

# The China–Taiwan Weekly Update



**China-Taiwan Weekly Update, October 4, 2024**

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*The China–Taiwan Weekly Update is a joint product from the Institute for the Study of War and the American Enterprise Institute. The update supports the ISW–AEI Coalition Defense of Taiwan project, which assesses Chinese campaigns against Taiwan, examines alternative strategies for the United States and its allies to deter the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) aggression, and—if necessary—defeat the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The update focuses on the Chinese Communist Party’s paths to controlling Taiwan and cross–Taiwan Strait developments.*

## **Key Takeaways**

- **Chinese Coast Guard ships entered the restricted waters of Taiwan’s Kinmen islands twice on September 26. The PRC has normalized such incursions since February to erode Taiwan’s control of the waters and assert the PRC’s right to enforce its laws there.**
- **The PRC has normalized a much higher volume of ADIZ incursions against Taiwan than in previous years as part of an intensified PRC pressure campaign against the new administration of Lai Ching-te.**
- **The PRC did not interfere with the Philippines’ resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal. The PRC likely intends to send a message to the Philippines that the PRC will not escalate further if the Philippines cooperates with PRC demands.**
- **The PRC, Brazil, and 11 other countries issued a joint communique that expresses support for the PRC-Brazil plan to end Russia’s war in Ukraine.**
- **Reuters reported that a Russian defense firm established a program in the PRC to manufacture long-range attack drones for the Russian war in Ukraine. The PRC has provided dual-use components and other nonlethal equipment to support Russia’s defense industrial base. There are no corroborated reports of the PRC providing lethal aid to Russia.**

- **The PLA conducted military exercises and operations likely in response to a joint training exercise by the United States, Philippines, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. The PLA’s behavior indicates that it will maintain current levels of coercion and military presence within contested waters.**

