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CHINA

China-Laos Military Exercises

China and Laos held the China-Laos Friendship Shield-2023 Joint Military Exercise at Kommadam Academy of the Lao People's Armed Forces (LPAF) in Laos. The military drill aimed at improving capabilities to combat terrorism and was conducted to test responses to scenarios such as 'joint attacks on transnational armed criminal groups based in jungle mountains'. Reportedly, the Military Exercise was launched to strengthen defence cooperation between the two countries, agreed under the Joint Statement signed last year. The Exercise included live arms firing, comprehensive individual training, detachment tactics and combat service support. The combined arms brigade of the 75th Group Army under the People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s Southern Theatre Command, participated in the Exercise.

Major Arms Deal Talks between China, Saudi Arabia and Egypt

China's State-owned defence company, North Industries Group Corporation (Norinco) is reportedly in talks with Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI) for sale of weapons ranging from [reconnaissance drones to air defence systems](#). The two sides are negotiating over weapons like the Sky Saker FX80 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), the CR500 vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) UAV, the Cruise Dragon 5, two types of loitering munitions (also

known as suicide drones) and the HQ-17AE short-range air defence (SHORAD). According to media reports, the entire deal will be financed in Chinese yuan. Further, Egypt is also in talks with China over acquiring the Chengdu J-10C multirole fighter. A delegation from the Egyptian Air Force met with representatives from the Chengdu Aircraft Industry Group on the sidelines of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition, held in Malaysia from 23-27 May. These reports have [triggered speculation](#) that China is trying to step in as defence exporter when the United States (US) and Russia are busy with the Ukraine crisis.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech in high-level security meeting

In a speech at the [first meeting of the National Security Commission](#) under the 20th CPC Central Committee on 31 May, Xi Jinping called on the members to "deeply understand the complex and challenging circumstances facing national security, properly grasp major national security issues, and accelerate the efforts to modernize the country's national security system and capacity, so as to safeguard the new development pattern with a new security architecture and break new ground for national security work". Members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, Li Qiang, Zhao Leji and Cai Qi, and deputy heads of the National Security Commission, attended the meeting. During the meeting, the importance of improving the integrated

system to counter national security risks, enhance real-time monitoring and issue warnings promptly, was noted. Two documents *Guidelines on Speeding up the Building of Risk Monitoring and Early Warning System for National Security* and *Guidelines on Strengthening Extensive Public Education about National Security* were discussed and adopted in the meeting.

JAPAN

New bill to support indigenous defence industry

The lower house of the Japanese Diet [passed](#) a new bill on 9 May which guaranteed financial support from the Government to bolster domestic defence industry, allowing the Government to ensure its competitiveness as well as durability. The bill also allows the Government to assist defence manufacturers with cybersecurity as well as enable their expansion abroad, while criminalising the leakage of sensitive information such as the specifications of defence equipment with a monetary fine or a prison sentence. Finally, the bill enables the Government to directly take over ailing or non-performing facilities deemed to be important to national security if their owners are unable to run them efficiently.

The bill was initially proposed in February and approved by the Kishida cabinet for presentation to the Diet. The bill is now under consideration in the upper House, the House of Councillors.

NATO liaison office in Tokyo

On 10 May, Japan's Ambassador to the US Koji Tomita [hinted](#) that Japan is 'working towards' opening a liaison office for NATO in Tokyo soon. In remarks made to reporters, Tomita said that though there has not yet been any final confirmation, efforts are on to set up what would be the European alliance's first Asian liaison office in Tokyo. NATO itself has not confirmed the reports, but Nikkei Asia, which first broke the story, claims that the office could be operational as soon as next year and would function as a forum for NATO's discussions with Australia, South Korea and New Zealand. In light of the Nikkei report, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quick to denounce what it termed NATO's 'eastward expansion' and called for 'high vigilance' on the issue.

TAIWAN

Stinger missiles arrive in Taiwan

Reportedly, Taiwan has received a batch of Stinger missiles and associated equipment, worth US\$500 million (NT\$15.3 billion), from the US. The missiles were delivered under the Presidential Drawdown Authority, which expedites weapon deliveries "[to foreign countries and international organizations in response](#) to "unforeseen emergencies"." According to press reports, the US "[has awarded a contract to General Atomics Aeronautical Systems \(GA-ASI\) to produce four MQ-9B SkyGuardian drones for Taiwan.](#)" Besides, the US and Taiwan are

discussing about the former “[using fast-track authority to provide a weapons package worth US\\$500 million \(NT\\$15.34 billion\)](#)” to the latter. In the meantime, Taiwan’s National Chung Shang Institute for Science and Technology (NCSIST) handed over 19 Sky Sword II mobile missile launchers to the military in early May. These mobile launchers have been produced under the Sea and Air Combat Capability Enhancement Plan. The Plan was implemented in 2022 “[to produce and build various types of missiles, mobile missile launchers, and military facilities.](#)” It allotted NT\$23.65 billion (US\$771.6 million) for use over five years, from 2022-2026 for the purpose.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

South Korea’s Defence Diplomacy

The [first Korea-Pacific Summit](#), co-chaired by the President of South Korea Yoon Suk Yeol and Prime Minister of the Cook Islands Mark Brown, was held in Seoul on 29 May. Eighteen countries of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) attended the Summit. The objective of the Summit was to coordinate the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and Korea’s Indo-Pacific Strategy. A [joint declaration](#) issued after the summit emphasized the strengthening development cooperation and security collaboration in maritime security, cyber security, public health and transnational security.

In a separate development, on the sidelines of Korea-Pacific Island Summit, [South Korea and Australia signed a defence cooperation deal](#). The two sides have

agreed to revise the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2011. South Korea also expressed the willingness to join the Indo-Pacific Endeavor, an Australia-led multinational military drills, as well as Operation Render Safe, an underwater anti-mine drill in the Pacific.

Further, it recently signed a contract worth US\$ 2.2 billion with Malaysia, over sale of 18 FA-50 advanced trainers/light fighters, including new maritime patrol aircraft and helicopters. The Agreement was signed during the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA 2023) in Malaysia.

It has been reported that South Korea’s arms sales have jumped to [more than US\\$ 17 billion in 2022 from US\\$ 7.25 billion](#) in 2021.

North Korea’s military spy satellite launch fails

The North Korean State-media [informed](#) on 31 May, that Pyongyang’s attempt to launch the country’s first spy satellite has failed. According to the media statement, the rocket carrying the satellite crashed into waters off the Korean Peninsula’s western coast. Scientists associated with the project are examining the cause of the failure. North Korea’s missile launch prompted evacuation orders in South Korea and Japan. According to experts, North Korea is planning to launch more than one satellite, and with three to five satellites, North Korea could build a Space-based surveillance system, which will allow Pyongyang to monitor the Korean Peninsula.