



PLA UPDATE

A monthly newsletter focused on the internal and external affairs of the PLA

Patrick deGategno, editor

Welcome to the third issue of *PLA UPDATE*, CNA's monthly newsletter focused on the internal and external affairs of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). Each edition of this newsletter draws on the expertise of CNA's China and Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division to gather information and provide an update on important developments in the PLA as reported in the Chinese- and English-language media of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The past four weeks were extremely busy for the world. All eyes are glued to the events unfolding in Ukraine. This month also featured the fifth annual meeting of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), which is the PRC's legislature. The NPC will not meet again before the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2022, when Party leadership below Xi Jinping will turn over. We focus this third issue of *PLA UPDATE* on current events related to the PLA that may have been obscured by other major news reports.

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SPECIAL: PLA DAILY COMMENTS ON UKRAINE WAR

Until very recently, PLA media outlets have largely refrained from commenting on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. This changed on March 17, when the *PLA Daily* editorial board published its first of a series of commentaries on the war. Because the editorial board sets the tone for opinions published in PLA media, the talking points in these op-eds may be echoed in subject matter expert remarks on the invasion for months to come.

CMC MOUTHPIECE OP-ED SERIES BLAMES THE US FOR “CRISIS” IN UKRAINE

Patrick deGategno and Brian Waidelich

On March 17, the Central Military Commission (CMC) mouthpiece *PLA Daily* began publishing a series of scathing editorials blaming the United States for the “crisis” in Ukraine. As of March 28, seven such op-eds have run under a series titled “The Despicable Role of the United States on the International Stage as Seen from the Ukraine Crisis.”¹ The articles are all authored by “Jun Sheng,” a pseudonym for “Voice of the Military” that is generally interpreted to represent the *PLA Daily* editorial board’s opinions on issues of concern.

The op-eds present variations on a central theme, namely that the war in Ukraine is principally the fault of the United States. The articles do not criticize Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (or even characterize the conflict as an “invasion”) and offer no thoughts on how China might mediate or otherwise help bring the war to an end. The hyperlinks in the bullets below lead to the English translations of the “Jun Sheng” commentaries (the endnotes provide citations and links to both the Chinese and English versions):

- The [first article](#), published on March 17, argues that long-term US pressure and encirclement of Russia “laid the fuse” for the current conflict. As evidence of this claim, “Jun Sheng” says the US has been promoting the eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and fomenting “color revolutions” along Russia’s periphery.²

- The [second op-ed](#), which ran on March 20, connects NATO's eastward expansion in Europe to US efforts to strengthen its alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. The article claims the US Indo-Pacific strategy threatens to "disrupt regional peace and stability,"³ insinuating that the US could cause a situation in Asia resembling the war in Ukraine. (Taiwan is not mentioned.)
- The [third article](#), printed on March 21, is less a commentary on the situation in Ukraine and more a diatribe on US intervention in the affairs of other states. "Jun Sheng" finds US intervention based on concerns over democracy and human rights to be disingenuous and claims that US hegemony and power politics are the biggest threats to civilization.⁴
- The [fourth article](#), published on March 23, accuses the US of waging a disinformation campaign to shift the blame for the current crisis onto China. "Jun Sheng" rejects US media reporting that China had prior knowledge of Russia's intent to invade Ukraine. Calling the US a "habitual liar," the op-ed cites alleged past instances of the US government issuing false information over ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and chemical weapon attacks in Syria.⁵
- The [fifth editorial](#), released on March 25, upbraids the United States for being a "recidivist" and regularly "fabricating excuses" to sanction other countries and intervene militarily in their pursuit of their own interests. According to "Jun Sheng," the United States manufactures "double standards" for itself, and US actions in support of those standards have caused humanitarian crises and massive loss of life in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and the former Yugoslavia.⁶
- The [sixth article](#), appearing in *PLA Daily's* March 28 edition, depicts the US as a "destroyer of global biosecurity" with a "dark history" of developing and using bioweapons. The op-ed claims the Russian military recently found "much evidence" of a US-funded military biological program in Ukraine and that the United States' attempts to cover up the program have concerned the international community.⁷
- The [seventh article](#), released on March 31, uses US sanctions against Russian officials for "human rights violations" in Ukraine as an occasion to denounce the US as "the trampler of the international human rights cause." Saying little about the war itself, "Jun Sheng" asserts that US sanctions on various countries (including Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, and Syria) in defense of human rights only serve to further harm the people the US claims to protect.⁸



PLA Daily's second commentary reposted the above cartoon from the *Global Times*. Source: Liu Rui, "Milking the Crisis," *Global Times*, Mar. 9, 2022, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202203/1254435.shtml>.

