

EAST ASIA MILITARY MONITOR

VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 3

MARCH 2022



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CHINA

China Increases Military Spending

The Chinese government [announced](#) a defence budget of CNY 1.5 trillion (US\$ 229.5 billion) at the opening session of the annual National People's Congress (NPC) held on 5 March. Reportedly, with this budget China's military expenditure increased by 7.1 per cent from the previous year and is the highest increase since the onset of the pandemic. A work report released at the NPC by Premier Li Keqiang stated that the surge in the budget is aligned with China's goals of achieving military development by 2027 and military modernization by 2035. [According](#) to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua, the increase in military expenditure will help "provide the forces with better training and more advanced equipment. It [will] also support the military in tackling non-conventional security threats such as major epidemics and natural disasters". In this context it is noteworthy that the massive increase in the defence budget was announced in the backdrop of rising geopolitical competition between China and the neighbouring countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Xi Issues New Military Equipment Procurement Rules

Chinese President Xi Jinping signed an [order](#) on 19 March further promulgating [rules](#) for the improvement of equipment efficiency for the military. In the order, new interim rules to regulate the procurement contracts for military equipment have been put into effect. The regulations aim at the tasks, management and supervision of the

contracts under new circumstances to advance the quality and efficiency of the equipment. Reportedly, in view of the PLA's procurement of sophisticated weapons systems from local buyers, such regulations are likely to become necessary to ensure the standards of military equipment and efficiency in the battlefield. Further, the rules are also expected to root out corruption and misuse of funds in procuring equipment and ensure the judicious supervision of such tasks.

TAIWAN

Taiwanese Experts Caution China over Russia's Failures in Ukraine

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) in a Press Brief released on 30 March, [cited](#) some senior experts stating "that Russia's losses on the battlefields of Ukraine are making China "more cautious" about invading Taiwan." Apparently, "the poor performance of the Russian military, the stiff resistance by Ukrainian forces, and sanctions from the West" are some factors that will compel China to rethink its future invasion plans. According to the brief, the experts also highlighted Russia's military setbacks as possible lessons for China which will dissuade it from "rashly [resorting] to non-peaceful means." Importantly, according to the experts' assessment, "the war in Ukraine has exposed the lack of accurate intelligence-sharing between autocratic leaders and their [G]enerals." They inferred that the Chinese communist leaders will take note of this situation and will remain "more cautious" and act more prudently when it comes to the use of force.

JAPAN

Japan Sanctions North Korea following the ICBM Launch

On 24 March, Japan confirmed that a new type of inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) launched by Pyongyang fell within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Prime Minister Kishida condemned the development as an “outrageous act that cannot be tolerated” and State Minister of Defense, Makoto Oniki suggested that the latest launch constitutes “a serious threat” to Japan. Chief Cabinet Secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno indicated that following the tests, Tokyo registered a strong protest through Pyongyang’s Embassy in Beijing. Also, Japan expanded its sanctions against Pyongyang and froze assets of six North Koreans, three Russians and four Russian entities who are allegedly involved in Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile development. With this, Tokyo’s sanctions list covers [120 individuals and 129 entities](#). Japan is likely to work in close cooperation with [Washington and Seoul](#) in responding to the situation.

New Land-Based Electronic Warfare Unit in Japan

On 28 March, Japan’s Ground Self-Defense Forces (GSDF) marked the launch of a [new electronic warfare unit](#) at GSDF Camp Asaka for enhancing the country’s electronic warfare capabilities. The unit, comprising around 180 personnel nationwide, has been tasked with detecting and analyzing the communications and radar emissions of potential adversaries. It will also be responsible for disrupting enemy communications and radars if

required. The unit’s headquarter was established on 17 March in order to expedite development of capabilities in the field of electromagnetics, along with space and cyberspace, in the face of increasing threats from China and Russia’s military build-up. Reportedly, Japan’s Defense Ministry has established [electronic warfare units](#) in garrisons across Japan with a majority of them in Okinawa and the southwestern region of Kyushu. Previously, there was only one unit in Hokkaido.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

ROK’s Defence Diplomacy in March 2022

The ninth Republic of Korea (RoK)-United Arab Emirates (UAE) [defence ministerial](#) talks were held on 18 March in Seoul. During the talks, South Korea’s Minister of National Defence Suh Wook and his UAE counterpart Mohammad Ahmad Al Bowardi [exchanged views](#) on their respective regional security environments and agreed to continue to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the areas of defence and defence industry. Meanwhile, UAE’s defence minister [reiterated](#) Abu Dhabi’s unwavering support to Seoul’s effort for the denuclearization of, and establishment of, a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. In a separate development, South Korea and France held the first working-level meeting on [space security](#) from 17 to 18 March. In the meeting, the two sides discussed the development of bilateral space cooperation while sharing space security policies, space capabilities and the need for exchange of space professionals.

South Korean President-Elect Yoon Seok-youl pledges to enhance military capability

South Korean President-Elect Yoon Seok-youl soon after his victory on 9 March, [pledged](#) to build a powerful military and respond forcefully to North Korean provocations. Speaking at a televised press conference, Yoon [declared](#) that he will rebuild strategic ties with the US and firmly deal with “illicit, unreasonable behaviour by North Korea in a principled manner”. However, the door for South-North talks will remain open, he added. Earlier, during his presidential campaign Yoon had criticised Moon’s approach towards North Korea as passive and had promised a hard-line policy of supporting [sanctions](#) against North Korea and developing [technology](#) to carry out pre-emptive strikes against Pyongyang.

Recently, as demonstration of its resolve to combat threats from North Korea, Seoul on 24 March [fired](#) multiple missiles as part of a live fire drill in response to North Korea’s intercontinental ballistic missile test. Furthermore, on 28 March, the South Korean military conducted its first brigade-level field training [involving](#) a cutting-edge combat simulation system.

North Korea tests important spy satellite system

Just days before South Korea’s presidential elections, North Korea’s state news agency (KCNA) confirmed carrying out tests for [reconnaissance satellite systems](#) on 5 March. The news report stated that the DPRK’s National Aerospace Development Administration (NADA) and the Academy

of Defence Science conducted another important test in line with plans for developing a reconnaissance satellite. According to the [report](#) the test helped the NADA confirm the reliability of the data transmission and reception system of the satellite, its control command system and various ground-based satellite control systems. Although, the state news agency did not explicitly mention use of [missile and rocket launches](#) to conduct such tests, it subtly referred to Pyongyang’s ninth round of missile tests conducted on 26 February. While the tests were being condemned by North Korea’s neighbours and the United States (US) the state media reported on 10 March Kim Jong-un’s statement declaring to launch [several reconnaissance satellites](#) in the coming years to gather real-time information on military actions of the United States (US) and its allies. The North Korean leader also [defended](#) the country’s satellite programme by stating that besides gathering military intelligence, the project was essential to protect North Korea’s national interests and sovereignty and to enhance its national prestige. Following the tests, experts opined that the spy satellite system is among a range of [sophisticated weapon systems](#) that the North Korean leader had pledged to build last year under the country’s five-year military plan. However, it remains to be seen whether Pyongyang will be able to successfully develop or secure sufficient number of cameras for the satellite to enable it to monitor South Korean and US military activities.