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| News & Information



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## **NEWS SUMMARY:**

- China's Coast Guard played an unprecedented role in military drills around Taiwan, participating in a simulated blockade of the island and raising the chance of escalation as Beijing muddies the waters with "gray zone" tactics.
- The government of Taiwan should prepare for the possibility of increased activity from China's maritime militia following the inclusion of China's Coast Guard and other vessels in the war games, an expert says.
- China's military is advancing the development of high-technology arms, including sound weapons, according to a new open-source intelligence report.
- A guided-missile destroyer equipped with a high-energy laser joined the U.S. 7th Fleet to begin testing the weapon's effectiveness at sea.
- RAND republished a paper that characterizes gray zone competition as a complex adaptive system.
- There are no safe zones anymore in contested logistics, which creates a primary danger for Soldiers and Marines in forward areas who can't be adequately resupplied due to the threats against ground, naval, and air logistics platforms.

- Pakistani police fired tear gas and charged at student protesters who ransacked a college building, as anger spread over an alleged on-campus rape.
- Dominican police officers in riot gear used teargas in a bid to end protest action by truckers, who used their vehicles to block the main highway on the west coast of the island.
- Pakistani police fired tear gas and swung batons at thousands of supporters of a far-right Islamist party in Karachi after the demonstrators tried to break through a security barricade.
- Opinion: The United States and the Philippines, along with US defense allies Japan and Australia, must adopt five measures to blunt China’s ambitions and deter further aggression.

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## **GRAY ZONE COMPETITION:**

### **China's coast guard joins military drills, raising risk of escalation**

*(The Washington Post, October 17)*

China's coast guard, the world's largest maritime law enforcement agency, played an unprecedented role in this week's military drills around Taiwan, participating in a simulated blockade of the island and raising the chance of escalation as Beijing muddies the waters with "gray zone" tactics.

The drills, which came just days after Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te rebuked Beijing's claims of sovereignty over Taiwan, included a record-breaking 153 jets buzzing around the island from Monday to Tuesday morning, according to the Defense Ministry in Taipei.

Also for the first time, China's coast guard fully encircled Taiwan, with the ministry counting 17 of the service's ships around Taiwan and its outlying islands during the same period. The Chinese coast guard also deployed a new type of huge vessel not previously used in drills around Taiwan and navigated to waters surrounding Taiwan's Matsu islands where it had not ventured in the past.

While coast guards are widely seen as law enforcement agencies, not as arms of the military, the drills illustrate the Chinese coast guard's unusually aggressive behavior. They also reveal its increasing role in Beijing's attempts to assert control over waters like the South China Sea and those around Taiwan.

"The amount of coast guard integration into this exercise is remarkable because it's something we haven't seen to this level before," said Ray Powell, director of SeaLight, a maritime transparency project at Stanford University. "China's coast guard has become central to China's strategy of asserting its sovereignty in the places that it wants the other countries to know that it is sovereign."

Taiwan's Defense Ministry expressed "strong condemnation" of the drills, which are now common around sensitive political events in the island democracy of 23 million people.

Taiwan is not the only area where China's coast guard has flexed its power this week. On Thursday, the agency announced it drove away a Japanese fishing boat that "illegally entered" waters near the tiny but disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, which both Beijing and Tokyo claim.

Tokyo, which rejects Beijing's claim over the islands, did not comment on the incident Thursday.

#### Chinese coast guard's unprecedented involvement

After encircling Taiwan and mimicking a blockade that could cut off the island from the outside world, China's coast guard published a map on social media of its boats around Taiwan in the shape of a heart, likening the surrounding vessels to an illustration of China's love for its neighbor.

This week also marked the first time Chinese coast guard ships entered the prohibited waters around Matsu, an archipelago of outlying Taiwanese islands, in a military drill, according to a Taiwanese coast guard official speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive cross-strait topics.

The Chinese coast guard sent its largest ship, called the 2901, during drills around Taiwan, the official said. The 2901 weighs 10,000 tons and can sail as fast as 25 knots, according to Chinese state media.

The Taiwanese coast guard ships are much smaller and “cannot compare to the big monster,” said Lin Ying-yu, an expert on the Chinese military at Taiwan’s Tamkang University.

Why is this concerning?

China’s use of the coast guard around Taiwan fits into a broader category of “gray zone” tactics, meant to menace while stopping short of provoking an outright conflict.

“The coast guard essentially gives China a degree of ambiguity as it uses military coercion against Taiwan in what’s known as the gray zone, below the threshold of the use of force,” said Drew Thompson, an expert on the Chinese military at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore and a former Pentagon official.

It also muddies the response because China can categorize coast guard activities as law enforcement, rather than military action. In fact, a spokesperson for China’s coast guard described its activities this week as “law enforcement inspections,” according to a statement.

If Taiwan responds to aggression from the Chinese coast guard with its navy, according to Thompson, China has the pretext to bring in its own naval forces while accusing Taiwan of escalating the situation.

“It’s a way of complicating not just Taiwan’s response but the international community’s response,” Thompson said. “By characterizing these vessels as law enforcement vessels rather than navy vessels, it’s essentially claiming that this is a civil, nonmilitary action, and that makes it difficult to respond with military force.”

Other examples of gray-zone tactics China could employ include the use of cyberattacks against Taiwanese critical infrastructure as well as economic punishments like banning certain Taiwanese imports.

