

► PLA STC conducts routine patrols amid US-Philippines-Japan drills

Philippines slammed for attempting to stir up trouble in South China Sea

By Feng Fan

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Southern Theater Command on Sunday slammed the Philippines for drawing countries from outside the region to conduct so-called joint patrols in the South China Sea, warning that such moves disrupt regional peace and stability.

The statement came after the Philippines concluded five days of joint maritime exercises with the US and Japan, amid an increased presence of US military assets in the region.

According to the official WeChat account of the PLA Southern Theater Command (STC), Senior Captain Zhai Shichen, spokesperson for the command, stated that "on July 26, naval and air units of the PLA STC conducted a routine patrol in the South China Sea."

In an attempt to stir up troubles in the South China Sea, the Philippines co-opted countries outside the region to conduct so-called joint patrols, disrupt-

ing peace and stability in the region. Forces of the STC will resolutely safeguard China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, and firmly uphold regional peace and stability, Zhai said in the statement.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the US Pacific Command conducted the 17th Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity from July 21 to 25, according to Philippine News Agency, citing the AFP.

The agency claimed the drills were conducted "amid renewed tensions between Manila and Beijing" over an incident near Ren'ai Jiao.

The agency quoted AFP as claiming that the exercise demonstrated the participants' "enduring partnership" and AFP's commitment to freedom of navigation and overflight, while deterring what the Philippine military called "illegal, coercive, aggressive, and deceptive activities" in the South China Sea.

The continuation of such exercises

represents a dangerous departure from the proper course of China-Philippines relations, Yang Xiao, a research professor at the Institute of Peaceful Development under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times.

By repeatedly provoking confrontations and creating instability, the Philippine military is seeking opportunities to expand its forces and authority, increase military spending and obtain more external military assistance, Yang said.

Such actions will only have negative effects on China-Philippines relations and further destabilize the South China Sea, he said.

Yang said the Philippines, the US and Japan have conducted repeated military exercises in the South China Sea since the beginning of the year. The US military is seeking to normalize the deployment of offensive weapons in the Philippines and turn the country into a forward operating position, transforming the previously peaceful South China Sea into a potential powder keg, he said.

Tokyo claims location of China-Russia patrol vessels; route 'deters Japan's militarism'

By Li Yu

Japan's Ministry of Defense Joint Staff on Saturday again reported the latest location of the China-Russia joint naval task group, claiming that it had confirmed four Chinese and Russian naval vessels proceeding northeast through waters southeast of Cape Nosappu, Hokkaido. A Chinese expert said the joint patrol is likely to complete a circumnavigation of Japan, demonstrating the two navies' ability to break through the so-called island chain blockade while deterring Japan's right-wing forces.

Japan's Ministry of Defense Joint Staff claimed the Type 055 destroyer was sighted about 220 kilometers northeast, and the other three vessels were sighted about 130 kilometers southeast, of Cape Inubo, Chiba Prefecture, on July 23. Then, the four ships were confirmed proceeding about 300 kilometers southeast of Cape Nosappu, Hokkaido, on July 25. According to the Japanese side, the vessels had transited south between Okinawa Island and Miyako Island on July 16 before sailing northeast southwest of Okinotori, on July 19, then proceeding northeast southeast of Minami Iwo Jima and north east of Iwo Jima on July 21.

Song Zhongping, a Chinese military affairs expert, told the Global Times on Sunday that judged by sighting records claimed by the Japanese side, the China-Russia joint naval task group has already completed roughly two-thirds of a circuit around Japan and is likely to continue through either the Tsugaru Strait or the Soya Strait into the Sea of Japan before transiting the Tsushima Strait. Completing a full circumnavigation of Japan would demonstrate that the two navies are capable of rapidly deploying to relevant waters to conduct joint training and other military missions.

Song said that the joint patrol also serves as a deterrent to Japan's right-wing forces and militarism. Another key objective of the China-Russia joint patrol is to strengthen the two navies' ability to break through island-chain blockades and operate in strategically important straits. The expert noted that the patrol demonstrates the capability of the Chinese and Russian navies to overcome strategic blockades and restrictions at maritime chokepoints.

► Naval pride

Former naval servicemen take part in Navy Day celebrations outside the North River Terminal in Moscow, Russia, on July 26, 2026. President Vladimir Putin also made remarks on the occasion of Navy Day, marked annually on the last Sunday of July.

Photo: VCG



US military pauses strikes on Iran while Tehran moves to legalize Hormuz governance

By GT staff reporters

Following 13 consecutive days of strikes, the US military has paused strikes on Iran though explanations for the halt are varied, media reported, while the Iranian side has just held talks with Oman regarding the management of safe shipping traffic in the Strait of Hormuz.

US President Donald Trump has set aside, at least for now, plans to sharply escalate the American military

assault against Iran, with particular concern that intensifying the war could dangerously drain the Pentagon's already diminished stockpile of Patriot antimissile interceptors and other air defense munitions in the Middle East, The New York Times reported on Saturday local time.

Separately, a CBS report on Saturday, citing two regional officials, noted that the US bombing was intentionally paused so as not to disrupt the delicate in-

person diplomacy. The report said the Omani-Iranian talks are being tracked closely by the US.

On Sunday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said that Iran and Oman held "fruitful" talks on the management of safe shipping traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, with some progress achieved, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

"The talks were fruitful and some progress was achieved.

The Omani delegation left Tehran Saturday evening, but technical and political consultations between the two sides continue," Baghaei said.

With the Strait of Hormuz remaining at the heart of the dispute, State broadcaster of Iran IRIB reported that the Parliament's National Security Committee is reviewing Iran's draft law on the management of the strait, along with the judicial, economic and civil sub-committees, per Al Jazeera.

Ding Long, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, said that the recurring cycle of clashes, ceasefires and negotiations points to an emerging trend, and the stalemate may well drag on long-term, featuring a persistent pattern of fighting while negotiating.