The "Jun Sheng" commentaries to date are similar to (though sometimes more pointed and acerbic than) related remarks from [Chinese Communist Party \(CCP\) officials](#), [PRC government agencies](#), and [state media outlets](#).⁹ Like these authoritative remarks, the *PLA Daily* editorial board's op-eds all take the following approach:

- They do not condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine or even call it an invasion;

- They do not explicitly support Russia’s invasion or suggest that China would do anything militarily to help Russia attain its objectives in Ukraine;
- They deny any PRC leadership foreknowledge of Russia’s plans to invade Ukraine; and
- They shift all the blame for the current situation in Ukraine onto the United States and, to a lesser extent, its allies.

The absence of public support for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine from PRC officials and media may be motivated partly by concerns over potential secondary sanctions from the US and its European allies. Yet to a certain extent, the “Jun Sheng” editorials allude to a deeper motivation. The articles overwhelmingly focus on demonizing the United States, which suggests that the PRC is motivated primarily by opposition to Washington, not affinity for Moscow, in its military relations with Russia (and perhaps in the bilateral relationship more broadly).

From this perspective, the commentaries serve PLA units with useful propaganda for discussion during political work sessions. As the war in Ukraine progresses, the editorial board’s key points will support efforts to maintain troop focus on preparing for future potential contingencies involving the strategic competitor the PRC views as its pacing threat.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP GUIDANCE

While many around the world focus their attention on the events unfolding in Ukraine, the 13th NPC reviewed the PRC government’s work in all areas of national concern during 2021 and set policy priorities and guidance for 2022. In this section, CNA analysts review PRC media coverage of four topics discussed at the NPC that are relevant to PLA affairs.

NPC GOVERNMENT WORK REPORT AND MILITARY MODERNIZATION

Patrick deGategno

A primary document that summarizes PRC government work in 2021 and policy goals for 2022 reviews government policies in support of the PLA. According to state-run Xinhua News Agency, the [fifth session](#) of the 13th NPC was held March 5–11 in Beijing.¹⁰ The NPC will not meet again before the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which will presumably take place in the fall of 2022. The Party will make significant changes to its leadership at that time. On March 5, Premier Li Keqiang provided the Government Work Report (full text in [English](#) and [Chinese](#)), reviewing government work in 2021 and introducing policy guidance for 2022.¹¹ According to the work report, the PRC made “major strides” in 2021 to strengthen national defense and continue modernizing the armed forces, and it got off to a good start with the 14th Five-Year Plan. In 2022, the PRC will need to take the following actions:

- Continue to modernize the military, aiming to meet the 2027 centennial goal of military building (Xi Jinping’s administration recently set this short-term modernization goal, which is aligned to the 100th anniversary of the PLA’s founding on August 1, 1927).¹²
- Implement the “military strategic guidelines for the new era” (新时代军事战略方针).¹³
- Continue efforts to improve military training and combat readiness.
- Accelerate modernization of the military’s logistics and asset management systems, build a modern weaponry and equipment management system, and improve the organization of defense science, technology, and industry.

- Complete reforms of the national defense mobilization system, strengthen national defense education nationwide, and continue to deepen the correct relationship between the government, the military, and the people, as embodied by the “two supports” (双拥).¹⁴ (Read more about national defense mobilization reform and the NPC below.)