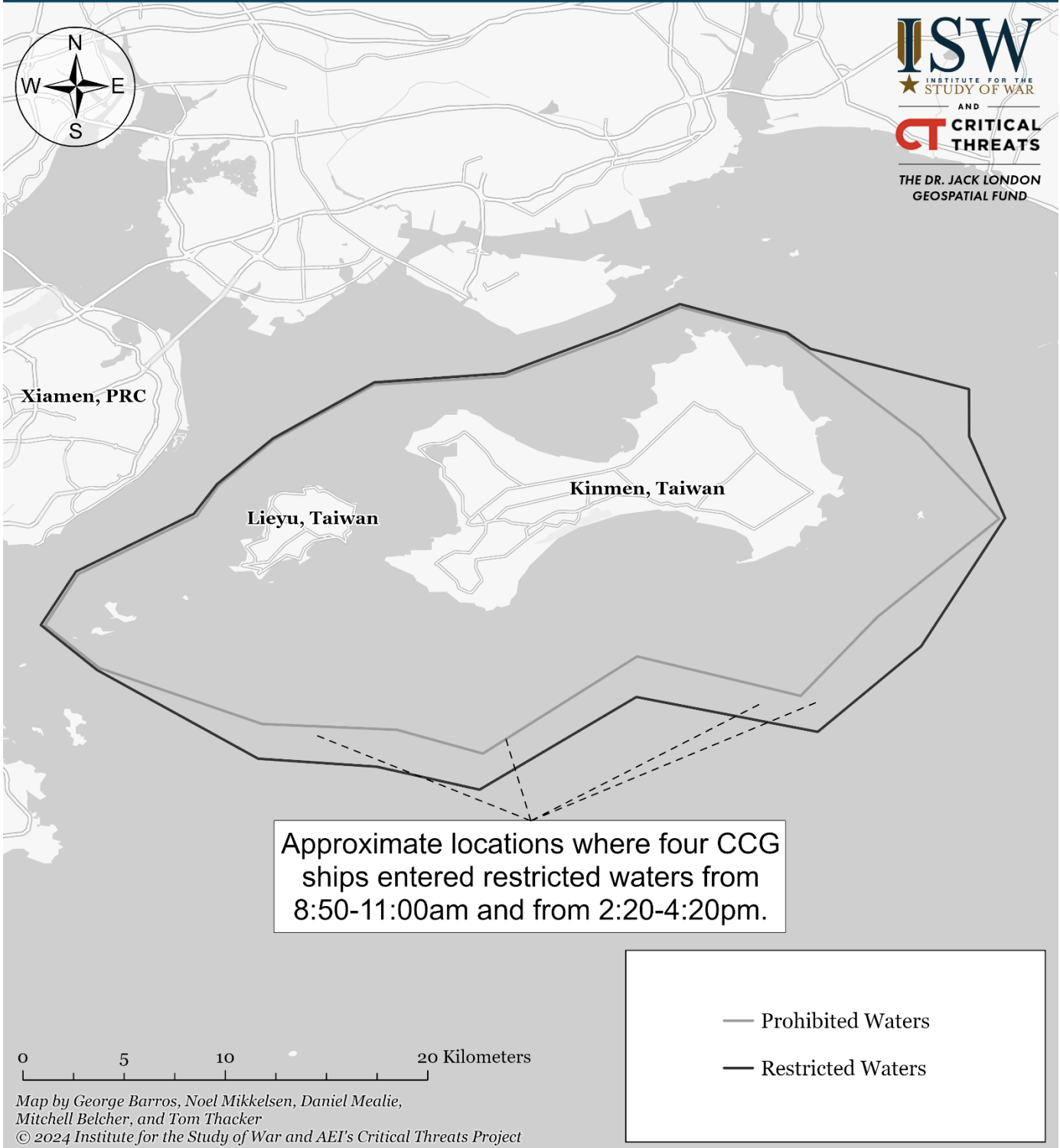
## Cross-Strait Relations

### *Taiwan*

**Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) ships entered the restricted waters of Taiwan’s Kinmen islands twice on September 26. The PRC has normalized such CCG incursions since February to erode Taiwan’s control of the waters and assert the PRC’s right to enforce its laws there.** Taiwan’s Coast Guard Administration (CGA) reported that four CCG ships simultaneously entered Kinmen’s southern restricted waters at four separate points at 8:50 am and left at 11:00 am. They entered again at the same locations at 2:20 pm and left at 4:20 pm. The CGA said these were the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> such incursions in 2024.[1] The Fujian CCG announced the patrols and said their purpose is to “continuously strengthen law enforcement patrols in the waters near Kinmen, further strengthen control of relevant waters, and effectively safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese fishermen, including those in Taiwan.”[2]

