



# PLA UPDATE

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

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Welcome to the August 2023 edition of *PLA UPDATE*, CNA's newsletter on the internal and external affairs of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). This issue begins with a look at high-level developments in PLA administration, including a call for better supervision of military spending from People's Republic of China (PRC) leader Xi Jinping and a shakeup in the PLA Rocket Force's (PLARF) top leadership. We next turn to recent activities of the PLA Navy (PLAN), including its operations and exercises with the Russian navy, a PLAN hospital ship's five-country medical mission in the South Pacific, and a minesweeping squadron's training with crewed and uncrewed vessels. We then examine developments in the PLA Air Force (PLAAF), including its recent exercise with the Thai air force and an aerial tanker's display of refueling capabilities. We conclude with a look at new uniforms for non-active duty members of China's armed forces.

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## SENIOR LEADERSHIP GUIDANCE

### XI JINPING CALLS FOR STRENGTHENED GOVERNANCE OVER PLA

**China's top leader exhorted the PLA to improve oversight of institutions tasked with managing military funds.** On July 24, the Political Bureau (Politburo) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee—a decision-making body comprising China's top party, government, and military officials—convened a group [study session](#) on the topic of “strengthening all-around military governance.”<sup>1</sup> As one US-based PLA analyst notes, CCP Politburo study sessions are held nearly every month, and the session topics serve as indicators of issues that China's senior leadership considers important.<sup>2</sup>

Following the discussions at the July 24 study session, PRC leader Xi Jinping delivered a speech in which he charged the PLA with strengthening all-around military governance through a variety of means, including the creation of new mechanisms for supervising military expenditures. In a related development, on July 20, the PLA's official newspaper [reported](#) that China's Central Military Commission (CMC) released an opinion calling for the establishment of a “military integrity risk prevention and early warning mechanism.” Such a mechanism would reportedly enable the PLA to more accurately identify sources of corruption and thereby better prevent them.<sup>3</sup>

## PLA PROMOTIONS

### PLA NAVY, AIR FORCE OFFICERS PROMOTED TO LEAD ROCKET FORCE

**The new PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) leadership comes amid rumors of high-level corruption in the service responsible for China's nuclear arsenal.** On July 31, PRC leader Xi Jinping presided over a ceremony in Beijing at which two PLA officers were promoted from two-star lieutenant general to three-star general, the PLA's highest military rank. PRC state media identified the newly promoted officers, Wang Houbin and Xu Xisheng, as the PLARF's new commander and political commissar, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Notably, these appointments were cross-service assignments for both officers. Wang previously served as a deputy commander of the PLAN, while Xu was formerly the political commissar of the Southern Theater Command Air Force.<sup>5</sup>

Although it is not unprecedented for PLA generals or flag officers to change services,<sup>6</sup> this appears to be the first time since Xi Jinping took power that the top two leadership positions of one service were simultaneously replaced by officers from other services.<sup>7</sup> The move came amid a wave of media speculation in July about the whereabouts of PLARF leaders, with Hong Kong and Indian media alleging that senior members of the service were [under investigation for corruption](#)<sup>8</sup> or [died under mysterious circumstances](#).<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of why the leadership was replaced—which will likely remain opaque to outsiders—the decision to assign navy and air force leaders to lead the PLARF invites the question of why a new leadership team did not come from within the PLARF. One possibility is political: whatever transpired resulted in the need for a clean sweep. Another possibility (which need not be mutually exclusive with the first) is operational—a recognition of the fact that the PLA's nuclear force is no longer solely ground-based. Historically, the PLARF and its predecessor, the Second Artillery Corps, were tasked with managing China's land-based nuclear and conventional missiles. The emergence of the PLA's nascent nuclear triad, however, has [raised](#)

[questions](#) among some US scholars about how the PLARF will command and control nuclear weapons delivery platforms assigned to other services, namely PLAN submarines and PLAAF bombers.<sup>10</sup>



Official photo of the July 31 promotion ceremony. PLARF Commander General Wang Houbin and Political Commissar General Xu Xisheng are in the back row. In the front row are the leaders of China's CMC, with CMC Chairman Xi Jinping in the center.

