

▶ PLA Navy steps into deep blue sea, contributes to global peace and stability: expert

# China marks 15 years of overseas escort missions

By Liu Xuanzun

China is set to celebrate the 15th anniversary of its overseas naval escort missions on Tuesday, through which the country has been contributing to global peace and stability with concrete actions amid its shift in naval strategy from near seas defense to far seas protection, experts said.

Under relevant resolutions by the UN Security Council, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy deployed its first task force to carry out escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia on December 26, 2008.

Since then, the PLA Navy

has made about 150 vessel sorties and sent over 35,000 officials and soldiers on 45 escort task forces, and made 1,600 escort runs protecting more than 7,200 ships, over 50 percent of them from foreign countries, in pirate-infested waters, according to authorities.

One of the main goals of the Chinese naval escort missions is to protect the safety of passing ships and personnel in the Gulf of Aden, a busy sea lane in the heart of world trade that sees tens of thousands of ships from over a hundred countries annually commuting between Europe and the Pacific Ocean region as well as the Indian Ocean region, Zhang Junshe,

a Chinese naval expert, told the Global Times on Monday.

China's sending of warships to provide escorts in this pirate-infested region not only safeguards China's national strategic interests, but also fulfils its international responsibility and obligations by providing public security goods to the international community, Zhang said.

Observers pointed out that the PLA Navy's escort route, starting from China's coastal regions, stretching from the South China Sea into the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea before arriving in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia, is also China's maritime trade and energy lifeline, and

with the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, more Chinese overseas interests including Chinese personnel, investments and cooperation projects need to be protected along the route.

PLA Navy escort task forces have also carried out three missions involving evacuation of nationals during their escort missions - in Libya in 2011, in Yemen in 2015 and in Sudan this year.

In the evacuation operations, the PLA Navy not only evacuated Chinese nationals, but also foreign personnel.

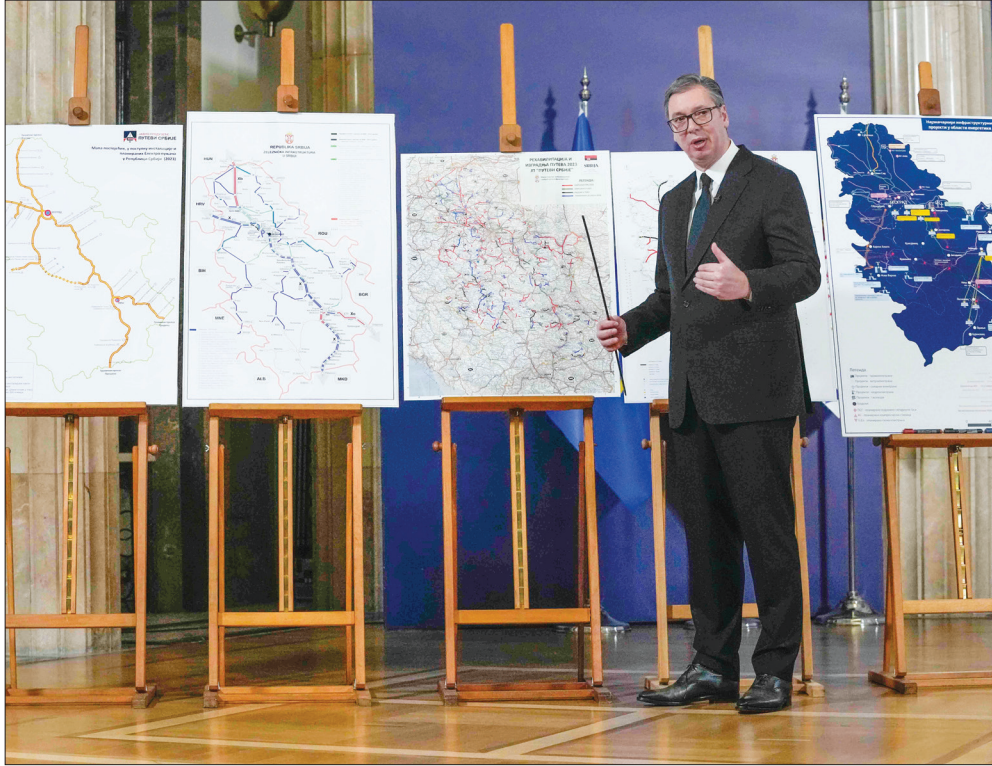
Fifteen years of escort missions also witnessed the development of the PLA Navy's far

seas capability, analysts said.