IN SPEECH, XI EXHORTS MILITARY TO ADHERE TO LAWS, REGULATIONS

Patrick deGategno and Elizabeth Barrett

According to [Xinhua](#), Xi gave a speech to the full committee of PLA and People’s Armed Police (PAP) delegates to the NPC on March 7.¹⁵ *PLA Daily* published [four commentaries](#) on Xi’s remarks to the delegates (the hyperlink leads to the first of these, and the endnote contains links to all four).¹⁶ According to *PLA Daily* commentaries, Xi’s speech [focused](#) on the need to implement the strategy of “law governs the military,” a requirement for “strengthening of the PLA in the new era.”¹⁷

“Law governs the military” (依法治军) is the fourth of four maxims associated with a CCP strategy for military modernization and reform, the other three being “government builds the military” (政治建军), “reform strengthens the military” (改革强军), and “science and technology rejuvenate the military” (科技兴军). According to the 2015 national defense white paper [China’s Military Strategy](#), “law governs the military” describes a top-level effort to improve the PLA’s system of laws and regulations, its adherence to them, and civilian and military legal enforcement mechanisms.¹⁸ The aim is to prevent abuses of power and improve military discipline and Party oversight of the military. “Law governs the military” (along with the other three related maxims) has been enshrined as a strategic priority in the [19th Party Congress Work Report](#).¹⁹ The four maxims also have been written into China’s [National Defense Law](#).²⁰

[According to *PLA Daily*](#), Xi made remarks to the PLA delegation to the NPC exhorting the PLA to follow all laws and regulations that apply to military personnel at all levels. Xi enjoined the military and its leadership to study existing laws, transmit that knowledge throughout the forces, and rigorously support the military’s discipline inspection, auditing, and judicial systems.²¹ Xi reportedly stressed that doing so is fundamental to Party and government efforts to oversee and regulate military modernization and is essential for enacting reforms to strengthen the military.

PLA NPC DELEGATES TELL MEDIA PLA NEEDS TO IMPROVE “JOINTNESS”

Elizabeth Barrett and Patrick deGategno

Following Xi’s speech, delegates commented to the media on the state of military modernization and areas in which further reform is required. In comments picked up by [Xinhua News Agency](#), at least two delegates directly called for improved jointness. For example, delegate Xu Jianfeng, a political commissar attached to a Northern Theater Navy frigate, [stated](#): “We need to strengthen joint training, joint support, and joint use.”²² In a [PLA Daily](#) interview, Major General Ling Huanxin, deputy secretary of the CMC Discipline Inspection Commission, noted that “military discipline inspection and supervisory organs” (军队纪检监察机) are important for ensuring that military personnel actually abide by laws and regulations, and he also commented that those who enforce “must first observe discipline.”²³ Rear Admiral Li Daoming, the deputy director of the CMC Political Work Department, [spoke](#) on the need to improve laws and regulations for “foreign-related” military operations, particularly surveillance, counterterrorism operations, and combined exercises with foreign militaries.²⁴

PRC DEFENSE SPENDING TO INCREASE 7.1 PERCENT IN 2022

Ryan Loomis and Patrick deGatego

Beijing says it will increase its defense budget by 7.1 percent in 2022 to 228.3 billion USD. On March 9, a spokesperson for the PRC Ministry of National Defense (MND) stated at the fifth session of the 13th NPC that the PRC had allocated a defense budget of 1.45 trillion yuan (228.3 billion USD) for 2022, [up by 7.1 percent](#) compared to the budget implementation in 2021.²⁵ This increase would mark the defense budget's fastest growth rate since 2019. According to the PRC Ministry of Finance report presented at the NPC, the total budget for planned central government expenditures in 2022 has been set at [13.4 trillion yuan](#).²⁶ The officially announced 2022 defense budget is therefore roughly 1.08 percent of total central government expenditures.