Lai, in a speech last month, specifically decried this strategy. “Through its use of gray-zone tactics such as economic coercion and cognitive warfare, China poses serious threats to global peace and stability,” Lai said. “China doesn’t just want to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. It intends to change the rules-based international order and achieve international hegemony.”

The rapid expansion of the Chinese coast guard

China’s coast guard has expanded and militarized over the past decade.

It was established in 2013 under the State Oceanic Administration, the government authority previously responsible for regulating China's coastal areas. Five years later, it was moved under the People's Armed Police, a paramilitary organization overseen by the most powerful military body in China, the Central Military Commission.

Today, the Chinese coast guard has 150 large vessels — including 20 transferred from China's navy — some of which are equipped with helicopter facilities, water cannons and guns, according to a 2023 Pentagon report. In addition, it is estimated to have more than 50 medium and 300 small ships.

The coast guard's legal powers are also growing. In 2021, Beijing passed the Coast Guard Law, which expanded the maritime force's ability to respond, including with weapons, to foreign ships in areas China deems to be under its jurisdiction. This spring, additional regulations were passed to allow the coast guard to board and detain ships it determines have illegally entered Chinese waters.

If the coast guard boards a Taiwanese ship as the regulations allow, said Bonnie Glaser, an expert on Taiwan at the German Marshall Fund in D.C., "it could result in a confrontation and possibly exchange of fire that would significantly escalate cross-strait tensions."

#### Chinese coast guard activity beyond Taiwan

The South China Sea and East China Sea have become flash points for clashes between the Chinese coast guard and countries like the Philippines.

In June, the Chinese coast guard forcibly boarded Philippine navy ships in the most serious, recent confrontation in the South China Sea, while the Japanese government complained to Beijing after four Chinese coast guard vessels entered territory that Japan considers its own. In August, coast guard ships from China and the Philippines collided near the Sabina Shoal, a disputed area in the Spratly Islands.

China's coast guard has also started venturing further afield. It recently entered Arctic waters for the first time in a joint exercise with Russia, according to a post on the Chinese agency's official social media account early this month.

What is the response to the coast guard's aggression?

Taiwan is attempting to modernize its own coast guard, but experts say more resources and attention are needed.

With a budget of nearly \$800 million in 2024 — down 3 percent from 2023 — Taiwan's coast guard has 164 vessels as of August last year. But many of those ships have been in commission for two or three decades and need upgrades, according to data from Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council.

Tamkang University's Lin said a bigger coast guard budget is necessary, as well as more cooperation with maritime forces from other countries, like the United States and Japan. In 2021, Washington and Taiwan agreed to establish a coast guard working group to improve

communication between the countries' maritime agencies. This summer, Taiwan and Japan held joint coast guard drills off Japan's eastern coast.

The most important preparation for engagement with the Chinese coast guard, however, may be a mental one.

"It's important for other countries not to delude themselves that the Chinese coast guard is anything other than a branch of the PLA," Thompson said, referring to China's People's Liberation Army. "The most important thing is recognizing them for what they are."

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### **China could include maritime militia in drills, expert says**

*(Taipei Times, October 17)*

The government should prepare for the possibility of increased activity from China's maritime militia following the inclusion of China Coast Guard and other vessels in the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) war games around Taiwan on Monday, an academic said yesterday.

China Central Television-affiliated social media channel Yu Yuan Tan Tian said the exercises, designated Joint Sword-2024B, were the first such drills to include China Coast Guard ships, armed with 76mm guns and having a top speed of 25 knots (46.3kph).

The exercises also included a full circumnavigation of Taiwan, as opposed to naval operations restricted to areas off the east coast, it said, adding that the China Coast Guard also for the first time conducted operations within restricted zones near Lienchiang County (Matsu).

The Coast Guard Administration (CGA) on Monday said that it expelled four Chinese coast guard ships that entered Taiwan-controlled waters off Matsu shortly after the PLA announced the start of the drills.

The inclusion of China Coast Guard vessels was part of the China's "gray zone" tactics, and would likely be included in future military exercises, Tamkang University Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies director Li Da-jung (李大中) said.

As it is not an official branch of the PLA, the coast guard's inclusion in Monday's exercises hints at the possibility that China would also step up its use of other paramilitary forces, such as its maritime militia, comprised of law enforcement and fishing vessels, he said.

It was "unprecedented" for so many China Coast Guard ships to patrol simultaneously in the region, Singapore-based security analyst Collin Koh (高瑞連) said, adding that the step "could herald a new norm for Beijing's gray zone pressure on Taiwan."

Coast Guard Administration Deputy Director-General Hsieh Ching-chin (謝慶欽) condemned the China Coast Guard's cognitive warfare tactics and urged the public not to fall for China's lies, after the China Coast Guard issued a picture of one of its vessels along with its route around Taiwan on Monday.

The China Coast Guard said the route was shaped like a heart “because they could not stop loving Taiwan even when on duty.”

The CGA monitored China’s military exercise throughout the drills, Hsieh said, adding that it was confident and capable of defending the nation’s maritime borders.

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## **China’s cognitive warfare advances include sound weapons, according to intel report**

*(The Washington Times, October 16)*

China’s military is advancing the development of high-technology arms, including sound weapons to wage cognitive warfare — the use of unconventional tools and capabilities to alter enemy thinking and decision-making, according to a new open-source intelligence report.

