



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

Patrick deGategno, editor

Welcome to the second 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 will draw on the material and expertise of CNA’s China and Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division to provide an update on important developments in the PLA as reported in the Chinese-language media.

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MAJOR EXERCISES

PLA NAVY, AIR FORCE HOLD MULTIPLE EXERCISES AROUND PRC TERRITORY IN POSSIBLE RESPONSE TO US-JAPAN EXERCISE

Patrick deGatego

The PLA Navy and Air Force held multiple exercises across the PRC territory from February 7 to 10. *Global Times*, a nonauthoritative, commercial daily newspaper, claimed in two reports that the PLA conducted these exercises in response to the February 3–7 US-Japan combined maritime exercise Nobel Fusion.¹² According to a US Marine Corps (USMC) press release, [Noble Fusion](#) transpired from February 3 to 7 in the Philippine Sea and featured participating forces from the US Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force, as well as maritime and ground elements from the Japan Self-Defense Force.³

The *Global Times* reported that the [PLA Navy's three regional fleets](#) and [PLA Air Force units in all five theater commands](#) held the following drills in their respective areas of operation:

Eastern Theater Command

- Eastern Theater Navy vessels, including Type 052C “Luyang II” DDG CNS *Changchun*, Type 052D “Luyang III” DDG CNS *Xiamen*, and Type 054A “Jiangkai II” FFG CNS *Yiyang*, [conducted](#) air defense, maneuver, and main gun live-fire drills in the East China Sea.⁴
- An Eastern Theater Air Force regiment organized flight training, including drills featuring KJ-2000 airborne early warning and control system planes, to test the unit’s “combat capabilities” on February 7.⁵

Southern Theater Command

- Southern Theater Navy vessels, including Type 919 “Anshen” AH CNS *You'ai* (AH 861) and Type 903 “Fuchi” AOR CNS *Weishanhu*, [carried out](#) search and rescue, replenishment at sea, and live-fire drills in the South China Sea.⁶ Of note, the [Type 919 Anshen AH](#) is a new [4,000-ton displacement hospital ship](#). It has two known vessels in its class: CNS *Nanyi-12* and CNS *Nanyi-13*, both of which serve the Southern Theater Navy.⁷



PLA Southern Theater Navy hospital ship CNS *You'ai* (AH 861) in mid-August 2021. Source: *PLA Daily*



PLA Southern Theater Navy hospital ship CNS *Nanyi-12* in mid-April 2021. Source: *PLA Daily*

PRC media reports indicate that [CNS Nanyu-12](#) may have been redesignated [CNS You'ai \(AH 861\)](#) sometime during mid-2021.⁸

- Southern Theater Air Force J-10 fighter units conducted flight exercises “honing pilots' capabilities in air-to-air combat” on February 9 and 10.⁹

Northern Theater Command

- Northern Theater Navy vessels, including an unspecified Type 903 “Fuchi” AOR and Type 101 “Hai Jiu” ARS CNS *Beijiu*, [participated](#) in “maritime-air multidimensional combined rescue drills” in the Yellow Sea to test their rapid response capabilities during exercise activities including damage control, minesweeping, and search and rescue.¹⁰
- Northern Theater Air Force JH-7 fighter-bombers received maintenance and carried out flight drills on February 9.¹¹

Western Theater Command

- Western Theater Air Force units carried out ground-based anti-aircraft missile drills on February 7 and J-16 “mock aerial combat battles” on February 10.¹²

Central Theater Command

- Central Theater Air Force units carried out “cold-resistant training for paratroopers” on February 7, anti-aircraft missile combat readiness drills on February 9, and flight tests for Z-10 attack helicopters and Z-8 transport helicopters on February 10.¹³

In its reports, the *Global Times* quoted PRC military commentators asserting that the PLA Navy and Air Force exercises were conducted in response to the February 3–7 US-Japan combined maritime exercise [Noble Fusion](#).¹⁴ According to the *Global Times* reports:

- Unnamed PRC military commentators alleged that Noble Fusion included the participation of “the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln*, about 15,000 US sailors and marines and another 1,000 members of the Japan Self-Defense Forces” exercising in “particularly sensitive” sea areas, “encompassing the waters to the east of the island of Taiwan,” making the exercise “very provocative to China.”¹⁵
- Frequent media commentator and former PLA Second Artillery Engineering Academy professor Song Zhongping also asserted that the US and Japan flouted the “Olympic Truce” by executing Noble Fusion as the Winter Olympics were beginning in Beijing.¹⁶
- Song and an unnamed PRC military affairs commentator claimed that the PLA’s maritime and air exercises “displayed the PLA's high level of combat preparedness amid military provocations from the US and its allies” and demonstrated that “China’s military is prepared to deal” with any external threat or contingency.¹⁷

