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CHINA

PLA conducts simultaneous military drills in three major sea regions

The state-run *Global Times* [reported](#) on 10 February that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted simultaneous drills in three major sea regions around China. Apparently, these maritime exercises were organized in response to the United States (US)-Japan [Noble Fusion Exercise](#) held between 3-7 February. As per the report, the PLA sent the Type 052C destroyer *Changchun*, the Type 052D destroyer *Xiamen* and the Type 054A frigate *Yiyang* to East China Sea where they held combat exercises with multiple training courses, including air defence, manoeuvring and main gun live-fire shooting. In the South China Sea, the PLA's Type 903 comprehensive supply ship *Weishanhu* and the hospital ship *You'ai* held maritime drills, including search and rescue missions, maritime replenishment and live-fire shooting. Lastly, in the Yellow Sea, the Northern Theatre Command Navy organized a maritime-aerial multi-dimensional comprehensive rescue and damage control exercise, mine-sweeping and search and rescue drills.

It is noteworthy that while these exercises were widely dubbed by Chinese analysts as a demonstration of China's military preparedness against external provocation, Senior Colonel Tan Kefei, spokesperson of China's Ministry of National Defence (MND) sought to assuage international concerns by [contending](#) in a press briefing on 24 February that China did not consider the Asia-Pacific an arena of zero-sum game.

China's Military Equipment Experiment Regulations

On 12 February, President Xi Jinping [signed](#) an order to promulgate a set of regulations for testing and assessing military equipment. The regulations consisting of 56 articles in 11 chapters are supposed to implement weapon-testing methods according to combat requirements and further the objectives of informationalization and intelligentization of the Chinese military. With the PLA eyeing realistic [combat conditions](#) for its military training and combat preparedness, the new regulations are aimed at reconciling the standards for all equipment in the Chinese military. The regulations are also likely to initiate equipment testing for their entire lifespans. This change would shift the focus from testing solely before commissioning to their regular monitoring for entire service, thereby continuously improving the efficiency of the weapons.

TAIWAN

Taiwan to receive US support for Patriot missile defence system

In a major bid to strengthen Taiwan's missile defence system, the Biden administration approved a US\$ 100 million [support contract](#) with Taipei. On 7 February, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) publicized the decision with the release of an official statement on its website. The statement informed that under the support contract with Taiwan the US will sell equipment and engineering support services for five years, designed to "sustain, maintain, and improve the Patriot Air Defense System". Further, it [claimed](#) that the sale will "help improve the

security of the recipient and assist in maintaining political stability, military balance and economic progress in the region". After the [announcement](#) the Taiwan Foreign Ministry issued a [statement](#) welcoming the US decision and declared: "In the face of China's continued military expansion and provocative actions, our country will maintain its national security with a solid defence, and continue to deepen the close security partnership between Taiwan and the United States."

Taiwanese media draw lessons from Ukraine crisis

Taiwanese media while [closely monitoring](#) the Ukraine crisis also highlighted the implications and lessons for Taiwan with reference to possible Chinese threat. The commentators [debated](#) about a range of scenarios like whether China would use the crisis as a strategic opportunity to take military action against Taiwan or the Russian invasion has emboldened Beijing to use forcibly annexe Taiwan. Further, [speculations](#) regarding Russia -China alliance or coordination in an event of Chinese military action against Taiwan also dominated media discussions. However, the overarching [perception](#) within Taiwanese media was that although, the situation warrants a careful monitoring, the two contexts are fundamentally different. Therefore, a military exigency in the Taiwan Strait might not be on the card.

JAPAN

Japan and UK advance military technology cooperation

On [15 February](#) Japan and the United Kingdom (UK) announced a partnership on sensor technologies for their Tempest and F-X future combat aircraft programmes.

The [Letter of Agreement](#) signed by the two countries affirmed collaborative work on a universal radio-frequency (RF) sensor technology known as Japan and Great Britain Universal Advanced RF (JAGUAR) system. Besides, Tokyo is also likely to continue to co-develop a [Joint New Air-to-Air Missile \(JNAAM\)](#) with the UK in fiscal year 2022. An official at Japan's Ministry of Defense (MOD)'s Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency (ATLA) confirmed to *Janes* on 21 February that the Japanese Defense Ministry has secured [JPY350 million](#) (US\$ 3 million) to fund preparation costs related to air-launch tests of a prototype of the JNAAM. However, the schedule of the joint programme will be modified according to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, it will be only after the evaluation of the performance of the missile prototype that the two countries will decide whether to put the missile into mass production. [Reportedly](#), for this project the UK will offer missile technologies related to its Meteor Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) from MBDA and Japan is considering transfer of its advanced radio frequency (RF) seeker technologies developed by Mitsubishi Electric Corporation to support the development of the JNAAM.

Russian warships near Japan

Media [reports](#) in Japan suggested that in the first half of February, around 24 Russian warships including destroyers and submarines operated in the Sea of Japan and also the southern part of Sea of Okhotsk. Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyers and a P-3C anti-submarine and surveillance plane identified Russian activities. Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi reportedly called it

an “unusual” large-scale military exercise. He mentioned that despite rising tensions in Ukraine, Moscow wants to demonstrate that it is equipped to operate both in the east and west simultaneously. The Defense Ministry observed that it is uncommon for Russia to conduct large-scale military exercises during this time of year.

In a separate development, on 25 February, a [Russian missile](#) reportedly hit a Japanese-owned cargo vessel in the Black Sea.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

South Korea to reinforce Air Force’s anti-missile unit

Reportedly, amidst rising threats from North Korea’s missile tests, South Korea is preparing to [reinforce](#) its Air Force’s missile defence unit by deploying additional equipment, including advanced radars, and broadening its missions. To that end, the Ministry of National Defense issued a [public notice](#) to push for legislation to restructure the existing Air Defense Missile Command. The [proposed reorganisation](#) is set for April, whereby the Command will be renamed as the Missile Strategic Command and will be expanded and restructured, with revised leadership-ranking requirements. Further, it will be supplied with additional ballistic-missile early-warning radars and mid-range surface-to-air missiles (M-SAM). According to South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense, the restructuring is expected to enable the unit to [shift](#) its current operational requirement of “strike operations” to one that is focused on “strategic and operational target-strike missions”. Furthermore, the Command “will monitor strategic and operational threats in the air, counter complex, wide-area, multi-layer missiles, and carry out

regional air defense missions”, the Ministry informed in a [statement](#).

Apart from preparing to enhance its defence capabilities, Seoul also geared towards [deepening](#) its defence ties with extra-regional partners like France. The South Korean Defence Minister Suh Wook met his French counterpart Florence Parly in France on 14 February to discuss various issues of common interest in the Indo-Pacific. During the meeting, the two sides agreed to [advance cooperation](#) in domains of space, cyber security and artificial intelligence

North Korea builds secret base for missiles

As per [media reports](#) published in early February, North Korea completed construction of an operating base which will probably store its long-range ballistic missiles. The operating base named Hoejung-ni Missile Operating Base, is located in a small, isolated wooded mountain valley in Chagang Province, which is approximately 25 kilometres (15.5 miles) from the Chinese border. Allegedly, the facility is one of the 20 missile operating bases that North Korea is yet to declare.

In a separate development, Pyongyang resumed its [missile testing](#) on 27 February after observing a near month-long pause coinciding with the Beijing Winter Olympics. Reportedly, the weapon was a ballistic missile and flew at a range of 300 kilometres, reaching a maximum altitude of 600 kilometres.