



# Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on February 29

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Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang, spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense (MND) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), answers recent media queries concerning the military on the afternoon of February 29, 2024. (Photo/mod.gov.cn)

*(The following English text of the press conference is for reference. In case of any divergence of interpretation, the [Chinese text](#) shall prevail.)*

I have one piece of news at the top.

At the invitation of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which is the current president of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Chinese Ministry of National Defense sent a delegation to Kazakhstan for the meeting of international military cooperation departments of SCO member states from February 27 to March 1. The delegation exchanged views with other parties on SCO defense cooperation in 2024.

**Question:** President Xi Jinping recently sent a congratulatory message to the 37th African Union Summit. He mentioned drawing up a new blueprint for China-Africa cooperation and jointly building a high-level China-Africa community with a shared future. Please share with us China's consideration on developing China-Africa military relations.

**Answer:** With the guidance and efforts made by President Xi and leaders of African countries, China-Africa military relations have deepened and grown stronger in recent years. The two sides held the China-Africa Forum on Peace and Security and multiple special meetings under this framework. Chinese and African militaries maintain close exchanges at various levels and conduct productive cooperation in force building, personnel training, maritime security, peacekeeping operations, military medicine, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).

Following the principle of sincerity, real results, amity and good faith, the Chinese military will continue to work with African militaries to act on the important consensus reached by the leaders, strengthen strategic communication and practical cooperation, and further enhance the quality and effectiveness of defense cooperation. By doing that, we will provide a reliable security guarantee for building a high-level China-Africa community with a shared future and make a greater contribution to regional and global security as well as the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.



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**Question:** It is reported that since the beginning of this year, China and the US have made new progress in military archives cooperation. Please give us more information.

**Answer:** With the assistance of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CMC Office for International Military Cooperation and competent PLA departments responsible for archives, a delegation of the US Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) visited Guangxi and Hunan to conduct site surveys in search of the remains of missing US military personnel in China during WWII. This is the first time for the two sides to conduct site surveys since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following a humanitarian spirit, the Chinese side has been assisting the US side to search for the remains of missing US military personnel in China for many years and solid progress has been made.

**Question:** According to reports, the US Secretary of the Air Force recently said that China's growing arsenal of long-range missiles and anti-satellite weapons pose a threat to the US supremacy in areas such as air combat and space-enabled intelligence. The US Department of the Air Force announced plans to restructure the US Air Force and the newly established Space Force, with resources being fully concentrated on strategic competition with China. What's your comment on that?

**Answer:** The US uses the alleged threats from other countries as an excuse to expand its military power. The Chinese side is firmly opposed to this approach. As we all know, the US has defined space as a warfighting domain. It has developed and deployed offensive space weapons, conducted offense and defense exercises and carried out technological experiments. The US even maliciously tracked and dangerously approached other countries' spacecraft, creating the risk of collisions between space objects. No country has done more than the US in militarizing the space and making it a battlefield and the US is the biggest threat to space security.

China advocates the peaceful use of space and opposes space arms race. We have made positive efforts to promote the building a community with a shared future for mankind in space. We urge the US to abandon its Cold War and zero-sum game mindset, stop spreading false information, and stop expanding its arsenal and making war preparations in space. The US should truly shoulder its responsibilities and avoid undermining global strategic security and stability.

**Question:** Recently, the Bayi Aerobatic Team of the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) put up a successful performance at the 2nd World Defense Show in Saudi Arabia. Can you tell us more about their performance and the highlights.

**Answer:** The PLAAF Bayi Aerobatic Team recently participated in the 2nd World Defense Show in Saudi Arabia and performed aerobatic displays. This is the first time for the team to perform at an exhibition in Saudi Arabia and its third appearance in the Middle East and the Gulf region. It is also the first time for the team to have a non-stop ferry flight to Saudi Arabia. This was achieved through aerial refueling by an accompanying YU-20 tanker aircraft. It reflects the PLAAF's emphasis on realistic training. During the event, the team performed three times with seven J-10C/S aircraft and demonstrated difficult maneuvers such as four-ship vertical upward blossom and five-ship horizontal upward blossom. They showed the world the style of China's Guard of Honor in the Sky. The team also performed alongside foreign aerobatic teams such as the Saudi Hawks and the Turkish Stars. The audience cheered when smoke trails of red, yellow, white and green, symbolizing the national flags of China and Saudi Arabia, appeared in the air. The PLAAF Bayi Aerobatic Team will continue to reach out and fly around the world as an envoy of peace, cultural exchanges and friendship.