These numbers may be misleading. According to experts at the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#), Beijing's actual defense-related expenditure in 2019 was nearly 40 percent higher than its officially announced defense budget.²⁷ Additionally, China's defense budgets from 1989 to 2020 have been an estimated 1.92 percent of central government expenditures.²⁸

In a routine press conference, the [PRC MND spokesperson denounced](#) such external analyses, saying that "it is groundless for some external forces to hype up the so-called 'hidden military spending.'"²⁹

PLA NPC DELEGATES ON NATIONAL DEFENSE MOBILIZATION REFORMS

Timothy Ditter and Patrick deGatego

NPC delegates called for further systemic reform, including the creation of a "national defense mobilization intelligence platform" and a "mobilization standardization system." On March 2, a *PLA Daily* [article](#) featured an interview with Wu Shaohua, a representative to the NPC and a PLA Army Service Academy professor. During the interview, Wu stated that the national defense mobilization system is "an important foundation for national defense and military construction" and a "most important topic to pay attention to" during the NPC. Wu then called for the construction of a "national defense mobilization intelligence platform based on new technologies such as big data and cloud computing...that integrates functions such as reporting, military coordination, and joint support" to advance the collection and categorization of national defense mobilization potential (国防动员潜力) information.³⁰

On March 4, the PRC Ministry of Defense [published](#) an article featuring statements on advancing national defense from several NPC delegates. Major General Gao Buming, NPC delegate and political commissar of the Western Theater Command Chongqing Garrison, stated that persistent problems in the national defense mobilization system need to be resolved, such as "inaccurate assessment of [mobilization] potential and poor utilization of resources."³¹ Gao advocated for the construction of a "mobilization standardization system" to streamline civilian resource use and avoid "time consuming and costly" modifications of civilian assets for military use.

These calls for a "national defense mobilization intelligence platform" and a "mobilization standardization system" from NPC delegates accompany the Government Work Report's prioritization of completing national defense mobilization reform, and they follow recent "urgent" modifications to key PRC laws that regulated national defense mobilization. (See the [February 4, 2022, PLA UPDATE](#) for more on previous urgent modifications.) All these demands for reform indicate that the mobilization system is a top priority for military modernization and that readers can anticipate significant changes to the system in 2022.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This month, we see a continuation of the PRC issuing military-related laws and regulations intended to improve the PLA's human capital. This trend comports with the PLA reform agenda's "Third Big Campaign," which focuses on updating the military policy system of laws, regulations, directives, standard operating procedures, and business practices concerning all facets of military affairs.³² (For more on the Third Big Campaign and the state of PLA reform, see David Finkelstein's September 2021 report [The PLA's New Joint Doctrine: The Capstone of the New Era Operations Regulations System](#).)³³

CMC ISSUES MILITARY CHILDCARE AND EDUCATION REGULATIONS

Kelly Buckley

On March 8, the CMC announced new military-wide regulations governing childcare and children's educational benefits for all military and civilian employees of the PLA. The CMC Political Work Department and Logistic Support Department developed the ["Regulations on Adjusting the Funding Guarantee System for Military Personnel Childcare and Education"](#) to increase benefits for PLA uniformed and civilian personnel.³⁴ According to the new regulations, military kindergarten is free for all "the children of active military personnel, serving civilian personnel, and military staff," and all personnel with children up to age six will receive early education allowances.³⁵ The regulations also increase the funds for the PLA's kindergarten system, standardize the scope of allowable expenditures, and simplify expense reporting procedures. The relevant funds will be calculated retroactively from September 1, 2021.

PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Many forms of professional military education are available to PLA service members. Modeling competitions, such as the one described below, provide personnel with opportunities to apply their military academic learning and operational experiences in imaginative ways to real-world problems. The competitions foster a culture of creativity in the PLA, and the results of these competitions also provide military decision-makers with a variety of solutions to operational challenges they may face in the future.

PLA MODELING COMPETITION ON "ACTUAL MILITARY PROBLEMS"

Brian Waidelich

In February, PRC media reported on the winners of the PLA's 5th Military Modeling Competition (全军军事建模竞赛). The four-day, three-night [contest](#) focused on framing "six urgent" operational problems related to "preparing for and fighting wars."³⁶ The competition featured 3,654 [three-member teams](#) from throughout the PLA, which focused on proposing optimized and creative solutions to operational problems.

