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MAPPING EAST ASIA

CHINA

Joint Aerial Patrol 2021 by Russian and the Chinese Military

Russia and China conducted [joint strategic aerial patrol](#) in the Asia-Pacific region with strategic bombers on 19 November. Reportedly, this aerial patrol is part of the annual exercises and is the third such exercise conducted by the two countries. The Chinese and the Russian military used H-6K bombers and Tu-95 MC respectively. While Japan lodged a protest with both countries, South Korea [had to scramble](#) its fighter aircraft in response to the exercise. During the previous exercises as well, both South Korea and Japan had to scramble jets as Russian and Chinese aircraft entered South Korea's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) in 2019 through Miyako Strait in the East China Sea. The Chinese statement about the aerial patrol claimed that the patrol was not directed against any third country.

Virtual Talk between Chinese and Russian Defence Ministers

The Chinese State Councilor and Minister of National Defense, General Wei Fenghe and Russian Defence Minister General Sergei Shoigu held [virtual talks](#) on 23 November 2021 to discuss prospects of further military and strategic cooperation between the two countries. At the meeting, the two ministers also noted how successfully China and Russia have promoted practical military cooperation and have achieved new breakthroughs and developments in joint exercise and training. The two sides affirmed to work together to sustain this momentum and comprehensively implement the important

consensus reached by the heads of states of the two countries. Lastly, they pledged to continue to deepen strategic coordination and strengthen cooperation in strategic exercises and joint patrols in order to safeguard the core interests of the two countries and to maintain regional and international security and stability.

Chinese National Defense Spokesperson reviews military achievements

In a regular press briefing held by the Chinese Defense Ministry, Senior Col. Wu Qian, spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense (MND) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), highlighted some of the [major achievements](#) of the Chinese military in weaponry and equipment development. Speaking on overall equipment development, he stated that the Chinese Military Commission (CMC) has phased out first-generation equipment, reduced the use of second-generation equipment and has commissioned in large quantities third-generation equipment and above. Elaborating further, he contended that the number of traditional equipment for ground combat and coastal defence has been reduced and new types of equipment for protection of the far seas and long-range strike has been developed.

With regard to building equipment for the joint operations system, Col. Wu noted that the military had optimized the proportion between heavy, medium and light land equipment and has promoted the development of equipment series for aircraft carrier formations and amphibious formations. Further, they have improved equipment systems for air control battle, electronic countermeasure, and transportation and projection while

simultaneously enhancing intermediate and long-range precision strike capabilities, and covering the whole territory with a fundamental information network.

Col. Wu also drew attention to backbone equipment development where new Type 15 light tanks, long-range multiple rocket launcher systems (MRLS) and Z-20 helicopters have been commissioned. He informed that the first indigenous aircraft carrier, Type 075 amphibious assault ships and Type 055 10,000-ton-class destroyers have been already put into service and the J-20, J-16 and J-10C warplanes have achieved combat capabilities. Lastly, DF-17 and DF-26 missiles have been commissioned in batches. At the end of the review, he declared that the Chinese military will continue to diligently implement President Xi's instructions and decisions and will move faster to accelerate weaponry and equipment modernization.

TAIWAN

Taiwan National Defense Report for 2021

The Taiwan Ministry of National Defense released its [annual National Defense Report](#) on 10 November. For the first time, this year's Defense Report titled, *Resilience: ROC Armed Forces* was released in Chinese and English versions simultaneously. Reportedly, the English version was released with the Chinese one to boost Taiwan's communication with foreign countries and strengthen efforts to combat the increasing military threat from China. Also, it intended to support the Government's policy to make Taiwan a bilingual nation. Offering the latest assessment, the Report claimed Taiwan to be facing grave military threat as China has

launched "gray zone warfare" against the former. Accordingly, the PLA has been [flying warplanes](#) into Taiwan's ADIZ. Also, Chinese armed forces are capable of blockading Taiwan's key harbours and airports and critical air and sea lines of communication and impact Taipei's military supplies and logistic resources. Furthermore, Chinese military modernization is aimed to obtain military superiority to the extent that it can deny foreign assistance forces from reaching the island in an event of an invasion. Apart from conventional military threats, the Report also informed about [cyber and cognitive warfare](#) deployed by China to conquer Taiwan without a full-scale military conflict.

On the issue of Taiwan's response to the Chinese military threat, the Report affirmed Taipei's resolve to strengthen its "[asymmetric warfare](#)" capabilities by ramping up domestic arms production, procurement of new weapons systems from abroad and restructuring the military. Further, it underscored Taiwan's strategy of delaying a Chinese invasion by deploying coastal minefields and targeting Chinese airfields, ports and assembly areas close to the Strait.

JAPAN

Japan advancing Interoperability with Indo-Pacific partners

In mid-November, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) conducted several joint exercises with key allies in pursuit of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. For instance, the JMSDF together with the United States (US) Navy, conducted [anti-submarine warfare exercise](#) for the first time in the South China Sea. The aim was to augment

tactical interoperability between the allies and bolster deterrence. The exercise involved *JS Kaga* and *JS Murasame*, P-1 patrol aircraft and submarine, *USS Milius* and P-8A maritime aircraft.