From another perspective, the PLA Navy's escort missions marked the implementation of its strategic requirements of near seas defense and far seas protection, as the PLA Navy strides to form blue-water capabilities, another Chinese military expert who had boarded a PLA vessel in a previous escort mission told the Global Times on Monday.

The PLA Navy will continue to carry out escort missions to contribute to global peace and stability as well as promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind and a maritime community with a shared future, the expert said.

## Call for calm



**Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic speaks during a public address in Belgrade, Serbia on December 24, 2023. He said that the institutions will end the electoral process, and that it is a matter of institutions and laws. Vucic's dominant Progressive Party won the December 17 vote for the parliament but the opposition parties claimed the elections were marred by irregularities. Opposition-led protests over the last week lapsed into violence on Sunday.**

Photo: VCG

## 'Chances for truce slim' after one of the deadliest nights in Israel's operation in Gaza

By GT staff reporters

Christmas Day bloodshed in Gaza has resulted in the deaths of at least 70 people, marking one of the deadliest nights in the ongoing battle between Israel and Palestine. Chinese experts believe the Netanyahu government's determination to extend its "aggressive" military actions in the Gaza Strip will only widen the existing gap between the parties, and hopes for agreeing on a new plan proposed by Egypt are slim.

Airstrikes that began before midnight continued into Christmas Day. Reports from residents and Palestinian media indicate that Israel intensified its aerial and ground attacks in central Gaza, according to Reuters.

Ashraf Al-Qidra, a spokesperson for the Palestinian health ministry, stated that at least 70 people were killed in an Israeli airstrike targeting Maghazi in central Gaza.

On the same day, Egypt issued a three-stage truce proposal, which seeks a short-term truce.

Some sources suggest that Israel is not outright refusing the draft and that it may result in potential negotiations, said The Times of Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu restated his long-held belief on Sunday that the Gaza offensive will not cease until Hamas is eradicated.

The Christmas bloodshed shows Netanyahu is hell-bent on having his own way, said Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University.

The peace deal proposed by Egypt offers hopes for a possible short-term cease-fire, but big challenges remain due to stark differences between Palestine and Israel, with the latter's pursuit of its goal through aggression only further widening the existing gap between the two parties.

Zhu Yongbiao, the director of the Center for Afghanistan Studies at Lanzhou University, told the Global Times that as major countries continue to make efforts in this process, including regional countries, reaching an agreement on Egypt's new truce plan is not impossible, but chances of success are slim.

## Philippines should 'stop pursuing wrong course at once' on SCS issue

By Zhang Yuying

After the Philippines repeatedly violated China's sovereignty, and drew forces outside the region into the South China Sea issue, the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated on Monday that the Southeast Asian country should stop pursuing the wrong course at once.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning stated on Monday that China will not weaken in its resolve to protect its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, after the Philippines repeatedly violated China's sovereignty, spread false news and colluded with foreign forces to undermine peace and stability in the South China Sea.

For months, the Philippines has

been making provocations on Ren'ai Jiao (also known as Ren'ai Reef) and other issues and drawing forces outside the region into those issues. China is compelled under those circumstances to take necessary measures to firmly respond to it, Mao said.

Mao noted that China's door of dialogue remains open. "We are ready to work with the Philippines to properly handle maritime issues through negotiation and consultation. We hope the Philippines will stop pursuing the wrong course at once," Mao said.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesperson Col. Medel Aguilar said that the country is preparing for more joint patrols with Japan and other countries in the South China Sea, after the Philippines already held a joint air and maritime

patrol with the US and Australia, the Philippine Star reported on Monday.

According to Aguilar, the joint patrols between the Philippines and its allies may shift from the bilateral arrangements to multilateral patrols in 2024 and beyond, meaning several countries will become involved.

"The attempt by the Philippines to conduct multilateral patrols indicates that the country believes its comprehensive strength, including in the economic and military fields, is weaker than that of China. If it provokes China alone, the Philippines believes it has no chance of winning, so it seeks to involve external powers on the South China Sea issue," said Gu Xiaosong, dean of the ASEAN Research Institute of Hainan Tropical Ocean University.