Source: [Xinhua](#).

## PLA NAVY

### NAVIES OF CHINA, RUSSIA CONDUCT SERIES OF EXERCISES & ACTIVITIES



PLAN sailors visited RFS *Sovershenniy* while the ship was at port in Shanghai.

Source: [PRC Ministry of National Defense](#).

**Recent engagements between the PLAN and Russian Federation Navy show that Beijing and Moscow continue to build bilateral military relations amid the Russian war in Ukraine and tightening US alliances in the Indo-Pacific.** These engagements include a Russian naval delegation's visit to Shanghai, the bilateral maritime exercise Northern Interaction 2023 in the Sea of Japan, and a combined naval patrol that ventured to international waters in the vicinity of Alaska.

*Russian Federation Navy delegation visits Shanghai*

According to a [statement](#) from China's Ministry of National Defense (MND), two corvettes of the Russian Federation Navy's Pacific Fleet (RFS *Gromkiy* and RFS *Sovershenniy*) visited Shanghai from July 5 to 11, where they participated in professional, technical, and cultural exchanges with PLAN

sailors. Upon departing Shanghai, the Russian ships conducted an exercise east of the Yangtze River estuary with the Type 052D destroyer CNS *Taiyuan* (131), which focused on formation maneuver, maritime communication, and search and rescue at sea.

#### *Northern Interaction 2023*

From July 20 to 23, ships from the PLAN and Russian Federation Navy participated in the combined and joint exercise Northern Interaction 2023 (北部·联合-2023) in the Sea of Japan. The exercise, organized by the PLA's Northern Theater Command, incorporated over 10 ships and more than 30 aircraft from the naval and air forces of China and Russia. According to a report from Xinhua, the PRC government's official news agency, the exercise included subjects such as "air-sea escort, deterrence and expulsion, and anchorage defense."<sup>11</sup>



PLAN and Russian Federation Navy ships participating in Northern Interaction 2023 conduct "air-sea escort" drills.

Source: [Xinhua](#).

PLA assets participating in Northern Interaction 2023 included the following:

- Type 052D destroyers CNS *Qiqihar* (121) and CNS *Guiyang* (119)
- Type 054A frigates CNS *Zhaozhuang* (542) and CNS *Rizhao* (598)
- Type 903A replenishment ship CNS *Taihu* (889)
- Fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft including the Y-20 large transport aircraft, KJ-500 airborne early warning aircraft, J-16 fighter, and Z-20 helicopter

Russian military assets participating in the exercise included the following:

- Destroyers RFS *Admiral Tributs* (564) and RFS *Admiral Panteleyev* (548)
- Corvettes RFS *Hero of the Russian Federation Aldar Tsydenzhapov* (339) and RFS *Gremyashy* (337)
- Fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft including the IL-38 patrol aircraft, Ka-27 anti-submarine helicopter, and Su-30 fighter

#### *Combined naval patrol*

Following Northern Interaction 2023, PLAN and Russian Federation Navy ships that had participated in the exercise set off on a combined naval patrol of the Northern Pacific. The flotilla patrolled international waters in the vicinity of Alaska, where they were [shadowed](#) by four US Navy destroyers and a P-8 Poseidon aircraft before departing.<sup>12</sup>