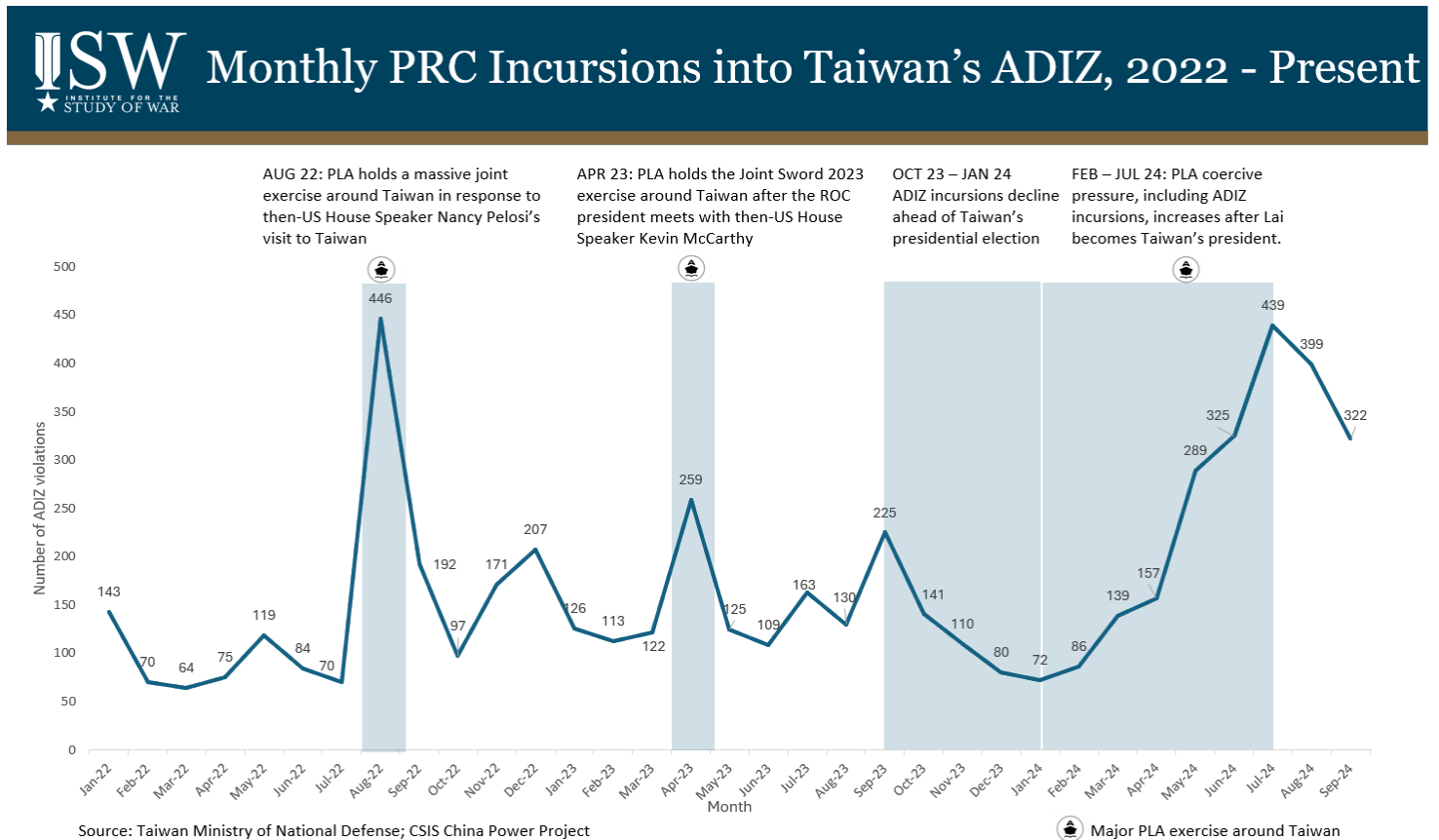
The PRC began CCG patrols around Kinmen in response to the deaths of two PRC fishermen whose boat capsized while fleeing a CGA pursuit in Kinmen’s prohibited waters on February 14. The CCG carried out incursions into Kinmen’s restricted and prohibited waters an average of five times per month between February and September. The CCG has normalized its incursions into Kinmen’s waters despite the PRC and the ROC resolving most of the disputes related to the February 14 capsizing incident. The PRC remains committed to its long-term campaign of using law enforcement to establish the PRC’s legal jurisdiction around Taiwan’s outlying islands.

# Chinese Coast Guard Violations of Kinmen's Restricted Waters (September 26, 2024)



**The PLA has normalized very high numbers of incursions into Taiwan’s Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) each month since Lai Ching-te took office as president of Taiwan.** Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense (MND) reported that PLA aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan’s ADIZ 322 times in September. This is less than the totals for the previous three months, but still much higher than almost all the monthly totals between January 2022 and Lai’s inauguration in May 2024. PLA incursions into Taiwan’s ADIZ climbed rapidly after Lai won Taiwan’s presidential election in January 2024 and hit a near-record high of 439 in July. The highest number of ADIZ incursions in one month was 446 in August 2022, which coincided with a massive spike in PLA activity around Taiwan following then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan. ADIZ incursion numbers do not include aerial activity around the Taiwanese archipelagos of Kinmen and Matsu, which are west of the median line.

The PRC has normalized a much higher volume of ADIZ incursions against Taiwan than in previous years as part of an intensified PRC pressure campaign against the new administration of Lai Ching-te, whom the PRC considers a dangerous separatist. The high frequency of ADIZ incursions drains Taiwan’s resources, exhausts military personnel, and degrades Taiwan’s threat awareness. Taiwan does not scramble aircraft in response to all PRC ADIZ incursions, but it does put military personnel on standby to respond quickly if needed.



