Chinese military told to resolutely follow party orders**
- **New PLA Reconnaissance Drone Unit**
- **Japan sends combat aircraft to participate in multinational exercise in Australia**
- **Japan-India 2+2 Defence and Foreign Ministerial Dialogue**
- **US clears arms sales to Taiwan**
- **Taiwan gears towards manufacturing indigenous weapons systems**
- **North Korea fired five ballistic missiles across September 2022**
- **South Korea, US, and Japan conduct trilateral anti-submarine training in the East Sea**



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 expanding submarine base on South China Sea

The latest analysis of satellite images of 31 July have [revealed](#) that China is expanding its submarine base on the edge of the South China Sea. An image of the Yulin naval base located on the Southern tip of China's Hainan Island showed two new piers around 240 metres long under construction and connected to reclaimed land. Reportedly, satellite images of this site from an earlier period showed the land reclamation process being underway and by late July, the structures of two new piers had taken shape. Yulin is a major base for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and houses its [nuclear-powered attack](#) and ballistic missile submarine fleet. Further, its location not only allows the PLA's South Sea Fleet access to the South China Sea but also to the busy shipping route stretching from the Middle East, through the Strait of Malacca to East Asia. According to Chinese military experts, the new site of submarine piers will possibly be used for [strategic deployment](#) of Type 094 ballistic missile submarines and Type 093 attack submarines.

Chinese military told to resolutely follow party orders

On 23 September, China's military mouthpiece the *PLA Daily* published a lengthy article on Chinese President Xi Jinping's ideas on the [armed forces](#). Besides emphasising that the Central Military Commission (CMC), chaired by President Xi has overall command and must be obeyed at all times, it asked the PLA to follow the Party's leadership and execute assigned tasks, regardless of how difficult and dangerous they are. Describing PLA soldiers as "bricks" ready to go wherever the Party sends them, the article called on

military personnel to take "whatever risks and challenges" were needed. Further, negating the idea of separating the PLA from the Party's control and transforming it into a national army, the article stated that "The [P]arty's absolute leadership over the military is an unshakeable system ... which plays an irreplaceable and important role in ensuring the [P]arty's long-term governance and political stability". It is noteworthy that the article accused two former vice-chairmen of the CMC, Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou of weakening the role of the CMC. However, that role was restored after they and other corrupt officials were brought down by Xi's anti-graft campaign. Thereafter the article hailed Xi's role in leading the PLA against the coronavirus when it first emerged in the Hubei province and called for absolute loyalty towards Xi. According to a Chinese military expert, the article was also aimed at conveying to the Chinese public that the CMC system sought prevention of abuse of military power by individuals.

New PLA Reconnaissance Drone Unit

The *Global Times* reported on 21 September that in one of the exercises of the PLA Western Theatre Command, the PLA introduced a [new reconnaissance drone unit](#). Reportedly, the new drone unit characterised by long-endurance will be able to grasp battlefield situation in real time. Further, the drone unit will be used for border defence and counter-terrorism to gain a better view of the terrain and troop movement of the adversary.

JAPAN

Japan sends combat aircraft to participate in multinational exercise in Australia

Amidst an increasing threat perception from China and North Korea's nuclear

missile programme, Japan on 3 September for the [first time sent combat aircraft](#) to Australia to participate in a multinational air combat exercise named Pitch Black. Accordingly, Japan sent five F-2As from the third squadron based at Hyakuri, northeast of Tokyo. Briefing the media about Japanese participation in the Pitch Black exercise, Col. Mastaka Todano said that the country's participation was necessary to improve capabilities and interoperability with partner nations and beyond. Further, the Japanese forces intend to gain more experience in large force employment in a coalition setting. He added that the exercise also allowed Japanese personnel to train with countries and aircraft they had never encountered before, specifically India's Sukhoi Su-30s and France's Dassault Rafales.

As per reports, fighters flew both air-to-air and air-to-ground missions alternating between friendly and adversarial forces during daytime and nighttime drills. The Japanese division supported by a KC-767 tanker of Japan's 404th Squadron from Komaki air base made its way to Australia via a stopover in Guam. During the exercise the F-2s used Australian KC-30A tankers for mid-air refuelling.