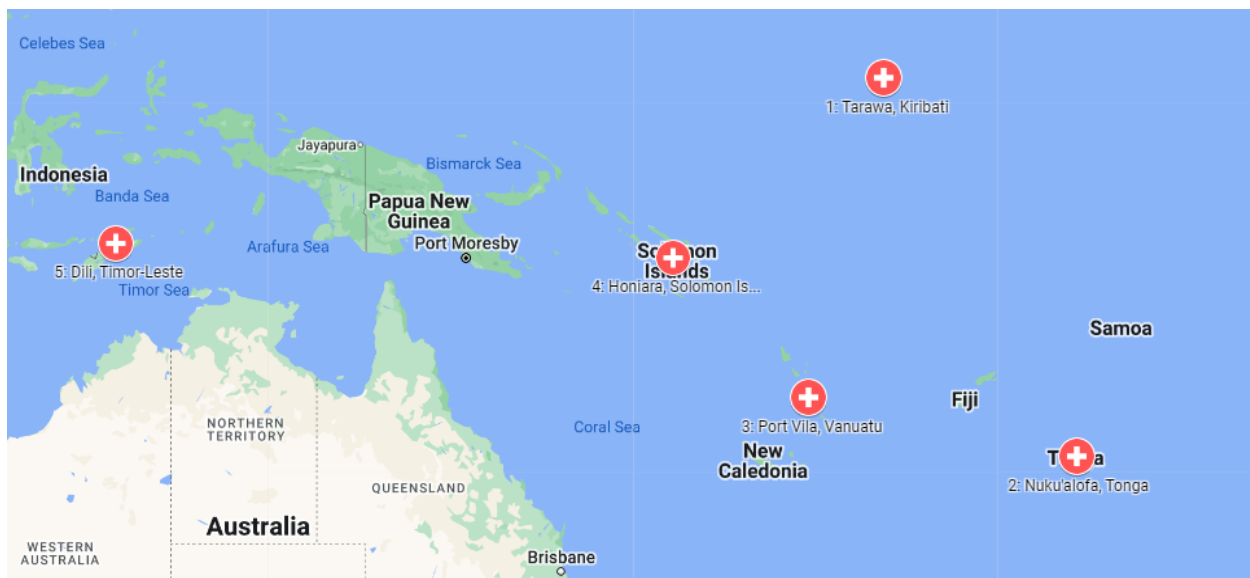
This was the third China–Russia combined naval patrol since 2021, the previous iterations of which also followed bilateral or multilateral military exercises. The first such patrol followed exercise Joint Sea 21 and saw PLAN and Russian Federation Navy ships complete a near-circumnavigation of Japan, while the second patrol came after Vostok 22 and saw a combined flotilla steam through waters near Alaska.<sup>13</sup>

Commenting on Northern Interaction 2023 and the combined China–Russia naval patrol, a PRC MND spokesperson [stated](#) that the activities "fully reflect the level of strategic mutual trust between the two countries" and "further consolidate the traditional friendship between the two militaries."<sup>14</sup>

## PLAN'S PEACE ARK BEGINS MEDICAL MISSION IN SOUTH PACIFIC

**The PLAN's five-country humanitarian mission comes at a time of heated competition for influence over Pacific Island countries.** On July 3, the Type 920 hospital ship CNS *Daishan Dao* (866)—commonly known as *Peace Ark*—departed port in mainland China for [Harmonious Mission 2023](#), a humanitarian medical mission in the South Pacific. According to the PLA's official news and information portal, the hospital ship's mission plan included a week of providing free medical services to local populations and overseas Chinese nationals at each of the following five locations: (1) Tarawa in Kiribati, (2) Nuku'alofa in Tonga, (3) Vila in Vanuatu, (4) Honiara in the Solomon Islands, and (5) Dili in Timor-Leste.

This is *Peace Ark's* ninth iteration of Harmonious Mission since the ship's commissioning in 2008 and the first time that a PLAN ship has offered medical services to Kiribati and the Solomon Islands. The ship's crew includes 126 active duty and civilian personnel drawn from the PLA's Naval Medical University, Joint Logistics Support Force, and Eastern Theater Command Navy. The crew are reportedly capable of performing examinations, treatments, and operations in areas including general surgery, orthopedics, obstetrics, and gynecology.<sup>15</sup>



Locations of Harmonious Mission 2023, according to the mission plan reported by PRC media.

Source: [Google Maps](#).