The competing teams built and tested models, analyzed results, and submitted papers to be judged by the event's organizing committee.³⁷ One modeling problem involved deriving a naval ship's maximum area of



Screenshot of the PLA's 5th Military Modeling Competition login page. Source: PRC Ministry of National Defense.

operations based on speed and directional constraints. [According](#) to Su Bo—an undergraduate from China Coast Guard Academy whose team won a grand prize in the undergraduate group competition—the contest challenged participants to “employ multidisciplinary knowledge and develop innovative solutions for actual military problems.”³⁸

COMMENTARIES ON FOREIGN MILITARY ACTIVITIES

Below, we summarize a commentary about US-Taiwan relations and their impact on the cross-Strait security situation. The author, [Zhang Tuosheng](#), is currently the director of research at the non-governmental Grandview Institution, the director of the Center for Foreign Policy Studies at the PLA-affiliated China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies, and a member of the Academic Committee at Tsinghua University’s Center for International Security and Strategy. He is a former deputy defense attaché at the PRC Embassy in London and a former fellow at PLA National Defense University Institute for Strategic Studies.³⁹

ZHANG TUOSHENG COMMENTARY ON US-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Kevin Pollpeter

Retired PLA officer warns that military conflict over Taiwan is inevitable if US crosses PRC red lines.

On March 4, Zhang Tuosheng published a commentary titled “[How to Avoid War over Taiwan](#)” in *China-US Focus*, a Hong Kong-based online commentary journal focused on US-China relations and affiliated with Tung Chee-hwa’s China-United States Exchange Foundation.⁴⁰

In his commentary, Zhang reiterated many of the PRC’s talking points regarding its opposition to US policy towards Taiwan. Zhang argued that the United States has been exaggerating the PRC’s intent to use military force against Taiwan and wrote that continued “salami slicing tactics” expanding the range of US activities with Taiwan will lead to military conflict if these activities cross Beijing’s red lines. To reduce the chances of conflict and miscalculation, Zhang proposed “resum[ing] and strengthen[ing] political and security dialogues” between the US and the PRC and between the PRC and Japan on “the one-China principle, opposition to Taiwan independence, and management of differences on the Taiwan question.”

Zhang also proposed that the US and PRC militaries should “engage in dialogue to strengthen crisis management” by expanding the code of conduct for military-to-military encounters at sea or in the air to include “the establishment of stronger communication mechanisms aimed at crisis avoidance and control.”⁴¹

MAJOR EXERCISES

The following summary of a recent joint exercise offers a good example of PLA units training for nearly a month to operate a joint command post in support of an underway naval taskforce. The PLA Navy taskforce included a guided missile destroyer (DDG), a guided missile frigate (FFG), a replenishment oiler (AOR), and an amphibious transport dock (LPD).

FOUR PLA SERVICES’ UNITS CONDUCT FAR SEAS JOINT TRAINING

Ryan Loomis and Patrick deGategno

PLA Navy, Air Force, Rocket Force, and Strategic Support Force personnel conducted a joint exercise involving a four-ship PLA Navy task force underway in the South China Sea, East Indian Ocean, and

Western Pacific. According to [China Military Online](#) and [CCTV-7](#), PLA Southern Theater Command units executed a joint exercise from February 5 to March 3, with a PLA Navy task force sailing 7,900 nautical miles while conducting “combat readiness patrols” and “far sea drills.”⁴² Media reports stated that the command post for the exercise included [PLA Navy, Air Force, and Rocket Force](#) personnel.⁴³ CCTV-7 video also showed at least one unnamed [PLA Strategic Support Force personnel member participating](#).⁴⁴ The reports do not clarify whether Air Force, Rocket Force, or Strategic Support Force personnel were embarked upon the vessels in the PLA Navy task force.

According to China Military Online, the PLA Southern Theater Command personnel involved in the joint training activity were embarked on a [PLA Navy training task force](#), including Type 052D “Luyang III” CNS *Hefei* (DDG-174), Type 054A “Jiangkai II” CNS *Huangshan* (FFG-570), Type 071 “Yuzhao” CNS *Jinggang Shan* (LPD-999), and Type 903 “Fuchi” CNS *Honghu* (AOE-906).⁴⁵ The *Global Times* reported that CNS *Hefei* and CNS *Jinggang Shan* were pictured in a February 19 Australian Department of Defence [announcement](#), which stated that a



Image of (from left to right) PLA Air Force, Rocket Force, and Strategic Support Force personnel operating jointly while the far seas training task force was underway. Source: CCTV-7.