The People’s Liberation Army is building sound weapons and other nonlethal arms that can incapacitate enemy forces by disrupting the neurological functions of human targets without causing visible injury, warns the report by the CCP BioThreats Initiative, a think tank of former intelligence and military experts.

The report, “The Evolution of Cognitive Warfare: NeuroStrike Capabilities and the Strategic Role of Infrasound Weapons,” is the third study by the initiative covering what are being called Chinese “neurostrike” weapons.

“Infrasound and cognitive weapons represent a significant leap in the evolution of modern warfare, introducing a new set of capabilities designed to target the mind and body in ways that are difficult to detect and defend against,” the report said. “As the [Chinese Communist Party] and PLA and other military forces continue to incorporate these technologies into their arsenals, the U.S. and its allies must remain vigilant and proactive in developing countermeasures.”

Modern warfare is rapidly evolving beyond physical combat through these weapons capable of disrupting brain and body functions with sound. A review of Chinese military writings revealed the military has developed two types of sophisticated sound technologies: “neurotype” sound weapons that affect brain activity and “organotype” models that can damage internal organs through various frequencies, the report stated.

“These weapons, which operate at frequencies undetectable by the human ear, have the capability to cause both neurological and physiological disruption, making them an essential tool in [China’s] arsenal for incapacitating adversaries without inflicting overt physical harm,” the report said.

The weapons offer strategic advantages in waging asymmetric warfare with minimal physical evidence.

China's military is using phased-array technologies that allow precision targeting of sonic weapons. The technologies can operate at maximum efficiency with minimal collateral damage, the report said.

China's sound weapons are also used with other nonkinetic means, including data-driven algorithms on social media platforms that seek psychological manipulation to shape human decision-making and perceptions.

Chinese military neurostrike weapons, however, are designed to directly target individuals rather than employ methods that rely on other media for impact.

"Neurostrike employs advanced non-lethal directed energy and infrasound weapons to incapacitate individuals physically and cognitively," the report said.

The sound weapons can disrupt internal brain frequencies and internal organs, resulting in cognitive dysfunction, disorientation and physical harm. Chinese military research on sound weapons revealed in writings that the arms are capable of disrupting the brain's alpha rhythm using frequencies detected in cognitive functions.

The weapons can induce confusion, emotional distress and a loss of consciousness, according to two Chinese military researchers who wrote a 2024 report, and can directly impair cognitive abilities vital in warfare.

Sound weapons designed to affect organs affect human tissue using frequencies ranging from 3 hertz to 17 hertz, causing a range of physical effects from nausea and dizziness to, in extreme cases, organ damage.

The report includes a photo of a Chinese high-powered infrasound generator used in underwater operations against military divers.

"Infrasound generators, when integrated with power sources and control systems, form the backbone of non-lethal weapons designed to incapacitate personnel without causing permanent damage," the report said. "However, significant advances in the ability to focus and amplify infrasound waves, such as those achieved through the infrasound phased array systems, have expanded the range and effectiveness of these weapons in modern warfare."

The report urges the U.S. government to take steps to deal with the growing threat posed by infrasound and cognitive warfare technologies, arguing that the military should invest in counter-sound weapon technology that can detect, block and neutralize infrasound waves.

Work with U.S. allies and partners in countering the weaponry should also be launched. Sound weapons and other cognitive warfare means also should be included in international arms control negotiations.

The report was written by L.J. Eads, Ryan Clarke and Xiaouxu Sean Lin, experts with military and intelligence experience.

Senator's campaign ad calls for 'breaking China'



Sen. Marsha Blackburn is not being coy: The Tennessee Republican, running for reelection in November, has a new campaign ad out saying it's time for the U.S. to start "breaking China."

Ms. Blackburn states in the ad that China "stole our jobs, sent us a virus" and is guilty of spying on the United States and buying up American land. The ad shows the senator smashing dinner plates emblazoned with a portion of the Chinese flag.

The ad reflects the growing political sentiment in Congress and elsewhere for tougher policies aimed at countering Beijing's activities in the United States and abroad.

The incumbent Ms. Blackburn holds a 23-point lead over her Democratic challenger, state Rep. Gloria Johnson, according to a poll published this week by The Tennessean.

Air Force urged to adopt new strategy to counter China

The United States is no longer unmatched in military and economic power as China has built up its capabilities and the Air Force needs to reform its military priorities as a result, according to a report by an Air Force think tank.

"Under the guise of a quiet countenance, China has been systematically working towards closing the power gap by enhancing its regional military capabilities, economic influence and international standing," the report said. "This shift has led China to challenge U.S. dominance both regionally and globally in an effort to alter the existing rules-based order."

China is challenging U.S. power through regional and international "order-building efforts," using both hard power and soft power.

Beijing wants to shift the global balance of power in its favor and as a result the United States needs to alter military strategies and technologies to maintain its decisive role in the world and counter China's growing capabilities, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, the report said.

For the Air Force, that shift means greater innovation and an increased focus on building long-range range military capabilities are needed, the report's authors argue. Air Force weapons and systems should move away from expensive fighter aircraft to more survivable high-technology weapons and inexpensive "attritable platforms" that can be lost in battle without severely affecting Air Force power.

For the short term, China is working to expel the United States from the Indo-Pacific region and develop global power projection capabilities. Thus, new Air Force weapons should be cheap, easily replaced and asymmetric, such as low-cost drones and supersonic cruise missiles that can penetrate China's defenses.