At the time of writing, *Peace Ark* has completed the Kiribati, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands legs of Harmonious Mission 2023. Information on these visits disclosed by PRC officials and media includes the reported numbers of patients seen and medical operations performed in each country, which are summarized in the table below:<sup>16</sup>

Country visited	Dates	Patients seen	Operations performed
Kiribati	July 15–22	5,095	20
Tonga	July 28–Aug. 4	6,895	39
Vanuatu	Aug. 8–Aug. 15	6,573	30
Solomon Islands	Aug. 19–Aug. 26	10,310	31

Despite its stated humanitarian objectives, the PLAN's Harmonious Mission 2023 comes at a time of heated strategic competition between China and the US for influence in Pacific Island nations. In July, the US and several partner countries concluded the main planning conference for [Pacific Partnership](#), the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>17</sup> In the next iteration of Pacific Partnership, the US will likely provide medical services and other aid to some of the same countries visited by *Peace Ark*, including an [expected stop](#) by USNS *Mercy* in the Solomon Islands in November.<sup>18</sup> The degree to which such "[military medical mission competition](#)" enhances Beijing or Washington's standings in these countries, and the degree to which it improves the quality of life in recipient countries, are questions that merit future analysis.<sup>19</sup>

## PLAN EXPLORES NEW MODE OF MINE COUNTERMEASURES OPERATIONS

**A minesweeping squadron seeks to improve synergies between crewed and uncrewed platforms to better detect, sweep, and hunt naval mines.** On July 11, PRC state media [reported](#) that a minesweeping squadron of the Northern Theater Command Navy was exploring a new operational mode for mine countermeasures (MCM) aimed at improving levels of "manned/unmanned coordination." Footage in the report showed related drills that involved CNS *Huimin* (which appears to be a Wozang-class minehunting ship), at least one shipborne mine neutralization remotely operated vehicle (ROV), two remotely controlled uncrewed Wonang-class inshore minesweeper craft, and two smaller craft carrying naval divers. At one stage of the drills, inshore minesweeper craft operated in a column formation ahead of *Huimin* to conduct "preliminary detection" of underwater mines (possibly simulated). Later, mines were reportedly "cleared" by the ROV and naval divers.<sup>20</sup>

The reported drills come amid ongoing discussion in PRC military and civilian writings about the importance of the PLAN developing enhanced capabilities for MCM both inside and outside the First Island Chain. Although PRC subject matter experts have for years recommended that the PLAN acquire semi- or fully autonomous uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs) and uncrewed underwater vehicles (UUVs) for MCM missions, the PLAN's only uncrewed craft dedicated to MCM remain the remotely controlled Wonang-class minesweepers, which were first introduced in 2005. As the PRC continues to research and develop capabilities for waging "intelligent" warfare, it will be worth watching to see what artificial intelligence-enabled or autonomous platforms may be delivered to the PLAN's MCM force.<sup>21</sup>



Left: formation of crewed and uncrewed vessels in Northern Theater Command Navy minesweeping squadron training activity reported by PRC state media. In the front is CNS *Huimin*, and on the far left and right in the back are Wonang-class inshore minesweepers. In the middle in the back are two smaller craft carrying naval divers.

Right: PLAN sailors on CNS *Huimin* wheel out a mine neutralization ROV. Although two ROVs can be seen in the image, the media report showed only one involved in the drills.

Source: [CCTV-7](#).

## PLA AIR FORCE

### CHINA, THAILAND CONDUCT EXERCISE FALCON STRIKE

**The Royal Thai Air Force and the PLA Air Force held the combined air exercise Falcon Strike 2023 from July 9 to July 21 at the Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base in Udorn Thani.** The two militaries held their [opening ceremony](#) for Falcon Strike 2023 at the air base on July 9.<sup>22</sup> According to [China Military Online](#), the official online news outlet of the PLA, Falcon Strike 2023 featured activities focused on “air support, joint air defense, and large-scale deployments.”

The PAAAF [reportedly](#) sent equipment including “fighter jets, fighter bombers, airborne early warning aircraft, and surface-to-air missile units.”<sup>23</sup> According to [Thai media](#), Thai aircraft taking part in the 2023 exercise included the Gripen 39 C/D, Alpha Jets, and Saab 340 AEW fighters.<sup>24</sup> Per agreement with the US air force, Thai air force F-16 and F-5 fighters were not allowed to participate in the exercise.