PLA Navy vessel had illuminated an Australian Defense Force P-8A with a laser in Australia’s exclusive economic zone.⁴⁶ The [PRC MND](#) and [Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokespersons](#) both rejected Australia’s account of the encounter and described the PLA Navy vessels’ operations during the encounter as “safe, standard, and professional.”⁴⁷

China Military Online and CCTV-7 specified that the task force conducted training on “more than 20 subjects,” including air defense and anti-missile operations and improved combat tactics.⁴⁸ [Video](#) purportedly from the task force also showed landing craft air cushion drills.⁴⁹ PLA media did not indicate how personnel from various services integrated their differing equipment and platforms, but simply stated that “staff officers from different services brought their expertise together, jointly improved the quality of joint operations, and formed a set of refined, standardized and programmed joint command processes.”⁵⁰

Speaking about the “far-sea training,” Song Zhongping, a former professor at the PLA Second Artillery Engineering Academy, told the PRC media outlet *Global Times* that this type of training is designed to help the PLA Navy meet its “strategic requirements of near-seas defense and far-seas protection.”⁵¹ To meet these strategic requirements, Song stated that this type of training improves “far-seas escort” capabilities and incorporates “[training passes through multiple coastal countries’ \[waters\]](#),” supporting security and actual combat capabilities in unfamiliar waters.⁵²

PLA ARMY

The PRC territory features many climates, and the PLA trains to prepare to defend Chinese territory and interests in all of them—as this next entry about high-altitude training shows.

PLA HIGH-ALTITUDE TRAINING IN FEBRUARY, MARCH 2022

Ryan Loomis

PRC media reports discuss high-altitude training challenges, objectives, activities, and locations. PLA-affiliated media outlets published more than a dozen articles between February 15 and March 15 that describe aspects of PLA training at 4,000 meters (13,123 feet) above sea level or higher.

PLA writings described specific challenges faced by soldiers operating at high altitudes:

- [Altitude sickness and hypoxia](#): *PLA Daily* and China Military Online described soldiers experiencing headaches, dizziness, diarrhea, vomiting, vision impairment, and muscle weakness.⁵³
- [Injuries](#): These reports also noted that the difficult terrain resulted in falls on ice and rock, vehicle accidents on steep embankments, and other injuries.⁵⁴
- [Different equipment](#): One China Military Online report described soldiers' unfamiliarity with equipment unique to high-altitude training.⁵⁵ A separate China Military Online report described testing new "cold-proof" equipment, including rapidly inflatable cold-proof tents for extremely cold conditions and thermal insulated water tanks.⁵⁶
- [Temperature](#): A China Military Online report described the need to unload "more than 10 tons of coal" at the end of a weekend exercise, during which temperatures dropped to -30 degrees Celsius (-22 degrees Fahrenheit).⁵⁷
- [Psychological impact](#): Another China Military Online report described the effect of year-round cold conditions on the "physical and mental health of border troops" saying that it "affects their combat capabilities."⁵⁸

PLA media emphasized the need to prepare for future possible high-altitude combat, implying that border defense was the primary objective:

- One *PLA Daily* report highlighted the importance of "tailoring tactical training" so that "[training conditions match the actual combat environment](#)," including matching training "altitude, topography, weather" and other elements to actual combat scenarios.⁵⁹
- Although the reports did not name any specific bordering country, multiple reports stated or implied that border defense was the training objective.
- A China Military Online report described a recent training event in the Xinjiang military region above 4,500 meters that was designed to "strengthen the thinking behind [frontier garrisons](#)."⁶⁰
- Similarly, a China Military Online video report described "[border defense regiments](#)" on patrol at 4,300 meters.⁶¹



PLA mounted Yak patrol from the Khunjerab Border Defense regiment, 4,300-meter elevation. Source: CCTV-7.