**Question:** The Philippines and the United States recently conducted joint maritime exercises and air patrols in the South China Sea while the PLA Southern Theater Command also organized naval and air patrols in the area around the same time. The Philippine side said it would not back down from its maritime claims. A spokesman for the Philippine Coast Guard claimed that Chinese vessels violated the Convention on International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) by closely approaching its ships patrolling Huangyan Dao. What's your comment?

**Answer:** Recently, the Philippine side worked together with countries outside the region to muddy the water in the South China Sea by organizing and widely hyping-up so-called "joint military exercises" and "joint patrols". This seriously violates the spirit of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), endangers regional peace and stability, and contradicts the efforts of regional countries to maintain peace and stability in the area. It must be emphasized that the US is not a direct party to the South China Sea issue and it should abide by its commitment of not taking a position on sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea, and stop interfering or stirring up troubles in the region.

The relevant comments made by the Philippine side are far from the fact. It is a malicious hype-up. Vessels of the Philippine Coast Guard have repeatedly and illegally intruded into the waters adjacent to China's Huangyan Dao. The Chinese side took measures such as warning them off and controlling their navigation routes in accordance with relevant laws and regulations. The on-site operations are legitimate, professional and restrained. China has indisputable sovereignty over Huangyan Dao and its adjacent waters. We urge the Philippine side not to head further down the wrong path of provoking troubles. Meanwhile, the Chinese side will continue to carry out law enforcement operations in waters under our jurisdiction and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

The South China Sea is a shared home for countries in the region. China stays committed to resolving differences with the countries concerned through dialogue and consultation. At the same time, the Chinese military remains on high alert and will respond to any infringement or provocation. We will resolutely defend China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.



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**Question:** Recently, the US Marine Corps and the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force conducted exercises to seize offshore islands in Kyushu and Okinawa. Some analysts believe that this is a demonstration of response capability of the US-Japan alliance in the face of China's increasing military presence in relevant waters. Other reports indicate that Japan is making an evacuation plan in response to a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Some Japanese officials for maritime security predicted that even if China's military imposed a maritime blockade, hundreds of Taiwanese refugee ships would still flood in. Please comment on this.

**Answer:** We have noted the relevant reports. Defense cooperation between relevant countries should not target any third party, let alone make a specific reference to China. It is extremely irresponsible and dangerous to deliberately look for excuses, exaggerate tensions and stir up confrontation. These acts run counter to the aspirations of regional countries for peace and development.

The Taiwan question is purely an internal affair of China and how to resolve it is a matter for the Chinese. It brooks no foreign interference. In the past, Japan launched a war of aggression against China and colonized Taiwan for half a century. Japan committed countless atrocities in China and owes the Chinese people a great historical debt. We urge the Japanese side to thoroughly reflect on its history of aggression, stop provoking trouble on the Taiwan question, and make efforts to earn the trust of its Asian neighbors and the international community through real actions.

**Question:** Recently, the 46th Chinese naval escort taskgroup set sail for the Gulf of Aden to carry out its mission. According to foreign media reports, the PLANavy (PLAN) has started escorting Chinese cargo ships in the Red Sea. What is your comment on this?

**Answer:** The Red Sea area is an important international trade route for goods and energy, and maintaining security and stability in the region serves the common interests of the international community. China stands for protecting the safety of international sea lanes and against causing disturbance to civilian ships.

The PLAN task groups conduct routine escort operations in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia. The recent deployment has nothing to do with the current situation in the region. China will continue to act on the Global Security Initiative, safeguard international sea lanes and provide reliable escort to Chinese and foreign ships. We will make solid efforts to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

**Question:** The PLA Southern Theater Command Army recently sent troops to Thailand to participate in the Cobra Gold 2024 multinational exercise. Please tell us more details.