[Thai media](#) also reported that Falcon Strike 2023 is the first of three planned combined exercises from July to September between the PLA and the Royal Thai Armed Forces.<sup>25</sup> The other two are as follows:

- Joint Strike 2023, from August 16 to September 2 in Lop Buri Province, is a combined special warfare exercise involving PLA Army and Royal Thai Army “special warfare units.”
- Blue Strike 2023, from September 3 to 10 in Chon Buri Province, is a biennial combined maritime exercise between the two countries’ navies.



Top left: PAAAF jet fighter pilot flies over Thai airspace during Falcon Strike 2023. Top middle and right: PAAAF paratroopers practice skydiving over Thai airfield. Bottom: Closing ceremony of Falcon Strike 2023.

Source: [CCTV-7](#).

## PLAAF AERIAL TANKER SHOWS SKILLS AT CHANGCHUN AIRSHOW

**The public display of a PLAAF tanker's aerial refueling capabilities reflects broader PLA efforts to enhance operational reach.** From July 26 to 30, the [Changchun Airshow](#) took place in northeast China's Jilin Province. This annual event, first held in 2011, features displays and performances of crewed and uncrewed aircraft as well as other equipment such as ground-based radars and missiles.<sup>26</sup>



A highlight of the 2023 airshow was the first public display of a PLAAF YY-20 aerial tanker simultaneously [refueling](#) a J-20 stealth fighter and a J-16 multi-role fighter. A YY-20 pilot

speaking with Xinhua said that the refueling demonstration exemplified the PLAAF's everyday approach to operations and training, which seeks to create operational synergies through mixed groupings of combat aircraft. The pilot said that mixed aircraft groupings could greatly increase the PLAAF's operational radii and improve its capabilities for establishing control and conducting strikes in "distant areas."<sup>27</sup>

Source: [Xinhua](#).

## ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

### NEW UNIFORMS FOR MILITIA MEMBERS, LOCAL MILITARY RECRUITERS

**New uniforms have been issued to members of China's auxiliary combat force and nationwide recruitment leaders.** On August 1, the PRC began distributing new "Type-21 uniforms" to members of China's primary militia and full-time cadres of People's Armed Forces Departments (PAFDs). The issuance of the uniforms was reportedly part of an effort to "help stimulate a sense of honor and responsibility" among related personnel.<sup>28</sup>

China's militia forces are divided into two components. All male PRC citizens between 18 and 35 who are fit for military service and not already in active service are enrolled in China's "ordinary militia" (普通民兵). The "primary militia" (基干民兵) refers to a subset of militia servicemembers between the ages of 18 and 28 who are in good health, are politically reliable, and have received more military training than ordinary militia.<sup>29</sup> China's defense white paper released in March 2011 stated that the country's primary militia had eight million members. Although Xinhua [reported](#) in January 2016 that China's CMC sought to reduce the size of the country's militia forces, no official count of the primary militia has been released since 2011.<sup>30</sup>





Type-21 uniforms, from left to right: militia (summer), militia (winter), PAFD cadre (summer), PAFD cadre (winter), militia (coat), and PAFD cadre (coat).

Source: [PRC Ministry of National Defense](#).

PAFDs, which function as both local PLA headquarters and offices within local governments, are responsible for the bulk of the work in the twice-annual recruitment and conscription of PRC youths for military service. China's thousands of township-level PAFDs are led by civilian cadre who typically have former military experience. These full-time civilian cadre appear to be part of the primary militia.<sup>31</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Xi Calls for High-Quality Development of Armed Forces with High-Level Governance," Xinhua, July 26, 2023, <https://english.news.cn/20230726/0af75511e947449ab92816b2018b4b31/c.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Hart, "The CCP's Shifting Priorities: An Analysis of Politburo Group Study Sessions," *China Brief* 21, no. 13 (July 2, 2021), <https://jamestown.org/program/the-ccps-shifting-priorities-an-analysis-of-politburo-group-study-sessions/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Central Military Commission Issues 'Opinion on Establishing a Military Integrity Risk Prevention and Early Warning Mechanism'" (中央军委办公厅印发《关于建立军队廉政风险防范预警机制的意见》), *PLA Daily* (解放军报), July 20, 2023, [http://www.81.cn/szb\\_223187/szbxg/index.html?paperName=jfjb&paperDate=2023-07-20&paperNumber=01&articleid=910917](http://www.81.cn/szb_223187/szbxg/index.html?paperName=jfjb&paperDate=2023-07-20&paperNumber=01&articleid=910917).