**The PRC spoke out against a new US arms sale package to Taiwan as arms deliveries to the island continue.** The White House announced a Presidential Drawdown Authority arms sale

worth \$567 million to Taiwan on September 29. The arms sale package will include “defense items, services, and military training.”[3] CNA further reported that the new arms package will include UAVs.[4] The PRC spoke out against the sale, with PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian admonishing the US for supporting the “Taiwan independence attempt” and “emboldening Lai Ching-te and the DPP authorities.”[5] Taiwan News reported that its first shipment of Harpoon land-based anti-ship missiles arrived in Kaohsiung Port on September 27.[6] The United States approved the sale of these missiles in 2020 and will aim to conclude deliveries in 2028.[7]

The PRC could respond to ongoing approval and delivery of arms sale packages with sanctions, asset freezes, or bans on visits by senior executives, limiting the ability of US businesses—especially those connected to the US military—to access assets or operate in mainland China. The PRC has a range of policy options to choose from but has followed a precedent of sanctions as a response to US-Taiwan arms sales. In May and September of 2024, the PRC responded to announcements of US arms sales by freezing the assets of US-military-linked firms.[8] The PRC froze the assets of nine US firms in September and twelve US firms in May, also barring senior executives from visiting the PRC.[9] The sales that prompted these responses cost less than the sale announced on September 29, worth \$567 million.

### *China*

**The Wall Street Journal reported that US investigators are investigating a hacking campaign by PRC state-sponsored threat actors that infiltrated US-based internet service providers (ISP) to conduct espionage.**[10] Investigators are calling the campaign Salt Typhoon, following the Microsoft naming convention for cyber threat actors attributed to the PRC. Salt Typhoon is also known as GhostEmperor and Famous Sparrow, according to Microsoft’s cybersecurity division.[11] PRC-based threat actors’ access to US ISPs and telecommunications companies. Gaining access to the digital infrastructure of ISP and telecom companies would position PRC-based threat actors to steal sensitive data and potentially affect the flow of internet traffic.

Estonian cybersecurity research firm ESET discovered the threat actor, which it named FamousSparrow, in 2021 after observing activity that targeted hotels, engineering companies, and international and government organizations in 12 countries worldwide, including Taiwan.[12] Russian cybersecurity research firm Kaspersky publicized other malicious activity from a Chinese-speaking threat actor that it called GhostEmperor a week later.[13] Kaspersky linked GhostEmperor to FamousSparrow based on a common IP address across the activity in both companies’ investigations. Kaspersky reported that the threat actor infiltrated government entities and telecommunications companies in Southeast Asia and suggested geopolitically motivated espionage as a possible purpose, based on the targets.

The Salt Typhoon revelations follow a September 18 cybersecurity advisory from the US and UK that revealed an extensive botnet under the control of PRC state-sponsored cyber threat actor Flax Typhoon. The botnet infected over 260,000 small office/home office (SOHO) routers and internet-linked devices worldwide, almost half of which were in the US.[14]

Former US Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) suggested that the threat actor could be Advanced Persistent Threat 40 (APT40), another cyber threat actor that the Five

Eyes, Germany, South Korea, and Japan have attributed to the PRC Ministry of State Security (MSS) Hainan branch.[15] The Wall Street Journal reported that Salt Typhoon's focus on intelligence collection is notably different from other assessed PRC state-sponsored threat actors such as Volt Typhoon. The Five Eyes countries issued a joint advisory on February 7 that exposed Volt Typhoon's targeting of critical infrastructure in the United States.[16] The Five Eyes countries assessed that the purpose of this campaign was to develop the capability to disrupt key operational technology functions in the event of a conflict with the United States by leveraging its access to informational technology environments.

