

## ► Military exercises by non-regional countries harm peace in S.China Sea PLA holds drills 'in response to foreign activity'

By Liu Xuanzun

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Saturday conducted drills near China's Huangyan Dao in the South China Sea to safeguard sovereign security and maritime rights. The drills were believed to be a response to a joint maritime activity by the Philippines, the US, Australia, Japan and New Zealand on the same day, experts said.

The PLA Southern Theater Command deployed naval and air forces to carry out routine exercises including reconnaissance, early warning and sea-air patrols in waters and airspaces near China's Huangyan Dao on Saturday, the PLA Southern Theater Command said in a

press release on the day.

Certain non-regional countries are stirring up trouble in the South China Sea and creating unstable factors in the region, per the press release.

China has indisputable sovereignty over Huangyan Dao and its surrounding waters, and theater troops will remain on high alert, resolutely defend national sovereign security and maritime rights, and firmly safeguard peace and stability in the South China Sea, the press release reads.

Hours later, the PLA Southern Theater Command issued a second press release about the routine exercise.

These drills were conducted to assess the mission troops' capabilities in reconnaissance,

surveillance, alert patrol, combat readiness and joint strike operations in real combat environments, the second press release reads.

While the PLA Southern Theater Command did not elaborate on the actions by the certain countries from outside of the region, Reuters reported on Saturday that the Philippines, the US, Australia, Japan and New Zealand conducted a joint maritime activity "in the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines."

The PLA's exercises are routine, but their objective and aim are clear, that is to display China's determination, will and capabilities in defending its territorial sovereignty as well as peace and stability in the

South China Sea, while sending a warning to the countries that are making waves in the South China Sea, Ding Duo, deputy director of the Institute of Maritime Law and Policy at China's National Institute for South China Sea Studies, told the Global Times on Saturday.

The joint maritime activity by the five countries will not significantly disturb the situation in the South China Sea, nor can it affect China's position, but it can encourage the Philippines to become more adventurous in making provocations on Chinese islands and reefs, Ding warned.

The increasing gatherings of non-regional countries with military activities in the South China Sea will raise concerns

among ASEAN member states and coastal countries in the region, and it has become clear which forces are sabotaging peace and stability in the South China Sea, Ding said.

Military activities and media hype by non-regional countries are causing tensions and harming freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, observers said.

Waters near Huangyan Dao are important because the island is located close to the Mindoro Strait and the Bashi Channel, both of which are strategic pathways the US military seeks to control in the event of a conflict, Chen Xiangmiao, director of the World Navy Research Center at the same institute of Ding, told the Global Times.

### ► Peace efforts



**Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, speaks at a joint press conference with Celso Amorim, special advisor to the President of Brazil, after a ministerial meeting of the newly launched "Friends of Peace" platform on the Ukraine crisis on September 27, 2024 in New York on the sidelines of the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly.**

Photo: VCC

## Hezbollah leader killed in Israel's airstrike: reports

By Yang Sheng

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said in a statement on Saturday that Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was killed in an airstrike on the Lebanese organization's target in the southern suburbs of Beirut, with Chinese analysts saying this may further escalate regional conflict.

Hezbollah confirmed the death of its leader Nasrallah later on the same day after the IDF released the statement, the Washington Post reported on Saturday.

Earlier on Saturday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said "Iran will stand with Lebanon and Axis of Resistance."

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei tweeted on Saturday, "The Lebanese haven't forgotten there was a time when the soldiers of the occupying regime were advancing toward Beirut, & Hezbollah stopped them & made Lebanon proud. Today too, by the grace & power of God, Lebanon will make the transgressing, malicious enemy regret its actions."

Iran's Revolutionary Guard general Abbas Nilforushan was also killed in the airstrike, media reported.

Israel has intensified its airstrikes across Lebanon since Monday, marking the most extensive military actions in the region since 2006, Xinhua reported.

Chinese analysts said Israel's latest airstrike, as well as massive pager explosions and other operations, are making a statement that with US indulgence, Israel can strike any place and kill any person in the region.

The reported death of Nasrallah will inevitably have an impact on the command structure of Hezbollah and cause further escalation of regional tension, Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, told the Global Times.

## China, Russia conclude military training, launch maritime patrol

By GT staff reporters

Chinese and Russian militaries on Friday concluded an 18-day joint exercise in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk before launching their fifth joint maritime patrol in Pacific waters, as experts expect more military interactions in the future.

A closing ceremony for the Northern/Interaction-2024 exercise took place aboard the PLA Navy's destroyer *Xining* at the joint operation headquarters on Friday, the PLA Navy said in a press release on the day.

The exercise focused on joint maritime defense, with both sides' forces enhancing their capabilities in handling complex and realistic scenarios, according to the press release.

The exercise featured training

courses including sea-air escort, alert defense, anti-aircraft and fire strike. The combat-oriented exercise reached its intended goals, the PLA Navy said.

The Northern/Interaction-2024 exercise was launched on September 10, with China and Russia jointly deploying over 10 warships and 30 plus aircraft to conduct drills in waters and airspaces in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk, according to Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang, a spokesperson of China's Ministry of National Defense.

The exercise tested both sides' capabilities in tactical command coordination and joint operation, deepened the strategic cooperation between the two militaries, and contributed positive forces to the safeguard of peace

and stability in the region, as well as the tackling of security challenges, Zhang Xiaogang said at a regular press conference on Thursday.

Following the exercise, a China-Russia warship flotilla would conduct a joint maritime patrol in Pacific waters, the spokesperson said.

Chinese naval expert Zhang Junshe told the Global Times that this is the first time China and Russia are conducting two joint maritime patrols within one year, reflecting a high level of strategic mutual trust between the two countries' militaries.

The two countries' navies held their fourth joint maritime patrol in July 2024. The first three such joint maritime patrols were held in October 2021, September 2022 and July 2023, according to official releases.