<sup>4</sup> "Xi Presents Order to Promote Military Officers to Rank of General," Xinhua, July 31, 2023, <https://english.news.cn/20230731/130783b936704932a1d7041eeb818280/c.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, Directory of PRC Military Personalities, Washington, DC, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Admiral Miao Hua, who currently serves as director of the Central Military Commission's Political Work Department, spent most of his career in the PLA Army before being transferred to the PLAN in 2014.

<sup>7</sup> The editors would like to thank Ken Allen and Rick Gunnell for their related comments on PLA senior promotions and transfers since 2012.

<sup>8</sup> On July 28, the *South China Morning Post*, citing unnamed sources, claimed the CMC's Commission for Discipline Inspection, the PLA's top anti-corruption body, was investigating former PLARF commander Li Yuchao and former deputy commanders Zhang Zhenzhong and Liu Guangbin. "Chinese Anti-Corruption Investigators Target Top PLA Rocket Force Generals, Sources Say," *South China Morning Post*, July 28, 2023, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3229150/chinese-anti-corruption-investigators-target-top-rocket-force-generals-sources-say>.

<sup>9</sup> *India Today*, citing Indian intelligence sources, reported on July 19 that former PLARF deputy commander Wu Guohua died under “mysterious circumstances” in June. Pradip R. Sagar, “Why Buzz of Internal Strife in Chinese Military Is Growing,” *India Today*, July 19, 2023, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/why-buzz-of-internal-strife-in-chinese-military-is-growing-2408748-2023-07-19>.

<sup>10</sup> Greg Hadley, “Nuclear Advances by China Raise Questions on Command and Control, Structure,” *Air Force Magazine*, Aug. 25, 2022, <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/china-new-nuclear-triad-raises-questions-on-command-and-control-structure/>.

<sup>11</sup> Qian Xiaohu (钱晓虎) and Ren Xu (任旭), “Exercise Northern/Interaction 2023 Kicks Off” (“北部·联合-2023”演习开幕), *Xinhua* (新华网), July 20, 2023, [http://www.news.cn/politics/2023-07/20/c\\_1129760376.htm](http://www.news.cn/politics/2023-07/20/c_1129760376.htm).

<sup>12</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Nancy A. Youssef, “Russia and China Sent Large Naval Patrol Near Alaska,” *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 6, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-and-china-sent-large-naval-patrol-near-alaska-127de28b>.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on military activities between China and Russia, such as exercises and combined patrols, see Dmitry Gorenburg, Paul Schwartz, Brian Waidelich, and Elizabeth Wishnick, *Russian-Chinese Military Cooperation: An Increasingly Unequal Partnership*, CNA, Mar. 2023, DRM-2023-U-034684-Final, <https://www.cna.org/reports/2023/05/Russian-Chinese-Military-Cooperation.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> “Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on July 27,” PRC Ministry of National Defense, Aug. 9, 2023, [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News\\_213114/NewsRelease/16243792.html](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/NewsRelease/16243792.html).

<sup>15</sup> “PLA Hospital Ship Peace Ark Sets Sail for Harmonious Mission 2023,” China Military Online, July 4, 2023, [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA\\_209163/TopStories\\_209189/16235016.html](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16235016.html).