China's network-centric warfare should also be targeted by Air Force systems that can disrupt sensor grids on land, sea, air and space.

Air Force bases in the region, especially in Japan, are vulnerable to Chinese missiles, drones and hypersonic weapons, highlighting the need for better base defenses, the report said.

The 72-page report, “Charting the Course: How the PLA’s Expected Regional and Global Strategies Should Influence the U.S. Air Force’s Lines of Efforts,” was written by Air Force Maj. Joshua Campbell. It was published by the Air Force’s China Aerospace Studies Institute.

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## **Destroyer USS Preble arrives in Japan armed with high-energy laser weapon**

*(Stars and Stripes, October 15)*

A guided-missile destroyer equipped with a high-energy laser joined the U.S. 7th Fleet over the weekend to begin testing the weapon’s effectiveness at sea.

Sailors in dress whites manned the rails Saturday as the USS Preble pulled into Tokyo Bay and moored at Yokosuka, where it became the 10th destroyer assigned to Destroyer Squadron 15.

The Preble’s arrival from Naval Base San Diego brings a new capability to the fleet. It is the only U.S. warship equipped with the High-Energy Laser with Integrated Optical-dazzler and Surveillance, or HELIOS, system.

The 60-kilowatt directed energy weapons system is designed to counter small watercraft or drones and collect long-range intelligence, according to manufacturer Lockheed Martin’s website.

HELIOS can “dazzle,” or blind or impair sensors aboard surveillance drones, or punch a hole through drones, low-flying aircraft and, in some cases, missiles, according to Lockheed Martin executive Joe Ottaviano, quoted by National Defense magazine in February 2021.

HELIOS is currently in the at-sea testing phase, Task Force 70 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Seth Koenig told Stars and Stripes by phone Tuesday. The typical overseas deployment for a destroyer is about a decade, but there is currently no defined time associated with the Preble’s assignment to Yokosuka, he said.

Lockheed Martin, starting work under a \$150 million contract in 2018, installed HELIOS aboard Preble in 2022, according to media reports cited by the Congressional Research Service for an Aug. 6 update on Navy-directed energy weapons.

HELIOS performed well in land-based tests in fall 2021 at the Navy’s Surface Combat Systems Center on Wallops Island, Va., according to the report. The Navy is actively pursuing systems like HELIOS to improve warships’ survivability against large numbers of drones and anti-ship missiles such as those employed by China, the report said.

HELIOS is primarily intended to defend the Preble itself, but it’s also shown some ability to defend other ships in its vicinity, according to the Congressional Research Service report.

Unlike missiles and close-in weapons systems, whose shipboard magazines are finite and may require a trip of thousands of miles to replenish, lasers run on the ship’s power supply and are theoretically inexhaustible.

Other potential advantages are fast engagement times, an ability to counter radically maneuvering missiles and conduct precision engagements, and an ability to use lasers for graduated responses ranging from detecting and monitoring targets to causing disabling damage, according to the research service report.

However, solid-state lasers like HELIOS have limited range — a mile to several miles — and are best as short-range defensive weapons, according to the report.

The HELIOS system works in sync with the Preble's Flight IIA Aegis Combat System — the Navy's command-and-control suite aboard guided-missile destroyers, according to Lockheed Martin.

That may prove to be a downside, however, if the Navy wants to install the system aboard Flight III variants of Arleigh Burke-class destroyers such as the USS Jack H. Lucas launched in June 2021. The system uses almost the same amount of power as the Flight III variant's AN/SPY-6 Air and Missile Defense Radar.

To install HELIOS on a newer variant, the Navy would have to remove other equipment or consider "very aggressive power management," according to the research service report, which cited a March 2019 article from Defense Daily.

Other potential drawbacks include line-of-sight limitations, poor performance in certain weather conditions, ineffectiveness against hardened targets or countermeasures and risk of damage to aircraft, satellites or human eyesight, the Congressional Research Service found.

The Preble replaces the guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold, which is due to relocate soon to Everett, Wash., but was still at Yokosuka as of Tuesday.

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## **Campaigning in the Grey Zone**

*(RAND, October 14)*

This paper develops an alternative approach to campaigning against hybrid threats based on systems thinking principles. The paper's key innovation is to characterize grey zone competition as a complex adaptive system. This allows the central tenets of military operational planning to be refined based on systems logic. The result is a series of principles for campaigning in the 'grey zone' between peace and war, augmented by a guide to action based on three functions: understand, act, and adapt. Example campaigns grouped by relevant European nations provide real-world context and illustrate key elements of this approach. By following this path, the transatlantic community can move away from a narrow, limiting military-centric doctrine towards a systems approach better suited to countering hybrid threats in a complex world.

Link to the RAND post: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/external\\_publications/EP70676.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/external_publications/EP70676.html)

Link to the republished paper: <https://hcss.nl/report/campaigning-grey-zone-towards-systems-approach-countering-hybrid-threats/>

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## **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE:**

### **The Army's latest response to contested logistics is an uncrewed one-ton VTOL lifter**

*(Breaking Defense, October 15)*

Why put soldiers and marines at risk by having them physically transport materiel the “last mile” of a logistics supply chain with crewed vehicles, boats, and aircraft? That’s a question both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps have already asked themselves, and their responses are similar: develop autonomous, uncrewed platforms that can perform dangerous logistics tasks in contested environments not only for the last mile but throughout every theater of operation.

“Innovation is the coin of the realm, and we are committed to producing solutions that will help DOD navigate the changing landscape of warfare,” said Rob Geckle, Chairman and CEO of Airbus U.S. Space & Defense. “Ultimately, we want to provide our Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines, Guardians, and Coastguardsmen with the right tools to deter our adversaries, and if called on, fight and win.”

In the Army, the charge to help develop autonomy falls with the Contested Logistics Cross Functional Team out of Army Futures Command. Said its commanding general, Gen. James Rainey, “Autonomous and robotic systems are going to disrupt the land domain, starting now.”

One of the CFT’s first initiatives is the “1 Ton Capable Cargo UAS.” This platform will have a vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) capability from both ground and marine environments, with or without cargo. The lifter must also “be terminally guided from a variety of end-users with no specialized training as well as from various locations [by] field personnel, medical personnel, supply personnel, remote command center,” stated the recent request for information.

Airbus U.S. Space & Defense responded to the Army’s RFI with details about how it can satisfy those requirements and many more – using examples and lessons learned from its prototype program developing an autonomous UH-72 Lakota helicopter for the Marine Corps, details of which are discussed below.

“When using manned aircraft in an unmanned configuration for logistics you’re able to take seats, life support, and instruments out of the cabin, which makes room for more payload as well as special cargo handling equipment designed to onload and offload standardized cargo containers quickly with minimum personnel,” said Carl Forsling, senior manager, business development and strategy for Airbus U.S., noting that some redesigns of the doors and hatches are involved.

“Adapting an existing manned aircraft to an unmanned configuration that can carry more cargo, further, and with less maintenance support removes a big part of the risk and cost of a new airframe design. When you already have a manned aircraft that fits the bill performance-wise,

and requires just some conversion, it's very effective from a programmatic and a production standpoint.”

The U.S. Army and Army National Guard have their own fleets of Lakota numbering around 480 – with the Army National Guard having received 18 of the improved UH-72 Bravo model – and are observing the progress of the Marine Corps’ prototype autonomy program managed by Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR).

There are no safe zones anymore in contested logistics, which creates a primary danger for Soldiers and Marines in forward areas who can't be adequately resupplied due to the threats against ground, naval, and air logistics platforms. The shift to uncrewed platforms is related to a general realignment of logistics away from organic and contracted logistics as wielded during the Afghanistan and Iraq wars where supply lines were generally uncontested.

Russia's war on Ukraine has shown that logistics are now regularly contested kinetically by precision fires and non-kinetically by drones flying ISR sensors and, more seriously, electronic warfare designed to jam or spoof communications and positioning, navigation, and timing. Potential adversaries in the Indo-Pacific can similarly contest the supply chain.

“Contested logistics are hard enough without running a resupply operation and not getting the right thing,” Army Future Command Chief Gen. James Rainey told Breaking Defense last year. “There's a lot of room there for progress.”

#### Autonomy to resupply forward-deployed Marines

Those realities become clear when looking at the vast distances of the Indo-Pacific region and the logistics tail that must remain intact and operational. Across U.S. INDOPACOM's Area of Responsibility, for example, the Marine Corps' latest operational construct called Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations calls for insertion of small, distributed units of island-hopping Marines amidst the First Island Chain to hold enemy shipping and other elements at risk.

As mentioned, supply lines are exceptionally long in the Pacific and it tends to stress and exceed the capability of what's organic, especially as the Navy and Marine Corps still operate in many instances under legacy manpower-heavy concepts for logistics. That will only be exacerbated by a conflict in the region.

NAVAIR's Aerial Logistics Connector (ALC) program is designed to address some of those challenges through the use of autonomous aircraft to resupply marines with weapons, ammunition, food, medical supplies, and other materiel inside the enemy's weapon engagement zone.

“The ALC should not put people at risk, nor should it require a large number of people to operate, maintain, and sustain,” said Forsling. “That's important because if you add things that require a lot of support to operate, then you're adding to the logistical problem while trying to solve it. That requires a capability that does not use a lot of resources at the forward edge and can operate off ships and ashore with minimal sustainment.

“That means it must be autonomous and produced in sufficient quantities so that if it is lost in the course of proceeding through these weapons’ engagement zones then it’s not an irreplaceable asset that stops the mission from continuing. We’ve kept those lessons in mind as we developed our concept for the Aerial Logistics Connector.”

Earlier this year, NAVAIR awarded Airbus U.S. Space & Defense a Phase 1 Other Transactional Authority Agreement (OTA) in support of the Marine Corps’ ALC. in response, Airbus U.S. Space & Defense’s developing an unmanned variant of the UH-72B Lakota platform under the OTA.

“Our unmanned UH-72 logistics connector leverages nearly two decades of U.S. military capability and offers Marines a versatile, affordable and enduring solution to address logistics missions around the globe,” said Geckle. “We look forward to supporting the Marine Corps with this latest modernization of the Lakota platform.”

The award is part of a Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA) rapid prototyping program that will provide the USMC with aircraft prototypes to demonstrate autonomous logistics capabilities through a series of operationally relevant experiments.

“Right now, logistics is done with traditional amphibious shipping and naval maritime prepositioning of ships, as well as theater resupply that originates out of places like Japan and Guam,” said Forsling. “That all depends, however, on getting those supplies to the last tactical mile to reinforce a platoon out there operating a missile launcher or sensor.