**PRC President Xi Jinping delivered a speech on PRC National Day that possibly aimed to rally popular support amid the PRC's ongoing economic challenges.** The PRC celebrated its National Day and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding on October 1. PRC President Xi Jinping delivered a speech calling upon the nation to “resolutely oppose Taiwan independence,” notably not a part of last year's National Day speech.[17][18] Xi's speech emphasized the changes that China has experienced. He said that “China's modernization has unfolded a magnificent picture,” but that “the road ahead will not be smooth” and that the PRC “must be prepared for danger in times of peace.”[19]

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Chairman Wang Huning likewise gave a National Day speech at a September 28 reception with high-level PRC leaders and 2000 members of the Chinese diaspora, including those from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau, in attendance.[20] Wang and Xi's National Day rhetoric reflected the PRC's broader efforts to unite all parties around the CCP and common national goals: “Chinese-style modernization” and unity within China.[21] The intertwining notions of modernization, national unity, and strength amid economic hardship reflect the interrelatedness of these goals.

## Northeast Asia

### *Japan*

**PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Lin Jian criticized Japan for a joint naval transit through the Taiwan Strait with New Zealand and Australia on September 25.[22]** Lin stated that the PRC was aware of the “political intentions” of Japan's actions and reminded Japan not to interfere in Taiwan per its commitments to the PRC after normalizing relations in 1972.

The PRC has reversed its earlier held position that the Taiwan Strait is an international waterway since 2022 and claims “sole sovereignty and jurisdiction” over the strait.[23] The PRC does not deny other countries freedom to navigate through the strait, however, despite protesting the actions as provocations that support Taiwanese independence. Lin's comments did not mention New Zealand or Australia, which sent naval ships through the strait on the same day.[24] New Zealand Defense Minister Judith Collins called it “a routine activity, consistent with international law, including the right of freedom of navigation as guaranteed under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.” The transit was the first for New Zealand since 2017.[25]

## Southeast Asia

### *Philippines*

**The PRC did not interfere with the Philippines' resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal on September 27.** The Philippines sent a civilian ship to Second Thomas Shoal on September 27 to deliver supplies to the *BRP Sierra Madre*.<sup>[26]</sup> The PRC did not interfere with this resupply mission, with official CCG statements saying that the PCG's actions were in accordance with a July provisional agreement between the two states.<sup>[27]</sup> Friction arose following the initial announcement of the deal, due to a disagreement over whether the Philippines needed to provide prior notification to the PRC when conducting resupply missions.<sup>[28]</sup> Despite this point of contention and the fact that the PRC has repeatedly called for the PCG to remove the *BRP Sierra Madre* from what it sees as its sovereign territory, the CCG deployed to Second Thomas Shoal only monitored PCG actions throughout the resupply mission. The PLA's actions are likely intended to send a message to the Philippines that the PRC will not escalate further if the Philippines cooperates with PRC demands.

# PRC Actions in the West Philippine Sea (September 25 - October 1)



The PLA held National Day exercises in the South China Sea from September 30-October 1.

On September 28 the PLA held military exercises in Scarborough Shoal.

On September 28 the US, Philippines, Australia, Japan, and New Zealand held joint military exercises in the Philippines EEZ.

The Philippines carried out a resupply mission to the BRP Sierra Madre on September 27.

The PCG reported a record 82 PRC vessels sailing near Sabina Shoal.

On September 27 a PLAN vessel shadowed a BFAR vessel en route to Half Moon Shoal.

0 300 600 1,200 Kilometers

Map by George Barros, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, and Tom Thacker  
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**The PLA conducted military exercises and operations likely in response to a joint training exercise by the United States, Philippines, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. The PLA's behavior indicates that it will maintain current levels of coercion and military presence within contested waters.** On September 28 the Philippines, Japan, United States, Australia, and New Zealand held a multilateral maritime cooperative activity (MMCA) in the Philippines EEZ intended to improve interoperability.[29] On the same day, the PLA Southern Theater Command reported that it held exercises near Scarborough Shoal focused on reconnaissance and surveillance, patrol and combat readiness, and joint strike capabilities.[30] Philippine defense authorities responded to PRC claims by rejecting the idea that PLA drills took place near Scarborough Shoal, saying that Philippine troops did not observe the activity[31] This is the second time that the PLA has held military exercises in Scarborough Shoal at the same time as joint Philippine and allied military exercises in the Philippines EEZ. This is the second time that the PLA has held military exercises in Scarborough Shoal at the same time as joint Philippine and allied military exercises in the Philippines EEZ.