Japan-India 2+2 Defence and Foreign Ministerial Dialogue

On 8 September Japanese Minister of Defence Hamada Yasukazu and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hayashi Yoshimasa met their Indian counterparts Rajnath Singh and Dr. S. Jaishankar in Tokyo for the second [Japan-India 2+2 Dialogue](#). The ministers discussed regional and global issues of mutual concern, bilateral security and defence cooperation, and coordination among like-minded countries. Considering their respective presidencies of G7 and G20

next year, the ministers confirmed that both sides will work closely to lead the international community. At the end of the Dialogue, the two sides issued a [joint statement](#).

Besides [acknowledging](#) their commitment towards realising the common goal of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), the two sides also reaffirmed that unilateral change of status quo is unacceptable not only in the Indo-Pacific but also in any region. Addressing the media in a joint press conference, Rajnath Singh informed that the two countries will be launching the "Joint Service Staff Talks" involving the Joint Staff of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces and the Integrated Defence Staff of India. Reportedly, [issues relating](#) to enhancing existing defence cooperation and discussion over the Reciprocal Provision of Supply and Services Agreement were taken up during the one-on-one meeting.

TAIWAN

US clears arms sales to Taiwan

The US government declared on 2 September that [US\\$1.17 billion \(NT\\$33.69 billion\) arms sale](#) had been cleared for Taiwan. The deal includes supply of anti-ship and air-to-air missiles to Taipei. Reportedly, Taiwan will buy 60 AGM-84-L1 *Harpoon* anti-ship missiles of worth US\$355 million, four ATM-84-L1 *Harpoon* exercise missiles, and 100 AIM-9X *Sidewinder* short-range air-to-air missiles worth US\$85.6 million. This arms package is also likely to include four AIM-9X tactical guidance units, and logistics support for a Surveillance Radar System. Further, it will cover spare parts, repairs, and technical assistance. Incidentally, Taiwan hiked its defence budget for 2023 to "a record NT\$586.3 billion" in August this year in response to China's live-fire drills

following Nancy Pelosi's visit that month. It was "an increase of 13.9% compared to the previous annual budget."

Taiwan gears towards manufacturing indigenous weapons systems

In keeping with Taiwan's policy "to manufacture as many weapons systems inside the country as possible," [the Taiwanese Navy launched](#) "its first indigenous amphibious transport dock", the *Yushan*, built by CSBC Corporation, on 30 September 2022. As per information released to the media, the 10,600-tonne ship that "is 153 meters long and 23 m wide", and can sail "with a top speed of 21.5 knots," can perform both peace and wartime tasks and duties. It "can transport 673 soldiers, as well as amphibious armoured vehicles, Humvees, and helicopters", besides being "equipped with features protecting against electromagnetic pulses and radar detection" and capability of firing surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles. Thirty-two Sea Sword II missiles would be part of its basic equipment.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

North Korea fired five ballistic missiles across September 2022

North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles on 29 September, hours after the US Vice President Kamala Harris visited the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas. According to [Bloomberg](#), this was a high-stakes tour to express support for South Korea against Pyongyang's nuclear threats. The missiles were fired roughly five hours after Harris entered a hut from the South Korean side of the DMZ.

Previously, North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles off its east

coast on 28 September, a day before the US Vice President was scheduled to arrive in Seoul, and a single short-range ballistic missile toward its eastern sea on 25 September. According to [Reuters](#), the 25 September launch occurred as the US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *USS Ronald Reagan* and its strike group arrived in South Korea for joint military exercises, and the 28 September launch occurred two days later in waters off South Korea's east coast. The latter were launched from Pyongyang's Sunan district and flew 360 kilometres, reaching an altitude of 30 kilometres and a maximum velocity of Mach 6.

South Korea, US, and Japan conduct trilateral anti-submarine training in the East Sea

In a move to strengthen deterrence against North Korea's missile threats, South Korea, the US, and Japan conducted a trilateral anti-submarine exercise on 30 September close to the Korean Peninsula for the first time in five years. According to [Reuters](#), the trilateral exercise took place a day after the US Vice President Kamala Harris's visit to Seoul and the heavily fortified border between the two Koreas.

According to [Yonhap News Agency](#), the three navies summoned a variety of warships for this year's version, including South Korea's *Munmu* the Great destroyer, the *USS Ronald Reagan* aircraft carrier and the 9,800-ton guided missile cruiser *USS Chancellorsville*, and Japan's 5,100-ton Asahi-class destroyer. Reportedly, the training [centered](#) on locating, identifying, and tracking North Korean submarines that are capable of launching submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). Further, it aimed to increase the military's capacity to counter rising submarine threats from North Korea, including its submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM).