



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on August 23, 2023

## China Stages Military Drills Near Taiwan

On August 19, China conducted air and sea military exercises around Taiwan to issue a “stern warning” to “separatist forces” on the island, after Taiwan’s Vice President William Lai’s recent trip to the United States.

In turn, Taiwan said that China’s drills proved Beijing’s “militaristic mentality” and that combat aircraft, naval ships, and land-based missile systems had been instructed to keep tabs on Chinese actions.

Earlier that day, the People’s Liberation Army’s Eastern Theatre Command, which is overseeing the area around Taiwan, stated briefly that it was conducting joint naval and air combat readiness patrols around Taiwan. It added that the exercises concentrated on ship-aircraft coordination to evaluate seizing control of air and sea space, as well as assessing combat capabilities.



AP Images

“The patrols and exercises serve as a stern warning to the collusion of ‘Taiwan independence’ separatists with foreign elements and their provocations,” a spokesperson for the eastern command revealed to Chinese state propaganda outlet Xinhua.

Another state-controlled mouthpiece, CCTV, indicated that missile-equipped vessels and fighter jets participated in the operation, and that units cooperated together to simulate the encircling of Taiwan.

Taiwan’s defense ministry lambasted the drills. “The launch of the military exercise this time not only does not help peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait but also highlights [China’s] militaristic mentality,” the ministry proclaimed in a statement. It divulged that 42 Chinese aircraft and eight ships participated in the drills, and that 26 aircraft had crossed the median line dividing the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and functioning as an unofficial border between both sides.

The defense ministry published on social media that it had deployed Taiwan combat aircraft, land-based missile systems, and naval vessels to observe the drills.

Taiwan’s Vice President Lai, the front-runner poised to be Taiwan’s next president at elections in January, recently returned from the United States, where he had stopped along his way to and from an official state visit to Paraguay. Previously, Taiwanese officials and analysts had cautioned that China would probably stage military drills near the island in response to Lai’s American visit, using it as an excuse to frighten Taiwanese voters before the election and make them “fear war.”

China had pledged to take “resolute and forceful measures” to protect its sovereignty after Lai’s U.S. stops, with its foreign ministry publishing a statement in line with his arrival in the U.S. saying it objected to any type of a visit by “Taiwan independence separatists” to the United States. “Lai stubbornly adheres to the separatist position of Taiwan independence and is a troublemaker through



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and through,” the ministry slammed.

Taiwan is the “core of China’s core interests” and facts have shown frequently that the reason for the escalation in hostilities in the Taiwan Strait is Taiwan trying to “rely on the United States to seek independence,” it said.

Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu said it was up to Taiwan’s citizens to determine the outcome of the impending elections, “not the bully next door,” alluding to the Chinese drills. “China should hold its own elections; I’m sure its people would be thrilled,” he wrote on the social media platform X, previously called Twitter.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory, and Beijing has considered the use of military force to take over the self-governed island if necessary. Recent months have witnessed China increasing military activity near the island following what it criticized as “collusion” between Taipei and Washington.

The founder and chief investment officer of U.S. investment firm Hayman Capital Management, Kyle Bass, an eminent China hawk, ominously said in a CNBC interview that Chinese leader Xi Jinping is determined to “bring war to the West,” with an invasion of Taiwan likely before the end of next year.

Bass stated that the West, including Washington and especially Wall Street, is too focused on the potential economic fallout of such an invasion, while claiming that the potential economic ramifications do not concern Xi in his geopolitical calculations.

“If you listen to what [Xi] says, I believe he will end up acquiring, reacquiring Taiwan by force by the end of next year,” Bass said. “We on Wall Street love to think he would never do that because it doesn’t make economic sense. We have to stop thinking that way and literally start listening to what the man says,” he elaborated.

As he began his third term in March this year, Xi emphasized the need to “promote peaceful development of cross-strait relations” with Taiwan and that China should oppose “external forces” and pro-independence movements. These days, the Chinese leader often talks about war, and his regime seems to be gearing up for a possible one in the near future.

For instance, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is overseeing the country’s biggest military buildup since the Second World War. Beijing is trying to sanction-proof the country by stocking up on grain and other commodities, as well as inciting China’s civilians for battle. To ensure a stable flow of domestic food supply and reduce its reliance on foreign imports, the country is expanding its farmlands.

The Chinese drills launched on August 19 came shortly after the United States, Japan, and South Korea welcomed “a new era of trilateral partnership” at a gathering in Maryland at the U.S. presidential retreat Camp David, where the three powers criticized China’s pugilism in the South China Sea.

In a joint statement, U.S. President Joe Biden, South Korea’s President Yoon Suk-yeol, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said they were unwavering in their “determination to uphold regional security, strengthen Indo-Pacific engagement, and promote common prosperity.” All three leaders also denounced Beijing’s “dangerous and aggressive” behavior in the South China Sea.

Last August, China conducted large-scale military drills around Taiwan in response to a high-profile visit by then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi [to Taipei](#). The six-day military exercises included China’s J-20 stealth fighter jets and test firing of conventional missiles.

Lai has been far more vocal about Taiwanese independence than incumbent Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, with whom Beijing is already at loggerheads as she dismisses the notion that Taiwan is part of



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China. Furthermore, Lai has characterized himself as a “pragmatic Taiwan independence worker,” and insisted recently when speaking with a local television channel that Taiwan was “not part of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).” “The Republic of China and PRC are not subordinate to each other,” he said, using Taiwan’s official name.



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