“An autonomous version of the Army’s UH-72B, widely used around the world as the commercial H145 twin-engine light utility helicopter, meets the Marine Corps’ requirements to transport assets at long range and high speed without risking lives,” said Forsling. “We’ve modified it for the Marine Corps’ special handling requirements for cargo, as well as for UAS operations,” said Forsling. “We’ve just entered the rapid prototyping OTA with several other companies in a competitive process, and we’re beginning a series of design events and flight demonstrations of our air vehicle.”

#### Complementary missions with the same solution

The Army’s need to resupply maneuver forces without putting soldiers at risk – both the ones executing the logistics mission and those on the front lines waiting for resupply – resembles in many ways the Marine Corps’ need to conduct logistics in contested environments for expeditionary operations. Each service operates across all warfighter domains – ground, maritime, air, space, and cyber – at a time when all are contested by kinetics, drones, and EW.

It’s not a coincidence that the mission set for the USMC’s Aerial Logistics Connector and the Army’s 1 Ton Capable Cargo UAS can both be addressed by a VTOL already flying for both services – the UH-72 Lakota.

“The Lakota is the most affordable from a development, acquisition, and sustainment standpoint and is currently available for the Marine Corps’ mission,” said Forsling. “It’s the lowest-risk option, and with the addition of a MOSA-compliant digital backbone has room for growth in

terms of mission capability, obsolescence management, without the risk of vendor lock. Those are the right entry points for the Marine Corps requirements for the ALC.”

For many of the same reasons, the Army can transition a VTOL to an autonomous cargo platform – based on the upgraded UH-72 Bravo model – already in production, Airbus notes.

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## **OTHER FOREIGN COUNTRIES:**

### **Pakistani police fire tear gas at protesting students as anger spreads over alleged on-campus rape**

*(The Associated Press, October 17)*

Pakistani police fired tear gas and charged at student protesters who ransacked a college building Thursday, as anger spread over an alleged on-campus rape.

Tensions have been high on college campuses since reports of the alleged rape in the eastern city of Lahore spread on social media, and protests have broken out in four cities.

Sexual violence against women is common in Pakistan, but it is underreported because of the stigma attached in the conservative country. Protests about the issue have been rare.

Thursday’s violence started when hundreds of students demonstrated outside a campus in the city of Rawalpindi in Punjab province. They burned furniture and blocked a key road, disrupting traffic, before ransacking a college building. Police responded by swinging batons and firing tear gas to disperse them, police official Mohammad Afzal said.

Police said they arrested 250 people, mostly students, on charges of disrupting the peace. News of the arrests panicked parents, who struggled to get their children released.

In Gujrat, also in Punjab province, a security guard died in clashes between student protesters and police on Wednesday. Police arrested a person in connection with the death.

They also arrested a man who is accused of spreading misinformation on social media about the alleged rape and inciting students to violence.

Earlier this week, more than two dozen college students were injured in clashes with police in Lahore after they rallied to demand justice for the alleged victim, who they said was raped on campus at the Punjab Group of Colleges.

On Thursday, the government banned rallies in Punjab, apparently to prevent more protests.

The Federal Investigation Agency said it has registered cases against 36 people accused of spreading misinformation about the case on social media.

Authorities, including the province's chief minister, said there was no assault, as did the woman's parents. But Punjab police on Thursday urged people to share any information about the alleged rape.

Mauz Ullah, a student at the college where the woman was allegedly raped, said they were protesting to seek justice for her.

He said he did not believe the college or police "as they kept changing their position" on the alleged assault. He said the college initially denied any such incident took place. "If no such incident had taken place, then why did they arrest a guard?" he asked.

The protests appear to have begun spontaneously. Student unions have been banned in Pakistan since 1984.

On Thursday, Usman Ghani, the head of the youth wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami opposition party, demanded an end to the ban on student unions, saying they might have helped resolve the matter without violence.

He said cases of sexual abuse at educational institutions are common.

"But the main thing is how you respond to make sure that the attackers don't get away without getting arrested," he said.

Hasna Cheema, from the rights group Aurat Foundation, said neither Pakistani police nor the media were trained to handle such sensitive matters.

"They turn things from bad to worse instead of solving them," Cheema said.

The Sustainable Social Development Organization said last month that there were 7,010 rape cases reported in Pakistan in 2023, almost 95% of them in Punjab.

"However, due to social stigmas in Pakistan that discourage women from getting help, there is a high chance that due to underreporting the actual number of cases may be even higher," it said.

This week's protests come less than a month after a woman said she was gang-raped while on duty during a polio vaccination drive in southern Sindh province.

Police arrested three men. Her husband threw her out of the house after the reported assault, saying she had tarnished the family name.

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## **Dominican police use tear gas as truckers block main highway into capital** *(The Trinidad & Tobago Guardian, October 17)*

Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerri Wednesday met with representatives of the Tipper Truckers Association, (TTA), as police officers in riot gear used teargas in a bid to end protest action by truckers, who used their vehicles earlier to block the main highway on the west coast of the island, leaving hundreds of people stranded and unable to travel to work and school.



A statement issued by the Office of the Prime Minister on Wednesday night, quoted Skerrit as reaffirming the government's "commitment to addressing the truckers' concerns, recognizing the essential role they play in the progress" of the construction of the international airport project.

The truckers have in the past accused the Skerrit government of favouring foreign trucking firms on national projects and from early Wednesday they parked their dump and trailer trucks across the lanes on the EO Leblanc Highway, blocking access into and out of the capital.

