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China / Military

## PLA showcases amphibious attacks on Taiwan in latest episode of documentary

The most recent of the five-part series to be broadcast on the Chinese mainland shows rapid switch from training drill to simulated full-scale assault

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A scene from the latest episode of a documentary marking the 98th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army. Photo: CCTV

The People's Liberation Army has showcased its advanced amphibious assault and landing capabilities in the latest episode of a documentary series commemorating its foundation, in what is seen as a clear message to Taiwan amid simmering tensions.

The episode, which appeared online on Monday, depicts a “cold start” operation that involves units transitioning directly from a training drill to a simulated full-scale assault. It appears to include footage of previous live-fire exercises around Taiwan.

Paratroopers can be seen penetrating enemy lines to guide precision strikes, while infiltrating frogmen seize key infrastructure and amphibious armoured units conduct ship-borne sea transits.

The episode also features unmanned combat formations breaching beachheads after initial firepower suppression, and joint forces executing maritime blockades and area denial operations – all relevant to any amphibious operation across the Taiwan Strait.

The five-part documentary series – called *Forging Ahead* – has been airing on state broadcaster CCTV since Friday to mark the 98th anniversary of the PLA's founding on August 1, 1927.

Beijing regards Taiwan as part of China, to be reunited by force if necessary. Most countries, including the United States, do not recognise the island as independent but Washington is opposed to any attempt to take it by force and is committed to supplying Taipei with arms.

The PLA has intensified its posture around the self-ruling island in recent years, particularly after William Lai Ching-te became Taiwanese leader last year and repeatedly angered Beijing by making a series of remarks Beijing interpreted as supporting independence.

The PLA's 100th anniversary has been set as a key milestone in its modernisation, prompting the US military to warn that Beijing might attack the island by 2027.

A sudden attack, such as a “cold start” from a drill, is widely considered to be a possible scenario.

The documentary's depiction begins with a night-loading exercise, as a PLA Army armoured brigade drives its vehicles onto a Type 071 amphibious transport dock.

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According to the episode, the unit spent two days at sea on board the 25,000-tonne vessel and was “circling the target” when it received orders to “immediately transition from training to combat”.

The brigade is shown joining other PLA air and sea forces, including an aircraft carrier strike group, and going on to “open up the last kilometre of barriers before landing”, the documentary said.

Missiles launched from aircraft and ships, along with long-range rockets, delivered the initial wave of firepower while unmanned surface vessels and aerial drones served as the first wave of the landing operation depicted in the episode.

They were followed by helicopters, landing craft, amphibious vehicles, and airborne troops advancing towards a beachhead. The documentary did not name the target, nor specify when the exercise took place.

However, it included footage of PLA long-range rockets hitting a mock-up of Taiwan's largest liquefied natural gas terminal – a feature of the live-fire drills code-named Strait Thunder 2025A in April.



State broadcaster CCTV also announced on August 1 that the PLA Navy's fourth Type 075 landing helicopter dock, called the Hubei, has entered service. Photo: CCTV

There were also scenes in the episode from inside command headquarters, as well as a simulated severe communication interference using alternative data links and launching a saturation fire attack that sinks an “enemy ship” at sea.

The PLA has been practising this type of blockade and area denial doctrine in preparation for a potential Taiwan contingency, along with infiltration drills by special combat forces such as the paratroopers and frogmen that were also featured.

The episode ended with a sound bite from a PLA Eastern Theatre Command spokesperson announcing the start of what came to be known as Strait Thunder 2025A – describing it as a “serious warning and powerful deterrence against Taiwan-independence forces”.

CCTV said in a separate report on Friday that the PLA Navy's fourth Type 075 landing helicopter dock, called the Hubei, has entered service as the latest addition to its rapidly expanding fleet of amphibious assault vessels.

At around 235 metres (771 feet) long and with a 40,000-tonne displacement, the Type 075 can carry a mix of helicopters, landing craft, armoured vehicles and several hundred marines.

Its flight deck supports the simultaneous operation of up to six helicopters for an air assault, while the floodable well deck allows for the efficient deployment of landing craft and amphibious vehicles

The PLA has also launched a Type 076 landing helicopter dock, equipped with an electromagnetic catapult, that could be commissioned as early as the end of next year.