The sample of PRC media articles described the following types of high-altitude training:

- Tactical exercises involving [traveling over glaciers and climbing steep snow](#) and icy slopes.⁶²
- Emergency [combat readiness](#) training at high altitudes.⁶³
- [Heavy vehicle maneuvering](#) at 5,000 meters⁶⁴ and [armored vehicle navigation](#) at 4,000 meters.⁶⁵
- Vehicle and on-foot night drills at 4,700 meters using new auxiliary [night vision driving devices](#).⁶⁶

- “[Specialized bayonet training](#)” and “[intensive physical fitness](#)” at 4,900 meters.⁶⁷
- Drone training for high-altitude tactical operations.⁶⁸

The descriptions of high-altitude training locations included areas in the Xinjiang and Tibet military regions. Most articles described high-elevation training taking place in the Karakorum Mountains of the Xinjiang military region.⁶⁹

- A China Military Online article described a training at the “[Xinjiang military region red army plateau training ground](#)” (疆军区某红军团高原驻训场上) at 4,500 meters in the Karakorum Mountains. The article indicated that this training ground location is “a drive” upslope in the Karakorum Mountains from the Kangxiwa (康西瓦) Martyrs Cemetery, where those killed in the 1962 China-India border conflict are buried.⁷⁰
- The [highest elevation](#) described in the select reports was 5,300 meters (17,388 feet) on a plateau in the Xinjiang military region where the PLA Army Research Institute conducts testing for emergency cold weather equipment.⁷¹
- One China Military Online article described a [Tibet military region](#) training above 4,000 meters.⁷²

PLA NAVY

As we show below, more efficient training programs may help the PLA Navy improve the speed of training its carrier air wing pilots.

PLA CLAIMS NEW ASSESSMENT MODEL IMPROVES CARRIER AIRWING TRAINING EFFICIENCY

Brian Waidelich

A training assessment model developed by a regiment of PLA Naval Aviation University has reportedly accelerated the cultivation of new carrier-based fighter pilots. According to the [PLA Daily](#), the new training assessment model integrates “flight parameters, video feed, and training assessment systems” to record and visualize the conditions of individual training flights. After each round of flights, instructors use the model to analyze in detail each cadet’s performance. From the model, instructors can identify individual cadets’ weaknesses and make necessary adjustments to subsequent training plans to ensure “progress with each flight.” The article asserted that use of the model has improved the precision and efficiency of quality control and safety monitoring, reduced the number of necessary training sorties by 6 percent, and allowed the regiment to cut a third of its instructors. The unit’s most recent group of pilot cadets finished land-based solo flights (which simulated ship landings) ahead of schedule and achieved higher overall training scores than cadets in previous years.⁷³



Pilot cadets of PLA Naval Aviation University conduct night flight training. Source: China Military Online.

NOTES

¹ The PLA’s official English-language website translated the name of the series of op-eds as “Ukraine Crisis Mirrors US’

Base Role on International Stage.”

For Chinese-language versions of the editorials published as of March 23, see Jun Sheng (钧声), “Fanning the Flames, the Initiator of Ukraine Tensions” (煽风点火, 乌克兰局势紧张的始作俑者), *PLA Daily* (解放军报), Mar. 17, 2022, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-03/17/content_311525.htm; Jun Sheng (钧声), “Ganging Up on Others, the Source of Disruptions to Regional Peace and Stability” (拉帮结伙, 搅乱地区和平稳定的祸水), *PLA Daily* (解放军报), Mar. 20, 2022, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-03/20/content_311784.htm; Jun Sheng (钧声), “Obsessed with Hegemony, the Source of Harm to Global Peace and Stability” (执迷霸权, 破坏世界和平稳定的祸源), *PLA Daily* (解放军报), Mar. 21, 2022, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-03/21/content_311860.htm; Jun Sheng (钧声), “Passing the Blame to Others, Mendacious Repeat Offender with Sinister Motives” (嫁祸于人, 用心险恶的撒谎惯犯), *PLA Daily* (解放军报), Mar. 23, 2022, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-03/23/content_312013.htm; Jun Sheng (钧声), “With Hypocritical ‘Double Standards,’ the Manufacturer of Humanitarian Crises” (虚伪“双标,” 人道主义危机的制造者), *PLA Daily* (解放军报), Mar. 25, 2022, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-03/25/content_312187.htm.

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