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### Taiwan

## China launches military manoeuvres around Taiwan in wake of election

People's Liberation Army conducts largest air and naval patrols since Beijing sceptic Lai Ching-te elected president



A Chinese fighter jet takes off during exercises around Taiwan in April. The PLA's latest air and naval drills are the largest manoeuvres around the island this year © Wang Zixiao/Xinhua/AP

**Kathrin Hille** in Taipei YESTERDAY

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China has staged its largest military manoeuvres around Taiwan in three weeks, in its first active response to the election of Lai Ching-te as the country's president last weekend.

The People's Liberation Army conducted joint air and naval combat patrols near [Taiwan](#) on Wednesday night, with 24 PLA aircraft and five PLA Navy vessels operating in the area, Taiwan's defence ministry said.

According to the ministry, "11 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait or entered Taiwan's south-west and north air defence identification zone".

An ADIZ is a self-declared buffer zone within which countries monitor and warn off foreign military aircraft to guard against attacks.

The PLA's moves marked the largest air manoeuvre and ADIZ violation since December 28 and came after Lai [won Saturday's election](#), giving the Democratic Progressive party an unprecedented third term in office.

[China](#) claims Taiwan as part of its territory and refuses to renounce the use of force to bring it under control if Taipei resists unification indefinitely. The Chinese Communist party cut off all exchanges with Taiwan's government after its current

Communist party but on an exchange with Taiwan's government under its current president, Tsai Ing-wen, also of the DPP, was elected in 2016. It has also rebuffed Lai's calls for a resumption of dialogue.

Beijing on Wednesday said some Taiwanese had some "bias" in their understanding of [cross-strait relations and national identity](#) because they had been "poisoned by 'Taiwan independence' thought and because political differences across the Taiwan Strait have not yet been resolved".

Taiwanese government officials have said they do not expect China to stage a military attack or large show of force in reaction to Lai's victory, but Beijing is likely to further increase pressure on Taipei.

The PLA flew more than 1,700 sorties into Taiwan's ADIZ last year and in 2022, almost double the number in 2021 and more than 80 times the tally in 2019, when Taipei started publicising the incursions on a regular basis.

This week, Taiwan's defence ministry adjusted the way it reports PLA activity to begin including information on which Chinese air bases the aircraft were coming from and how close they came to Taiwan's airspace. But it discontinued publishing detailed data on how many of which type of aircraft participated in each action.

"The reason they are no longer naming the exact types of drones, for example, is that our air force is no longer scrambling fighters to identify each PLA drone in order to limit wear on our aircraft," said Su Tzu-yun, an analyst at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, a defence ministry-backed think-tank.

Taiwanese defence experts said the changes were part of a review after the ministry botched the announcement of a Chinese satellite launch three days before the election.

The announcement called it a missile overflight in an English message and warned the public about potential falling debris without providing instructions for how to take shelter.

The ministry's explanation that it issued the air raid alert because the rocket launch took a path different from the one predicted might have revealed too much about Taipei's early detection capacity.

"They will continue to review how much and how detailed data they publish as we have to balance the need for deterring China through displaying readiness with the need to protect the friends who provide intelligence to help complement our

operational awareness," Su said.

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