Separately, the Japan-Australia bilateral exercise “[Nichi-Gou Trident](#)” was conducted south of Shikoku from 10-12 November. During this exercise, asset protection of Australian forces, in keeping with Article 95-2 of the Japan Self-Defense Force Law was conducted. This was the first time JSDF protected warships beyond the US Navy. JMSDF sent *Murasame*-class destroyer *JS Inazuma* to escort the Australian Navy’s Anzac-class frigate *HMAS Warramunga*. The Japanese defence ministry indicated that “protection of the Australian military represents [enhanced interoperability](#) and closer co-operation with our special strategic partner Australia.” Earlier, Japan and Australia also finalized the [Reciprocal Access Agreement \(RAA\)](#).

Subsequently, Japan, together with the US, Australia, Canada and Germany, conducted a multilateral naval exercise, called the [ANNUALEX](#) in the Philippine Sea from 21-30 November. The primary objective of this tactical exercise reportedly was to augment maritime communication tactics, anti-submarine warfare and air warfare operations, replenishments-at-sea, and maritime interdiction manoeuvres. The idea was to enable the navies to manoeuvre in difficult maritime environments with integrated surface and air engagements, and bolster mutual “war-fighting readiness, maritime superiority, and power projection in the Indo-Pacific”. It is noteworthy, that the JMSDF conducts this annual exercise with key Indo-Pacific partners to bolster strategic coordination, and further advance existing combat interoperability amongst

allies and strategic partners, and boost readiness across all platforms. The goal is to advance navy-to-navy cooperation and preserve regional security.

Japan to Increase Defence Capacity

In late November, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, together with the Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi reviewed troops at the Ground Self-Defense Force's (GSDF) Camp Asaka in Tokyo. There, Prime Minister Kishida declared that in the backdrop of Pyongyang’s advancement of new technologies including hypersonic glide weapons and missiles with irregular orbits and massive Chinese military modernization and unilateral attempts to change the status quo, Japan will also [bolster necessary defence capacities](#). The Prime Minister contended that “all options including the acquisition of enemy base strike capabilities” are on the table as Japan reviews its National Security Strategy by 2022.

In a separate development, Japan approved a [supplementary defence budget](#) of ¥773.8 billion or US\$ 6.8 billion for FY 2021. The budget was dubbed as the ‘defense - strengthening acceleration package’. Consequently, together with the ¥5.34 trillion initial budget, the total defence budget now amounts to more than ¥6 trillion. Reportedly, the supplementary budget has allocated ¥97.8 billion for the development of an [integrated air and missile defense system](#). Also, Japan is set to purchase Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC-3) Missile Segment Enhancement (MSE), and acquire the surface-to-air missile (SAM) system to defend JSDF bases from cruise missiles and air-to-surface missiles. Additionally, there are indications to acquire 3 Kawasaki P-1 maritime patrol aircraft, increase naval mines, and the Type 12 lightweight

torpedo, the Type 18 heavyweight torpedo and the Type 07 Vertical Launch Anti-submarine rocket. Furthermore, the JGSDF plans to set up a casern for a new camp on the Ishigaki Island in Okinawa, where Japan will deploy surface-to-air and anti-ship missile batteries, along with a few hundred troops.

US-Japan 2+2 and Quad Meeting

Reports indicate that Japan and the US may schedule their [2+2 dialogue](#) involving the foreign and defence ministers in January 2022. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi will hold discussions with their US counterparts, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, to further bolster the US-Japan alliance, especially discussing denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and preserving stability in the Taiwan Strait. Prior to that, Japan is reportedly expected to finalize the contentious issue of sharing more of the costs related to [stationing American troops](#). The last 2+2 meeting was hosted in Tokyo on 16 March 2021

Separately, White House's Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell confirmed on 19 November that Japan will host the next in-person Quad meeting in early 2022. Additionally, China extended an invitation to Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi after he assumed office. While stabilizing [China-Japan](#) relations is vitally important, the Foreign Minister confirmed that "nothing is set, and no arrangements are being made" for the visit.

KOREAN PENINSULA

Artillery firing exercises by North Korea

As per reports from North Korean state media, Pyongyang conducted [artillery firing exercises](#) to enhance its defence capability. An artillery firing competition among mechanized units was organized on 6 November, where senior government and military officials were present to supervise. Apparently, the recent drills were designed to inspect the progress of the mechanized units in their mobile combat capabilities and intensify competitive training throughout North Korea's military. Although North Korea's artillery tests do not garner much international attention, the long-range artillery pieces deployed near the border with South Korea pose a significant security threat to Seoul.

South Korea and US jointly conduct aerial drill

Reportedly, South Korea and the US conducted a [joint aerial exercise](#) on 1 November, largely due to mounting tensions over North Korea's recent missile test in late October. However, unlike previous exercises which mobilized tens of thousands of troops and cutting-edge equipment, this year, some 100 aircraft were dispatched from both sides, including South Korea's F-15Ks and KF-16s and the US' F-16s. It is noteworthy, that no equipment or soldiers from the US mainland joined the exercises. Also, the South Korean spokesperson declined to confirm the report. According to observers, the exercise was scaled back since 2017 to advance talks with Pyongyang regarding termination of its nuclear and missile programme in return for US aid.

CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

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