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

NEW LAWS AND REGULATIONS IN FEBRUARY

Kelly Buckley

In February, China announced three new regulations related to military affairs:

- On February 9, Chinese media reported that the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, State Council, and Central Military Commission (CMC) had issued "[Implementation Measures for the Commendation of Military Merits and Honors](#)." These measures standardize the process for conferring military commendations and provide new rules for medals, honorary titles, citations, commemorative badges, and special rewards.¹⁸
- On February 10, China Military Online reported that the CMC Logistics Support Department and Training and Administration Department had enacted regulations on [health protections during and after military training](#), which specify how medical treatment and rehabilitation should be conducted for injured trainees.¹⁹ (These regulations are discussed further below.)
- On February 17, the CMC Training and Administration Department issued the "[Regulations on the Work of Military Training Materials for the Army](#)." The new regulations standardize the planning, preparation, research and development, publication and distribution, use, and management of military training materials that are consistent with existing regulations and policies.²⁰

NEW PLA GUIDANCE AIMS TO BETTER PREVENT AND TREAT TRAINING INJURIES IN LIGHT OF "MORE REALISTIC" COMBAT TRAINING

Brian Waidelich

In early February 2022, the CMC released a pair of regulations aimed at better preventing and treating injuries suffered by servicemembers in increasingly demanding military training.

First, the CMC Logistic Support Department and Training Management Department jointly [issued](#) "Military Training Health Protection Provisions" (军事训练健康保护规定) in early February. The provisions focus on ensuring servicemembers' safety and health during military training, providing medical treatment and rehabilitation for those who are injured, and effectively managing military training health protection work.²¹ When reporting on the rationale for developing such regulations, the *PLA Daily* noted that, as the PLA has increasingly focused on [improving](#) combat readiness, executing combat-realistic training, and increasing the difficulty and intensity of training, a need has emerged for "greater requirements" for injury prevention and treatment throughout the force.²²

Second, the CMC Logistic Support Department issued the "All-Military Military Training Injury Prevention and Treatment System Building Regulations" (for trial implementation) (全军军事训练伤防治体系建设规范) in early February. These regulations seek to [integrate](#) the PLA's injury prevention and treatment resources. The regulations, announced by the CMC Logistic Support Department's Health Bureau, divide responsibilities along four levels: all-military, theater command, region, and unit (全军、战区、区域、部队). The new regulations call for the establishment of the following institutions:

- The All-Military Military Training Injury Prevention/Treatment and Research Center (全军军事训练伤防治与研究中心), which integrates resources from the PLA General Hospital, military medical universities, the Military Sports Training Center, and unspecified civilian organizations.

- Seven “military training injury prevention and treatment training centers” (军事训练伤防治培训中心)—one for each of the five theater commands, as well as one each for the Xinjiang Military District and the Tibet Military District.
- Six “military training injury prevention and treatment command centers” (军事训练伤防治指导中心), distributed among the medical centers of the PLA’s services and arms and the People’s Armed Police (PAP).²³

MILITARY DIPLOMACY

PLA AIRCRAFT, WARSHIPS DELIVER HUMANITARIAN AID TO TONGA

Brian Waidelich

The PLA supported China’s delivery of humanitarian aid to Tonga in the wake of the major volcanic eruption on January 15. PLA assets delivered relief supplies to the island kingdom in two batches—by air and by sea, respectively.



One of two aid-bearing PLAAF Y-20 heavy transport aircraft that arrived in Tonga on January 28, 2022. Source: CGTN

Batch 1: Airlift. According to China Military Online, on January 27, two PLAAF Y-20 heavy transport aircraft carrying [33 tons](#) of relief supplies departed from Guangzhou.²⁴ CGTN reported that they stopped to refuel [three times](#) before reaching Tonga’s Fua’amotu International Airport on January 28.²⁵

Batch 2: Sealift. Xinhua reported that, on January 31, the PLA Navy’s landing platform dock *Wuzhishan* and replenishment ship *Chaganhu* departed Guangzhou laden with about [1,400 tons](#) of mobile homes, tractors, and other supplies.²⁶ China Military Online reported that the ships [arrived](#) at Nuku’alofa Port, Tonga, on February 15.²⁷