**Answer:** The PLA Army participated in the HADR exercise under the multinational Exercise Cobra Gold 2024 in Thailand from February 20 to 28. The majority of the 25 participating Chinese troops come from the 75th Group Army. In the exercise, the multinational forces jointly assisted the government of the affected country in emergency relief operations. It included humanitarian engineering assistance, HADR tabletop exercise, high-level forum, live drill and other civil activities. Participating contingents had in-depth discussions on international search and rescue guidelines, multinational force operational procedures, and ASEAN disaster response mechanisms. They organized drills on personnel search and rescue, emergency firefighting, and chemical leakage disposal. This is the 11th consecutive exercise the Chinese military participated in since 2014.

**Question:** According to reports, New Zealand Foreign Minister said that his country recently started negotiations with Australia on joining the AUKUS Pillar II for cooperation on advanced capabilities including cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, and long-range hypersonic missiles. What is China's comment on this?

**Answer:** The United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, for their own geopolitical interests, have established the trilateral security partnership or AUKUS. The three countries are making great efforts to build a closed and exclusive small group and advance cooperation on nuclear submarines and other military technologies. The AUKUS undermines the international non-proliferation regime and may stimulate an arms race. It has caused strong concerns and widespread opposition from peace-loving countries.

We urge relevant parties to seriously listen to the voices of the international community and abandon their obsession with the Cold War and zero-sum mentality, refrain from going further down the wrong and dangerous path and harming international and regional peace and stability. Otherwise, their security interests would be compromised in the end.

**Question:** Recently, Chinese Foreign Minister delivered a keynote speech at the Munich Security Conference, saying that China will act as a force for stability in a turbulent world. Some US media reported that the Chinese mainland has increased military pressure on Taiwan in recent years, with ships and planes circling the island almost every day and Chinese military aircraft frequently crossing the "median line" in the Taiwan Strait. What is your comment?

**Answer:** There is only one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. There is no so-called "median line" in the Taiwan Strait. The exercises and training conducted by the PLA in the Taiwan Strait are legitimate measures to safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests. They serve as deterrence and a countermeasure against external interference and provocations made by "Taiwan independence" forces, and are necessary to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. We will continue to strengthen military training and enhance combat readiness and resolutely defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity.



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**Question:** According to security officials from the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, at the 21st round of China-India Corps Commander Level Meeting, "the Chinese military took a tougher stance and continued to reject India's request to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok plains along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh", therefore "the new round of meeting did not make any progress". What's your comment on the current situation along the border between China and India?

**Answer:** The comments you mentioned are not consistent with the fact. The current situation along the border between China and India remains generally stable. The two sides maintain effective communication through diplomatic and military channels. On February 19, China and India held the 21st round of Corps Commander Level Meeting at the Moldo-Chushul border meeting point on the Chinese side. The two sides had a positive, in-depth and constructive discussion on resolving the issues of each other's concern in the border areas and agreed to reach a mutually acceptable solution at an early date. China values the China-India mil-to-mil relationship. We hope the Indian side can work together with us to build mutual trust, properly settle differences and jointly maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas.

**Question:** It is reported that Taiwan will spend NT\$ 13.37 billion from its multi-year budget to purchase 500 "Stinger" air defense missiles. When meeting with personnel from the US Hudson Institute, Lai Ching-te claimed that the US government continued to promote the normalization of arms sales to Taiwan, allowing the island to enhance its self defense capabilities, and Taiwan would bolster its asymmetric warfare capabilities. What's your comment on this?

**Answer:** First I want to point out that no matter how many weapons the DPP buys with the hard-earned money of the taxpayers in Taiwan, it can never change the basic fact that Taiwan is China's Taiwan, let alone stopping the overwhelming trend towards national reunification. Our message to the DPP authorities is that seeking independence by force will lead nowhere. It will only push Taiwan towards an extremely dangerous situation of war.

The US side has repeatedly violated the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués, especially the August 17th Communiqué, and violated its political commitment to China on the Taiwan question by continuing its arms sales to Taiwan and strengthening military collusion with Taiwan. These acts have seriously undermined China's sovereignty and security, emboldened the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces, and harmed peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. The PLA will take all necessary measures to resolutely smash any "Taiwan independence" separatist plot, and firmly safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

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