

Chinese military

China's navy starts largest-ever exercises in Pacific Ocean

Manoeuvres involving aircraft carrier Shandong follow series of US-led military drills in region



A J-15 Chinese fighter jet prepares to take off from the Shandong aircraft carrier during military exercises near Taiwan in April. The Shandong is one of two carriers the PLA Navy has in service © An Ni/Xinhua/AP

Kathrin Hille in Taipei 7 HOURS AGO

China's navy has launched its largest-ever manoeuvres with an aircraft carrier in the western Pacific, according to foreign defence officials and analysts, as Beijing flexes its military muscle to push back against the US and its allies.

The Shandong, the [People's Liberation Army](#) Navy's second aircraft carrier, was on course on Tuesday to converge with more than 20 other Chinese warships in waters between Taiwan, the Philippines and the US Pacific territory of Guam, said two Asian security officials.

"This is by far the largest number of ships we have seen training with any Chinese carrier so far," said Su Tzu-yun, an analyst at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, a defence-ministry backed think-tank in Taipei. "They are expressing their displeasure with the various military exercises that have been under way in their periphery."

[Taiwan](#)'s defence ministry counted 20 PLA warships in the waters around the island in the 24 hours to early Tuesday morning. It did not give any detail, but the disclosure followed its announcement on Monday that the Shandong had sailed through the Bashi Channel, which separates Taiwan from the Philippines, into the Pacific. Japan's military also reported the passage of eight PLA naval vessels into the Pacific via the

Miyako Strait, south of Okinawa.

One east Asian national security official said the vessels spotted by Japan — six missile destroyers and two frigates — were continuing in a direction that indicated they would meet up with the Shandong. A separate Asian military official said some of the PLA vessels operating near Taiwan were also following the carrier.



The Liaoning and the Shandong, the two carriers the PLA Navy has in service, have conducted [several training missions](#) in the western Pacific since 2021, but only with small groups of ships.

“The typical escort we have seen in the past has been four destroyers or frigates plus one support ship, so the numbers this time are much larger,” Su said.

Beijing’s move follows a series of US-led military exercises in four locations around China involving more than two dozen nations.

In late August, the US conducted a naval drill with Japan, Australia and the Philippines in the South China Sea, followed by a bilateral sail with a Philippine ship and a joint coast guard operation with Thailand in the disputed waters.

In the first week of September, US, South Korean and Canadian naval ships

commemorated the anniversary of a Korean war battle and of the US-South Korean alliance with a joint sail in the Yellow Sea, which analysts said was their biggest joint naval manoeuvre near China in a decade.

Last week, the US Navy operated in the East China Sea with allies including Japan and Canada, followed by a transit by a US destroyer and a Canadian frigate through the Taiwan Strait.

A joint drill led by the US and Indonesia and involving 19 nations is under way in the south-east Asian country.

Neither the Chinese defence ministry nor the PLA announced the carrier manoeuvres.

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