### *Vietnam*

**The PRC MFA denied claims by Vietnamese state media that PRC authorities brutally beat and injured Vietnamese fishermen fishing near the disputed Paracel Islands.** Vietnam's *Thanh Nien* and *Tien Phong* newspapers reported that around 40 people aboard foreign vessels attacked 10 Vietnamese fishermen fishing near the islands on September 29. The assailants beat the Vietnamese fishermen with iron pipes and confiscated their fishing equipment. Three Vietnamese fishermen suffered broken arms or legs. [32] A Vietnamese local official said that a Chinese ship chased the fishing boat and that the armed assailants used canoes to intercept and attack the fishermen.[33] The PRC MFA said in response to a Reuters request for comment that Vietnamese fishing boats illegally fished in the waters of the Paracel Islands without the permission of the Beijing government and that relevant Chinese authorities took measures to stop them. The MFA did not mention the attack but claimed the PRC actions were "professional and restrained" and that it did not note any injuries.[34]

The Paracel Islands archipelago in the South China Sea is contested between the PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam, but is entirely under PRC control. The PRC seized control of the archipelago from Vietnam in 1974 and has since constructed military facilities on several islands, as well as a small town on Woody Island.[35] The PRC claims a straight territorial baseline around the archipelago, which means it claims full sovereignty over all waters between the islands as internal waters rather than the standard territorial waters extending 12 nautical miles seaward from each island. It asserts the right to restrict unauthorized access to foreign nationals. International law does not recognize the PRC's straight-baseline claim, however. The United States military has routinely conducted Freedom of Navigation Operations through the relevant waters to contest this PRC claim.

### Russia

**Reuters reported that a Russian defense firm established a program in the PRC to manufacture long-range attack drones for the Russian war in Ukraine. The PRC has**

**provided dual-use components and other nonlethal equipment to support Russia's defense industrial base. There are no corroborated reports of the PRC providing lethal aid to Russia.** Reuters cited two anonymous European intelligence sources and documents it obtained which indicated that IEMZ Kupol, a subsidiary of Russian state-owned arms company Almaz-Antey, developed a long-range drone with help from PRC specialists and was manufacturing it on PRC soil. The US government levied sanctions on IEMZ Kupol in December 2023. Reuters said documents sent by IEMZ Kupol to the Russian defense ministry said the company developed the new Garpiya-3 (G3) drone with PRC assistance and could manufacture it "at scale" in the PRC for use in Russia's war in Ukraine. Invoices reviewed by Reuters from a Russian firm that serves as an intermediary between IEMZ Kupol and PRC suppliers showed that unidentified PRC suppliers delivered seven drones, including two G3s, to IEMZ Kupol's Izhevsk headquarters on unspecified dates. Another Reuters report from September 13 reported that Kupol used PRC engines and parts of its Garpiya-A1 drones in 2023. Reuters said the G3 drone model is an upgraded version of the G-A1 drone that was modified with help from PRC engineers. Other documents showed that IEMZ Kupol was working with the Russian defense firm TSK Vektor as an intermediary and the Shenzhen-based PRC firm Redlepus TSK Vector Industrial. One showed plans by IEMZ Kupol, TSK Vektor, and Redlepus to establish a joint Russian-PRC "Advanced UAV Research and Manufacturing Base" in the Kashgar special economic zone of the PRC's Xinjiang province.[36] ISW cannot independently corroborate the Reuters reports at this time.

The PRC MFA told Reuters it was unaware of a Russia-PRC drone production project and that the PRC had strict export controls on drones. A US National Security Council spokesperson said that the United States had not seen any evidence that the PRC government was aware of the transactions or had any involvement in providing lethal aid to Russia.[37] The United States, Ukraine, and other countries have accused the PRC of supplying dual-use components such as semiconductors to Russia that are used in Russian military equipment. They have not publicized any cases of the PRC providing lethal equipment, however. Corroborated evidence of PRC firms providing lethal assistance to US-sanctioned Russian firms or jointly collaborating with Russia to produce lethal equipment would show a significant departure from the PRC's cautious approach to supporting Russia and undermine the PRC's professed neutrality on the war in Ukraine.