"We are hoping that some commonsense will prevail. Our position still remains the same. We really would want to have guarantees that every time there is a project on island that we have some form of say in it.

"We all have to eat and survive in the same country," said Everson Magloire of the Tipper Truckers Association, as he sought shelter from the teargas dispersed by the police at Canefield, three miles north of the capital.

"As long as the government has a contract, give it to any company, we the locals need 80 per cent of the work, that's what we want," said another trucker.

The statement issued by the Office of the Prime Minister noted that a "consensus was reached to revise the rates for trucking services on the international airport project.

"The Government of Dominica remains committed to transparency and open communication with truckers and other stakeholders involved in national construction projects, ensuring opportunities for local engagement," it added.

Residents in nearby communities say that they have been affected by the teargas, with one woman saying "I was in my house with my seven children ...when the teargas started coming in.

"We have seven young children under the age of 12, a boy just a year old experiencing this kind of thing. It has been very bad," she told reporters.

One of the protestors said he is disappointed with the action of the police "because there was no need to use tear gas against us"

Attorney Ronald Charles, representing one of the truckers who had been arrested, said his client had been charged with "assault and released on station bail".

He said his client was beaten and he has since advised that he seek medical attention.

"He will appear in court tomorrow where the charge will be read to him and we will take it from there," Charles said.

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## **Pakistani police fire tear gas and charge protesters in Karachi**

*(The Associated Press, October 13)*

Pakistani police fired tear gas and swung batons at thousands of protesters on Sunday in Karachi after the demonstrators tried to break through a security barricade.

Around 2,000 supporters of a far-right Islamist party tried to reach the city's press club to oppose another demonstration staged by civil society groups about the killing of a blasphemy suspect while he was in custody.

Supporters of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan party hurled rocks at officers and torched a patrol car when police stopped them from reaching the press club.

The party said one of its members died in the violence. Police arrested around 20 people from both demonstrations.

Provincial Interior Minister Zia Ul Hassan said authorities feared clashes because both the political party and the civil society groups had issued calls for protests on the same day.

Ul Hassan condemned the violence, especially given an upcoming security summit in Islamabad and last week's deadly attack on a convoy of Chinese nationals outside the city's airport.

The TLP supports Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws, which call for the death penalty for anyone who insults Islam.

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## **Mozambique Elections: Police fire tear gas, rubber bullets in Moatize to disperse crowd attempting to vandalize election equipment**

*(Club of Mozambique, October 11)*

The Mozambican Police (PRM) on Thursday fired tear gas to disperse a group of people who were allegedly attempting to vandalize equipment that was being transported to the warehouse of the Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE), in Moatize district, in the central province of Tete.

According to Feliciano da Camara, the Police spokesperson in Tete, cited by Rádio Moçambique, the clash took place when a group of individuals set up barricades along the road to prevent the circulation of vehicles carrying ballot papers used in Wednesday's presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections.

"In order to disperse the crowd, the police had to use tear gas and rubber bullets. They claimed that vehicles were carrying materials that didn't match the data obtained from some polling stations at the São José basic school and Algodoeira region", da Camara said.

Da Camara said that the Police could not identify the political affiliation of the individuals involved in the case.

"We couldn't identify them, because they did not have documents in their possession. We call on people to wait for the results to be announced by the electoral management bodies", he said.

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## **COMMENTARY:**

### **How the US and the Philippines should counter Beijing's aggression in the South China Sea**

*(Atlantic Council, October 15, Elizabeth Freund Larus and James Rice)*

On September 27, two Chinese missile vessels chased Philippine civilian boats near the First Thomas Shoal, also known as Bulig Shoal, in an area of the South China Sea known as the West Philippine Sea. It is considered the first time that such ships chased civilian vessels during maritime patrols. The Philippine vessels, the BRP Datu Romapenet and BRP Datu Matanam Taradapit, which are under the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, were en route to Hasa-Hasa Shoal (also known as Half Moon Shoal) to provide food and other aid to Filipino fisherman in the area. The following day, September 28, a Chinese helicopter chased and flew close to the BRP Datu Romapenet during its resupply mission near Bombay Shoal, which is close to Palawan Province in the Philippines.

In the wake of China's escalating coercive tactics against Philippine vessels, the United States must work with the Philippines and its other Indo-Pacific partners to publicize, counter, and deter China's maritime aggression in the South China Sea.

#### A pattern of aggression

The September incidents fit a larger pattern of China's aggressive tactics against Philippine vessels. In late August, some forty Chinese vessels from the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), Coast Guard (CCG), and China Maritime Militia (CMM) blocked passage in the South China Sea of a ship belonging to the Philippines' Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Services. A CCG vessel then rammed and fired a water cannon at the ship, which was on a humanitarian mission to deliver supplies to Filipino fishermen.

The incident occurred near Sabina Shoal, also known as Escoda, which is less than ninety miles from the Philippines' Palawan Province and well within the country's exclusive economic zone. In the attack, the Philippine ship was damaged and failed to deliver its humanitarian cargo. It was the first recorded time that the PLAN has participated in the use of force against Philippine government vessels, a dangerous escalation on the part of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Only two days later, CCG and PLAN warships maneuvered to block a Philippine supply mission to the BRP Teresa Magbanua, a Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) patrol vessel anchored for months at Sabina Shoal. The PCG anchored the vessel there in April after Philippine officials discovered piles of crushed corals, leading Manila to suspect that Beijing plans to build it up into an outpost, like it has in other parts of the contested Spratly Islands.

