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CHINA

China-Russia Joint Sea Naval Drills

In early August, China and Russia [conducted](#) a five-day 'Joint-Sea 2025' naval exercise off the coast of Vladivostok. The exercises were themed "jointly safeguarding strategic maritime routes" and "jointly countering security threats in the Western Pacific." Reportedly, the drills were held in two phases. During the first phase, the two sides held, tactical researches, professional exchanges, military visits and deck receptions at the port of Vladivostok. In the second phase, according to People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy statement, China and Russian navies organised in warship formations, conducted "multi-course training exercises featuring submarine rescue, joint anti-submarine, air defense and naval warfare, including the actual use of weapons". The use of PLA Navy's rescue ship *Xihu*, in submarine rescue training sessions was reported as one of the major highlights of the exercise. Following the naval drills, the two navies also held joint patrol in the adjacent waters in the Western Pacific.

Innovation Campaign for Transportation Organised by WTC

In mid- August, an innovation [campaign](#) for the effectiveness of transportation and delivery support under emergency was organised by a dispatch centre of the Western Theatre Command (WTC). Keeping in mind the requirements for railway transport loading due to a large number of new equipment that has been deployed to the military in recent years, the campaign was to address the practical

difficulties encountered by troops in transportation and delivery of military equipment. The campaign focused at innovative methods to be used in transportation to optimise the process. For this, the dispatch centre has promoted mass technical innovation. The centre [mobilised](#) their military representative offices to establish technical innovation teams, conducting a thorough analysis of existing support equipment to identify bottlenecks. To address the issue of equipment shifting, with the help of relevant military units the centre designed and developed a portable shifter. Reportedly, the shifter enables rapid and precise positioning of equipment, with improved loading efficiency for military trains.

JAPAN

Australia Chooses Japanese-Made Frigates for Fleet Modernisation

On 5 August Australian government officials [announced](#) that they had selected the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI)-made 'modified Mogami-class' frigate for induction into the Royal Australian Navy as part of its Sea 3000 fleet modernisation programme. The new frigates are expected to be co-developed by both countries, with an eye to inducting up to 11 hulls into the RAN by 2030. The new ships are expected to replace MHI's workhorse Mogami-class ships currently in service with the Maritime Self-Defence Forces of Japan, with advancements in radar technology, stealth capability, automated navigation and more firepower planned for inclusion. The new ships will also halve the number of crew required to operate the vessels, a strong

consideration for the RAN which is short of manpower. The approximately one billion Australian dollar deal is the largest arms sale by Japanese manufacturers since the Second World War, though its strong arms transfer restrictions imply in practice that only the first three hulls will be constructed in Japan, while the rest will be manufactured in Australia.

In its assessment, Australia reportedly assessed the upgraded Mogami-class “as best able to quickly meet the capability requirements and strategic needs of the Australian Defence Force”. Japan’s Defence Minister Gen Nakatani told reporters at a press conference on the same day that the decision by Canberra indicated “trust in Japan’s advanced technology and the importance of interoperability between Japan and Australia”.

Japan Inducts F-35B into JSDF Operations

The Japanese Air Self-Defence Forces (JASDF) officially [deployed](#) the United States’ premier stealth fighter F-35B on 7 August, with a view to eventually deploying them around the East China Sea. The first batch of three F-35Bs (piloted by US personnel) landed in Nyutabaru Air Force Base in Miyazaki prefecture on Japan’s southern main island of Kyushu. The JASDF is expected to deploy up to 42 F-35Bs in total, with eight of the aircraft being stationed at Nyutabaru. Training flights are expected to begin shortly, though there is stiff local opposition to these.

It was also reported on the same day that the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Forces

(JMSDF) has been upgrading its two so-called ‘helicopter carriers’, the JS *Kaga* and the JS *Izumo*, to be able to accommodate F-35B flight deck operations. This is a significant development in Japan’s defence posture, as the completion of these upgrades would result in Japanese forces operating for the first time since the Second World War two aircraft carriers, a class of ship the government has hitherto argued explicitly violates Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. It is expected that the government will argue that the *Kaga* and the *Izumo* are to be classed as defensive weapons, thus placing them within the limitations set by Article 9.

TAIWAN

Taiwan’s Defence Modernisation

Taiwan’s National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology is reportedly [developing](#) an “extended-range version of the *Hsiung Feng* III anti-ship missile,” which will have a range of up to 400 kilometres. The original version has the range of 150 kilometres. The institute is developing its air-launched version as well. Its range will be 150 kilometres, with a less than 1,000 kilograms weight. The US Defense Innovation Unit is [exploring](#) drone and tech cooperation with Taiwan, focussing on collaboration for “the broader civilian and dual-use ecosystem.” Separately, Taiwan plans to [buy](#) “48,750 combat drones within two years.” Local drone manufacturers have been invited to submit their proposals for a variety of military drones, which they will need to build by 2027. Meanwhile, Taiwan’s Armaments Bureau and private industry has

[collaborated](#) to develop two drones— “a bomb-dropping model and a fixed-wing loitering munition”— and “a wheeled tank with a 105 mm gun.” The focus has been on “rapid assembly, mass production, cost-effectiveness and operational efficiency” in developing them. Additionally, Taiwan [intends](#) to manufacture “A total of 1,320” *Kuai Chi* unmanned surface vehicles for the Navy’s Coastal Combat Command, Marine Corps, and the Army’s Special Forces Command over next five years. This surface vehicle is used for carrying Ching Feng, a type of loitering munition. Meanwhile, Taiwan’s defense budget is to be [NT\\$949.5 billion](#) in 2026, which will be 3.32% of GDP. It is likely to [reach](#) 5% of GDP by 2030.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

North Korea Denounces US-South Korea Military Drills

In August, North Korea strongly [criticised](#) the annual military exercise by the US and South Korea called Ulchi Freedom Shield (UFS). Pyongyang also vowed to retaliate against the military drills by the US and South Korea. North Korea called its “sovereign right” to defend against the hostile actions and provocations by Washington and Seoul. The Kim Jong-un regime in Pyongyang claims that the annual military exercises by the US and South Korea are “rehearsal for invasion” of North Korea. However, according to Seoul, it tried to [scale down](#) the UFS military drill with Washington this year so as not to provoke North Korea.

South Korean President’s Visit to the US

In the last week of August 2025, the South Korean President Lee Jae Myung visited the US and had a [summit](#) meeting with the American President Donald Trump. During the summit both leaders discussed US-South Korea military alliance and purchase of arms by South Korea from the US. Trump even floated the idea of US “[owning](#)” land for American military bases in South Korea. Washington has also been proposing “strategic flexibility” and “modernisation” of its alliance with Seoul which would possibly [enhance](#) the role of 28,500 American troops currently stationed in South Korea. Under this new arrangement, military alliance between the two countries would expand beyond the Korean Peninsula and include mechanisms to counter the emerging security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. However, it has been reported that it would not be easy for South Korea to embrace the concept of strategic flexibility in its military alliance with the US as that would lower deterrence against North Korea.