**The PRC, Brazil, and 11 other countries issued a joint communique that expresses support for the PRC-Brazil plan to end Russia's war in Ukraine.** The PRC-Brazil plan is a "six-point consensus on the political resolution to the Ukraine crisis" on May 23 to set conditions for a political settlement based on the UN charter through inclusive diplomacy.[38] It outlines a series of vague steps to de-escalate the war and does not meet Ukraine's base condition of Russia's withdrawal from occupied territory.[39] Ukraine, the United States, and the European Union have dismissed the plan, despite PRC claims of widespread support from the international community.[40] The plan demands equal participation by both Ukraine and Russia at international peace summits.

Algeria, Bolivia, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, and Zambia expressed support for the plan through the joint communique. The PRC called Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa "important members of the Global South" on July 26 before PRC Special Representative for Eurasian Affairs Li Hui conducted a round of shuttle diplomacy in the three countries to generate support for the PRC's role as a mediator.[41]

The communique is a product of the PRC and Brazil-led “Friends of Peace” forum, which is devoted to expanding dialogue and giving Global South countries a voice to advance a “political settlement of the Ukraine issue.”[42] PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, and Brazilian Chief Presidential Advisor Celso Luiz Nunes Amorim co-chaired the opening meeting of the forum at the UN headquarters in New York on September 27. [43] The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) stated that representatives from 17 Global South countries attended.

Ukraine’s interest in involving the Global South in the peace process explains the PRC’s emphasis on winning approval from Global South countries for its role as a mediator. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Deputy Head of the Office of the President Igor Zhovkva stated in June that Ukraine is interested in having a Global South country host a second peace summit, which Ukraine aims to hold before the end of the year.[44]

Zelenskyy called the PRC-Brazil plan “destructive” on September 12, however, and warned during the UNGA on September 25 that attempts to win over other countries to the plan conceal interests that are different from achieving a “full and just peace.”[45] Then-NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg criticized Turkey on September 30 for endorsing the plan and stated that NATO countries should fully support Ukraine’s conditions for peace.[46]

**The PRC will likely use the Friends of Peace forum to promote conditions for peace that are favorable to Russia.** Attaching the label of Global South to the forum and associating the group’s joint communique with the PRC-Brazil peace plan enables the PRC to claim that its plan for reaching a “political solution” represents the collective Global South’s position. The PRC can use the PRC-Brazil plan to shape the course of the war by advocating for Russia’s representation at peace summits and calling for a ceasefire without demanding Russia’s evacuation from occupied territory.

# PRC-Russia Joint Exercises 2018



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*\*Locations are approximate*

*Source: CSIS China Power Project, PRC MOD*

**The PRC and Russian militaries began their fifth joint naval patrol in the Northwest Pacific.** The PRC and Russia held the first four joint maritime patrols in October 2021, September 2022, July 2023, and July 2024, making 2024 the first year that the PRC and Russia conducted the exercise twice in one year.[47]

The PRC and Russia concluded the 18-day PRC-led Northern/Interaction exercise on September 27. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MOD) announced that PRC and Russian naval vessels that participated in the Northern/Interaction exercises replenished supplies in the Sea of Okhotsk and initiated their joint exercise in the Northwest Pacific.[48] PRC military aircraft and naval vessels also participated in the Russian-led Okean-2024 exercises between two phases of Northern/Interaction.

The PRC and Russia also initiated joint coast guard patrols in the Northwest Pacific on September 13.[49] PRC state media claimed that the joint patrols aim to improve coordination and organization between the two countries and enhance their ability to “jointly respond to various maritime security threats.”[50] The China Coast Guard (CCG) and Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) first announced a memorandum of understanding regarding coast guard cooperation in April 2023 to strengthen maritime law enforcement.[51] The US Coast Guard (USCG) located four Russian Border Guard and CCG vessels conducting a joint patrol in the Bering Sea on September 28, marking the northernmost location where the USCG has observed CCG vessels.[52] The USCG stated that the vessels remained five miles within Russia’s Exclusive Economic Zone.

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