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Taiwan

China extends military drills around Taiwan and intensifies propaganda push

People's Liberation Army says it is 'continuing joint training under real war conditions' past expected deadline



A Chinese air force pilot during a combat training exercise near Taiwan on Sunday. China's Eastern Theatre Command said it was 'continuing joint training' on Monday © Wang Xinchao/Xinhua/AP

Kathrin Hille in Taipei 2 HOURS AGO

China has extended military drills around Taiwan, stoking fears of a drawn-out period of heightened tension that is piling pressure on the US to respond.

Beijing's [largest-ever military exercises](#) around Taiwan had been expected to wind down after navigation warnings for seven areas around the country expired early on Monday.

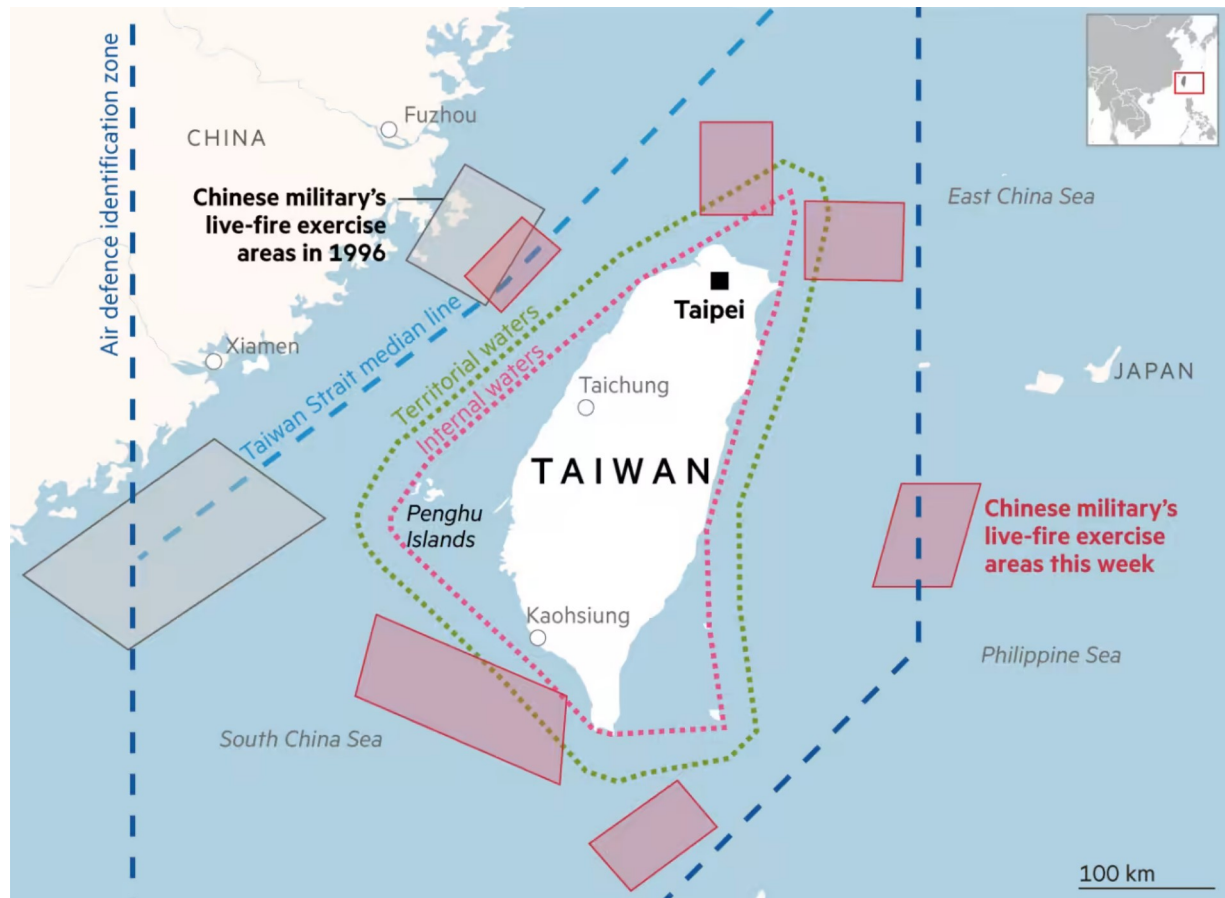
But the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theatre Command said it was "continuing joint training under real war conditions, focused on organising joint anti-submarine warfare and naval strikes".

The statement appeared to indicate that while the live-fire drills had concluded, the [Chinese military](#) was maintaining a pressure campaign that has brought its combat aircraft and warships closer than ever to Taiwanese territory.

Taiwan's defence ministry said the PLA's exercises were having an adverse effect on international air traffic. "Their intention is to deal a blow to our morale and threaten regional security," it said.

Last week Tsai Ing-wen, Taiwan's president, appealed to the international community for support.

The US government has repeatedly [condemned China's aggression](#). The G7 group of industrial nations has pleaded with Beijing to de-escalate the situation. But Washington, which has long acted as Taiwan's unofficial protector, has not revealed whether it would use military force to deter China.



Duan Dang, a regional security analyst in Vietnam, wrote on Twitter: “If the US doesn’t do something militarily to push back China in Taiwan Strait and re-establish a credible red line, it will be very bad! Frankly, no one in the region is going to believe in US commitments anymore.”

Apart from military exercises, Beijing has also [stepped up a propaganda offensive](#) aimed at eroding the island nation’s confidence in its security while satisfying nationalist sentiment on the mainland.

After Chinese online map services began displaying Taiwan in greater detail last week, state media and diplomats began publishing posts and articles highlighting signs of Chinese culture in Taiwanese cities, which they said bolstered Beijing’s claim of sovereignty.

A video posted on the Weibo account of state broadcaster CCTV showed street signs in Taipei carrying the names of Chinese cities and provinces such as Tianjin.

Shandong, Guiyang and Chongqing.

It was accompanied by a sentimental song with the lyrics: “A cloud from the homeland drifts at the edge of the sky and keeps calling out to me. As a slight breeze rises next to me, a voice keeps calling out: ‘Return, return!’”

“Every road leads home!” a caption under the video read. “Here, every street is filled with the yearning for home!”

The propaganda campaign has played on [Taiwan](#)’s complex national identity and history of Chinese migration and consecutive waves of colonisation.

After the Chinese Nationalist government fled to the island following its defeat in the civil war in 1949, it renamed most streets after mainland cities and traditional Chinese virtues. This was to uphold its claim as the legitimate government of China as well as to sinicise Taiwan after 50 years of Japanese rule and centuries of only loose association with the mainland.

But according to polls that Taiwanese universities have conducted for almost 30 years, the majority of the country’s population does not see itself as predominantly Chinese and does not want to become part of China.

Hua Chunying, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, posted screenshots of maps of the Taiwanese capital on Twitter, noting that they showed “38 Shandong dumpling restaurants and 67 Shanxi noodle restaurants in Taipei”.

“Palates don’t cheat. Taiwan has always been a part of China. The long lost child will eventually return home,” she wrote.

The claim that Chinese restaurants proved that Taiwan had been part of the mainland, which was also spread by other diplomats, quickly backfired, however, when Twitter users responded by asking whether the presence of McDonald’s fast-food outlets in Beijing demonstrated that China was historically part of the US.