For more on China’s delivery of humanitarian aid to Tonga and how it compared with US ally and partner aid, see CNA’s recent *InDepth* [article](#) “The Military Delivery of Aid to Tonga and Insights for Indo-Pacific Force Posture.”²⁸

NATIONAL DEFENSE MOBILIZATION

PLA ARMY COMMAND COLLEGE AUTHORS DISCUSS SEVEN AREAS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE MOBILIZATION

Brian Waidelich

In a recent article, two PLA academics provided readers with an overview of the seven key areas of the PRC national defense mobilization system. On February 15, 2022, *China Defense Daily* ran an [article](#) on China’s national defense mobilization system by Xue Zhiliang and Wang Guanlan, authors from PLA

Army Command College.²⁹ According to Xue and Wang, members of specialized military and civilian mobilization offices are susceptible to focusing on the particulars of their work and “see[ing] the trees but not the forest.” The authors claim that understanding the national defense mobilization enterprise’s main parts is essential to strengthen coordination between each specialty and develop warfighting capability. To this end, Xue and Wang outline key aspects of seven areas of national defense mobilization:

- **Political mobilization (政治动员)** consists of communicating the purpose of a war to the military and the people. They argue that modern warfare is becoming more hybrid and unrestricted, increasing greater requirements for citizens to mobilize and participate in warfare. The PRC should normalize national defense education for all people and ensure that people from all walks of life will be united in their opposition to the enemy.
- **Armed forces mobilization (武装力量动员)** seeks to mobilize armed forces quickly and efficiently to seize the strategic initiative early in a war, control the war situation, and attain victory. Xue and Wang argue that active-duty forces must reduce their peace-war transition time as much as possible, and reserve forces must always maintain a state of mobilization readiness.
- **Economic mobilization (国民经济动员)** is described as the material foundation upon which warfare rests. Xue and Wang assess that increasing levels of informatization and intelligentization have caused warfare to become more reliant on the economy and have increased requirements for timely production of military supplies.
- **Transportation mobilization (交通运输动员)** covers railways, highways, waterways, aviation, pipelines, and postal services. Xue and Wang argue that, because modern warfare erupts and develops suddenly in multiple interconnected domains, it is important to make adequate transportation mobilization preparations. The PRC, they argue, should implement national defense requirements across all transportation infrastructure development and transportation equipment design.
- **Scientific and technical equipment mobilization (科技装备动员)** empowers the participants in informatized warfare, a contest of systems, by ensuring the rapid mobilization of civilian scientific and technical expertise, facilities, and equipment for support to military operations. Xue and Wang assert that the PRC must strengthen the management and planning of organizations, personnel, equipment, materials, results, and information across warfighting domains to ensure the provision of strong science and technology support to the battlefield.
- **Network information mobilization (网络信息动员)** is the mobilization of civilian expertise, material, and electromagnetic resources required to acquire, transmit, store, and process networked information. Xue and Wang assert that it is essential because all types of operations in modern warfare depend on networked information systems. According to Xue and Wang, taking steps during peacetime to prepare civilian network information resources for potential mobilization in crises or conflicts is important to ensure the secure, stable, and smooth flow of information on future battlefields. Related efforts include gaining a clear understanding of the personnel, equipment, and production capacity of related industries.

- **People's air defense mobilization (人民防空动员)** involves activating protective infrastructure, implementing air defense control over cities and major economic targets, and leading the people to disperse, hide, and then quickly clear up the aftermath of air raids to maintain war potential. Xue and Wang write that the PRC must build an "underground Great Wall" in the course of modern urban development to provide an "indestructible shield" for the people.³⁰

PROMOTIONS

SEVEN SENIOR PLA, PAP OFFICERS PROMOTED IN JANUARY

Patrick deGategno

On January 21, the CMC promoted seven senior officers from the PLA and PAP to the rank of general officer (上将), the PRC's highest military officer rank. The [promoted](#) officers are as follows:³¹

- Admiral Liu Qingsong, Political Commissar of the PLA Northern Theater Command
- General Wu Yanan, Commander of the PLA Central Theater Command
- General Xu Deqing, Political Commissar of the PLA Central Theater Command
- General Qin Shutong, Political Commissar of the PLA Army
- Admiral Yuan Huazhi, Political Commissar of the PLA Navy
- General Li Yuchao, Commander of the PLA Rocket Force
- General Zhang Hongbing, Political Commissar of the PAP



The CMC Chairman Xi Jinping, vice chairs, and members (front row) posing for a group photo with the newly promoted general officers (back row) at their promotion ceremony in Beijing on January 21, 2022. Source: *PLA Daily*

NOTES

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