On August 29, a CCG ship rammed the Teresa Magbanua three times in an attempt to dislodge it. The incident was the fifth in August alone and involved some forty Chinese ships, including

PLAN, CCG, and CMM vessels. The Philippines was compelled to remove the Teresa Magbanua on September 16 because of bad weather, structural damage due to ramming incidents, and a lack of daily supplies. The crew needed to be medically evacuated and arrived at port in Palawan malnourished and dehydrated, some of them on stretchers with IVs attached. The Philippines' National Maritime Council plans to replace the Teresa Magbanua with another ship at some point in the future.

#### Elements of PRC forces

According to Ray Powell of Sealight and the Gordian Knot Center for National Security, China employs four different kinds of forces in the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea. Each of these forces plays a part in China's goal of gradually seizing possession of the maritime territory in what it views as its "10-dash line"—the perimeter of the entire South China Sea.

The first force is known as the "Spratly Backbone Fleet." Think of it as the backbone of the PRC's efforts. It includes hundreds of large fishing vessels manned by "patriotic" fishermen out of ports in Southern China. These fishermen act as enforcers, and the pay for their services often supplements their income from fishing. The crews of these vessels are at the cutting edge of the PRC's "gray zone" tactics. For example, they sometimes lash several of their boats together at anchor to form semipermanent formations—a practice known as "rafting"—in and around the shoals within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

The second force is the CMM. Although some members of the CMM also work as fishermen, their primary role is to carry out missions under the authority of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The CMM currently consists of around 4,500 vessels, and the PLA uses the CMM to enforce its coercive policies of occupation and area denial in the waters of the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea.

Next is the CCG. An estimated 250 vessels currently make up the CCG, which has been referred to as "China's second navy." In recent months, most of the actions that China has carried out against Philippine vessels operating in the waters off the Philippines' exclusive economic zone have involved the CCG. This includes the attack on small boats of the Philippine Navy during a resupply mission in Ayungin Reef (Second Thomas Shoal) in June, in which Chinese personnel used axes, long knives, tear gas, and batons to attack Philippine sailors and damage and disable Philippine naval vessels.

Last is the PLAN, China's navy. PLAN ships have intimidated and deterred both Philippine fishing boats and naval vessels, as was the case in the incident in Sabina Shoal on August 25. The PLAN is by some measures the largest navy in the world, with some 680 ships, three aircraft carriers, 58 destroyers, and 54 frigates. At present, the PLAN is transitioning from being a so-called "green water" (or coastal) fleet to being a "blue water" fleet that can operate beyond the first island chain.

#### What the PRC wants in the South China Sea

What is the PRC's goal with these "gray zone" actions? First and foremost, China seeks to attain dominance over the entirety of its self-declared "10-dash line." Achieving dominance

requires China's military and paramilitary organizations to gain complete operational control over the waters.

With complete control, China would be able to exploit the fisheries in the waters as well as resources in the seabed—and demand that commercial vessels seek China's permission to traverse them. In the long term, the PRC likely wants to attain both actual control and international recognition of its control over parts of what is currently the Philippines and other littoral states.

All signs indicate that China's authorities are absolutists in their territorial claims. The PRC regards "every square inch" of territory that it lays claim to as a nonnegotiable part of China. Although China may offer negotiations, it is unlikely ever to make actual concessions. This is illustrated by the dispute between Washington and Beijing over the militarization of China's man-made islands in and around the Spratly Island chain. In September 2015, Chinese leader Xi Jinping assured then US President Barack Obama that "China does not intend to pursue militarization" of the Spratly Islands. Xi added that China's outposts would not "target or impact any country." Subsequently, however, China has violated this promise by pursuing the militarization of those disputed man-made outposts.

How the US and its allies should respond

China's aspirations are unacceptable to Washington and Manila, not only from a strategic standpoint but also because they violate the existing rules-based international order. The United States and the Philippines, along with US defense allies Japan and Australia, must adopt the following five measures to blunt China's ambitions and deter further aggression.

First, the US Coast Guard and the US Navy, in concert with Philippine vessels, should begin regular joint patrols of the maritime region of the Philippines' exclusive economic zone. While both the United States and the Philippines have been skeptical of this proposal in the past, it is time to send a clear message to Beijing that its recent acts of aggression will not stand.

Second, US and allied assets should be deployed to assist with future resupply voyages to the specific locations that have previously been targets of Chinese aggression.

Third, PRC authorities should be notified of maritime actions by the United States and its allies, primarily as a means of de-escalation but also as part of a wider deterrence policy.

Fourth, the Philippines should continue its current policy of "assertive transparency," the use of visual evidence to expose China's illegal actions to the public. Philippine and sometimes foreign journalists have been aboard Philippine vessels when they have encountered illegal and aggressive actions by China. The United States, Japan, and Australia should support these efforts by encouraging greater participation of foreign journalists to report on the PRC's actions.

Fifth, the United States and its allies should act, and be seen to act, collectively and in consultation with each other. Many eyes are on Russia's war against Ukraine now, but Washington also needs to train more eyes on the Pacific. Consultations with Manila, Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra will demonstrate that these democracies are committed to

protecting Philippine sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea. They will also send a message to China that its efforts to bully the Philippines will not be tolerated.

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