

# FACT SHEET |

## 2023 CHINA MILITARY POWER REPORT



U.S. Department of Defense

Today, the Department of Defense transmitted to Congress its annual report, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China (PRC)*, referred to as the *China Military Power Report (CMPR)*. This congressionally mandated report charts the current course of the PRC's national, economic, and military strategy, and offers insights into the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) strategy, current capabilities, and activities, as well as its future modernization goals. The CMPR illustrates why the 2022 *National Defense Strategy* identified the PRC and its increasingly capable military as the Department's top pacing challenge.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- ▶ *Expanding PRC national power to confront a strategic environment that Beijing views as increasingly turbulent.* The PRC seeks to amass national power to achieve “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” by 2049, and to revise the international order in support of the PRC's system of governance and national interests.
- ▶ *Increasing PRC military coercion.* In 2022, the PRC adopted more dangerous, coercive, and provocative actions in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, between the fall of 2021 and fall of 2023, the United States documented over 180 instances of PLA coercive and risky air intercepts against U.S. aircraft in the region. Over the same period, the PLA also conducted around 100 instances of coercive and risky operational behavior in the air domain against U.S. allies and partners.
- ▶ *Strengthening PLA nuclear, space, and counterspace capabilities.* The PRC has clearly stated its ambition to strengthen its “strategic deterrent,” and continued throughout 2022 to accelerate the modernization, diversification, and expansion of its nuclear forces, as well as the development of its cyberspace, space, and counterspace capabilities.
- ▶ *Intensifying pressure against Taiwan.* Throughout 2022, the PLA increased provocative and destabilizing actions in and around the Taiwan Strait, including ballistic missile overflights of Taiwan, increased flights into Taiwan's self-declared air defense identification zone, and large-scale simulated joint blockade and simulated joint firepower strike operations.
- ▶ *Deepening PRC-Russia ties.* The PRC views its “no limits” partnership with Russia as integral to advancing the PRC's development and emergence as a great power. Nevertheless, Beijing has attempted a discreet approach to providing material support to Russia for its war against Ukraine.
- ▶ *Continuing PRC resistance to military-to-military communications with the United States.* Throughout 2022 and into 2023, the PLA largely denied, cancelled, and ignored recurring bilateral U.S.-PRC military-to-military engagements and DoD requests for communication at multiple levels. DoD is committed to maintaining open lines of communication with the PRC to ensure competition does not veer into conflict.

## PLA STRATEGY IN CONTEXT

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- ▶ In 2022, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) expanded on its calls to prepare for an increasingly turbulent international climate. In this context, the PRC's stated defense policy remained oriented toward safeguarding its sovereignty, security, and development interests, while emphasizing a greater global role for itself.
- ▶ One key part of this defense policy is the PRC's counter-intervention strategy, which aims to restrict U.S. presence in the East and South China Sea regions and limit U.S. access in the broader Indo-Pacific region. At the same time, the PRC is strengthening its capabilities to reach farther into the Pacific Ocean and beyond.
- ▶ Xi Jinping reaffirmed in 2022 his commitment to the PLA's 2027 capability milestone for modernization, which, if realized, could give the PLA the capacity to be a more credible military tool for the CCP's Taiwan unification efforts.

## PLA COERCION

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- ▶ In 2022, the PRC turned to the PLA as an increasingly capable instrument of statecraft, adopting more coercive actions in the Indo-Pacific region against the United States and U.S. allies and partners.
- ▶ PLA coercive and risky operational activities targeting foreign aircraft and maritime vessels throughout 2022 included: lasing; reckless maneuvers; close approaches in the air or at sea; high rates of closure; discharging chaff or flares in close proximity to aircraft; and ballistic missile overflights of Taiwan.

## PLA CAPABILITIES

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- ▶ In 2022, the PRC continued the development of capabilities and concepts to strengthen the PLA's ability to "fight and win wars" against a "strong enemy."
- ▶ DoD estimates that the PRC possessed more than 500 operational nuclear warheads as of May 2023—on track to exceed previous projections. DoD estimates that the PRC will probably have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030.
- ▶ The PRC may be exploring development of conventionally-armed intercontinental range missile systems that would allow the PRC to threaten conventional strikes against targets in the continental United States.
- ▶ The PRC continued its development of military capabilities in space and cyberspace under the PLA's Space Systems Department (SSD), sometimes referred to as the Aerospace Force (ASF), and Network Systems Department (NSD), sometimes referred to as the Cyberspace Force (CSF).