<sup>16</sup> “Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on July 27,” PRC Ministry of National Defense, Aug. 9, 2023, [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News\\_213114/NewsRelease/16243792.html](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/NewsRelease/16243792.html); “PLA Hospital Ship Peace Ark Sets Sail for Harmonious Mission 2023,” China Military Online, July 4, 2023, [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA\\_209163/TopStories\\_209189/16235016.html](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16235016.html); Xu Xiaolong and Li Weixin, “Chinese Naval Hospital Ship Peace Ark Concludes Visit to Vanuatu,” China Military Online, Aug. 17, 2023, [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA\\_209163/TopStories\\_209189/16245695.html](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16245695.html); Xu Wei (徐巍), Liu Bo (刘博), and Li Keji (李珂嘉贺), “Chinese Navy’s Peace Ark Hospital Ship Departs Solomon Islands, Heads Toward East Timor-Leste” (中国海军“和平方舟”号医院船离开所罗门群岛前往东帝汶), China News Service (中国新闻网), Aug. 27, 2023, <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gj/2023/08-27/10067979.shtml>.

<sup>17</sup> “Main Planning Conference for Pacific Partnership,” DVIDS, July 25, 2023, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/7940377/main-planning-conference-pacific-partnership>.

<sup>18</sup> “USNS Mercy Available for SOL2023 Games Thanks to USA,” *Sunday Isles*, Mar. 21, 2023, <https://sundayisles.islesmedia.net/usns-mercy-available-for-sol2023-games-thanks-to-usa/>.

<sup>19</sup> Eileen Natuzzi, “Military Hospital Ships from China and the US Are Plying Across Pacific Islands. But This Growing Competition Can Do More Harm Than Good,” Lowy Institute, July 10, 2023, [https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/military-hospital-ships-china-us-are-plying-across-pacific-islands-growing#msdynttrid=mysPV7H5Uk1-s8\\_znc8siFTcWwHhF7K5YNfc4VFi9nU](https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/military-hospital-ships-china-us-are-plying-across-pacific-islands-growing#msdynttrid=mysPV7H5Uk1-s8_znc8siFTcWwHhF7K5YNfc4VFi9nU).

<sup>20</sup> “Intensify Training and Combat Readiness, Accelerate Transformative Building, Coordinate Training, Explore a New Mode of Mine Countermeasures Operations” (深化练兵备战 加快转型建设 协同训练 探索反水雷作战新模式), *Military Report* (军事报道), CCTV-7, July 11, 2023, <https://tv.cctv.com/2023/07/11/VIDEQYn1vf1GciNtjivEBzqv230711.shtml?spm=C52346.PiumOrlYLNUM.EOVXtwLj8YU7.14>.

<sup>21</sup> For more on the PLAN’s MCM program, see Brian Waidelich and George Pollitt, *China Maritime Report No. 29: PLAN Mine Countermeasures: Platforms, Training, and Civil-Military Integration*, CMSI China Maritime Reports, July 2023, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cmsi-maritime-reports/29/>.

<sup>22</sup> “China, Thailand to Conduct Joint Air Force Training Exercise in July,” CGTN, July 1, 2023, [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA\\_209163/Exercises/News\\_209184/16234599.html](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/Exercises/News_209184/16234599.html); Wassana Nanuam, “Thailand, China Hold 3 Joint Military Exercises,” *Bangkok Post*, July 17, 2023, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2612821/thailand-china-holding-3-joint-military-exercises>.

<sup>23</sup> Li Jianwen, “China-Thailand Joint Air Exercise Falcon Strike-2023 Kicks Off in Thailand,” China Military Online, July 10, 2023, [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA\\_209163/TopStories\\_209189/16236105.html](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16236105.html).

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- <sup>25</sup> Wassana Nanuam, “Thailand, China Hold 3 Joint Military Exercises,” *Bangkok Post*, July 17, 2023, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2612821/thailand-china-holding-3-joint-military-exercises>.
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- <sup>31</sup> The authors would like to thank Dennis Blasko for his inputs on this summary. More information on China’s primary militia and PAFD cadres is available in Dennis Blasko’s eBook *Understanding China’s Armed Forces: A Compendium*, which is available as part of the course “Understanding China’s Armed Forces” at the following link: <https://proficiency1.com/courses/understanding-chinas-armed-forces/>.

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