

**Taiwan**

## China launches military drills around Taiwan after US passes defence act

PLA jets violate airspace in biggest show of force since Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei in August



Fighters of the People's Liberation Army air force conduct exercises around Taiwan in August © Gong Yulong/Xinhua/AP

**Kathrin Hille** in Taipei 7 HOURS AGO

China staged its largest military manoeuvres near Taiwan over the weekend since the Taiwan Strait crisis in August, days after the US passed an annual defence spending bill that authorised up to \$10bn in security assistance to the country for the first time.

In the 24 hours to Monday morning, 47 People's Liberation Army aircraft entered the country's air defence identification zone, with at least 41 flying across the Taiwan Strait median line, [Taiwan](#)'s defence ministry said.

This marks China's third-largest number of single-day violations of Taiwan's ADIZ, a self-declared buffer zone, and the most since August 5, during [week-long exercises](#) that Beijing staged to retaliate against US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei.

[China](#) has been steadily increasing the scope and scale of its air and naval operations near Taiwan in recent years, including an elevated level of activity since the August stand-off. But the exercises on Sunday were the first officially announced by the PLA since August.

The military had organised "joint combat readiness patrols and joint firepower strike drills", the PLA's Eastern Theater Command said in a statement. "This is the resolute response to the US and Taiwan's current escalation of their collusion and

provocation,” it added.

The drills come after Beijing sharply increased its military posturing as the US Congress deliberated and then adopted unprecedented military assistance for Taiwan in its [annual defence spending bill](#), which US president Joe Biden signed into law on Friday. The National Defense Authorization Act includes provisions for up to \$10bn in security assistance over five years and fast-tracking of arms sales for Taiwan.

China on Saturday said it was “strongly dissatisfied and resolutely opposed” to the law, which it claimed damaged peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. “The case ignores the facts to exaggerate a ‘China threat’, wantonly interferes in China’s internal affairs and attacks and smears the Chinese Communist party, which are serious political provocations,” the foreign ministry said.

According to [Taiwan’s data](#), 42 of the 47 PLA planes that flew into the ADIZ were fighter aircraft, with early warning and reconnaissance planes, including one drone, accounting for the rest. More than two dozen fighters crossed the median line, including at its centre where the strait is narrowest — a highly risky manoeuvre the PLA uses infrequently, generally when Beijing is seeking to respond to moves such as visits to Taipei by senior US officials.

Following the NDAA’s emergence, the PLA stepped up relatively unusual operations, including an aerial refuelling exercise with fighters and bombers around southern Taiwan last Thursday, an ADIZ incursion by a record 18 bombers on December 13 and fighters crossing the centre of the median line on December 8.

Senior Taiwanese officials said the PLA had used these operations to practice elements of a [potential Taiwan Strait war](#), including a simulated attack on warships and preparation for invasion with amphibious vessels positioned on the northern and southern ends of the strait.

China’s largest single-day incursion into Taiwan’s ADIZ was 59 aircraft in October last year, according to Taiwan defence ministry data. The ministry said a total of 71 PLA aircraft operated in the area surrounding Taiwan over the past 24 hours, but the significance of that number remains unclear because Taipei only selectively discloses Chinese military planes’ flight paths.

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