

# Intensive exercises prepare for amphibious landing missions

## PLA vows to safeguard sovereignty ahead of Tsai-McCarthy meeting

By Liu Xuanzun

Ahead of a planned meeting between Taiwan regional leader Tsai Ing-wen and US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California on Wednesday, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theater Command vowed to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, with multiple land, naval, air exercises focusing on amphibious landing missions underway.

"Even a bit of China cannot be left behind!" the PLA Eastern Theater Command said in a social media post released on Tuesday, paying tribute to those who sacrificed their lives in liberating the country and rejuvenating the nation a day before Qingming Festival, or the Tomb-Sweeping Day, a day to commemorate ancestors in traditional Chinese culture.

The series of posters released by the PLA Eastern Theater Command highlighted the island of Taiwan, at a time when Tsai and McCarthy are report-

edly scheduled to meet in California on Wednesday, a move that will gravely undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

When asked about if China will hold military drills in response to the Tsai-McCarthy meet, Mao Ning, a spokesperson at China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in a regular press conference on Tuesday that the Chinese side will closely monitor the situation as it develops and resolutely defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Shortly before the scheduled Tsai-McCarthy meet, the PLA forces facing the island of Taiwan continued land, naval and air exercises with amphibious landing missions in mind. The PLA has been holding intensive drills since last week, according to reports.

A combined arms brigade under the PLA 72nd Group Army recently held a realistic combat-oriented beach assault exercise that honed its capabilities to fight and win, China Central Television (CCTV) reported on Tuesday,

This unit is an amphibious force that is responsible for cross-sea landing missions, CCTV reported, showing footage in which Type 05 series amphibious armored vehicles boarded the PLA Navy's landing ships, including a Type 071 amphibious landing ship, conducted a beach assault, and then pushed deep into the land during the exercise.

Over the past few days, a vessel-borne helicopter regiment affiliated with the PLA Eastern Theater Command Navy carried out landing exercises in both day and night on the Type 075 amphibious assault ship Guangxi, js7tv.cn, a video news website of the PLA, reported on Wednesday.

Fujian Maritime Safety Administration announced on Wednesday that a joint patrol and special inspection operation has started in the central and northern parts of the Taiwan Straits. The operation features a law enforcement flotilla that secures the safety of commercial ships in the region, media reported on Wednesday.

## Top Saudi, Iranian envoys to meet in Beijing; may 'discuss ties resumption details'

By GT staff reporters

The top diplomats of Saudi Arabia and Iran will reportedly meet in Beijing on Thursday. Experts believe the three sides will discuss detailed arrangements following the Saudi-Iran agreement reached last month brokered by China. They noted that in the long run, Beijing will continue to play a vital role in the future for two sides to solve some long-standing and complex problems before they can establish mutual trust.

The meeting between Saudi Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud and his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir-abdollahian, will be the first formal meeting between the countries' most senior diplomats in more than seven years, Reuters reported Wednesday.

Choosing China "came as an extension of Beijing's positive role in reaching the agreement and facilitating communication between the two countries," Saudi-owned Asharq al-Awasat newspaper cited an unidentified source in Riyadh as saying, according to Reuters.

The meeting to be held in Beijing will touch upon some detailed arrangements following the agreement reached last month, including the two countries reopening embassies and the upcoming visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Saudi Arabia, Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, told the Global Times on Wednesday.

In the long run, the three sides also need to talk about many other issues as there is still a long way to go for Saudi Arabia and Iran to establish mutual trust. For example, the three sides could discuss whether it is necessary to set up a tripartite mechanism or even any bilateral mechanism between Saudi Arabia and Iran, between the Gulf Cooperation Council and Iran or between the Arab League and Iran as the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran involves many other issues in addition to their bilateral ties, such as issues related to Yemen and Syria, according to Liu.

Liu noted that Beijing in the future would continue to play a vital role in helping to promote negotiations over the solutions to some long-standing issues between the two countries.

## Nuclear safety talks



**Russian state nuclear agency Rosatom general director Alexey Likhachev (left) meets with Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Kaliningrad, Russia, on April 5, 2023, to talk over security measures for Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia plant.**

Photo: AFP

## US intensifies military attempts in the Philippines, to 'tie Manila closer to its chariot'

By Fan Anqi

In a latest move to tie its Southeast Asian ally tighter to its geopolitical chariot, US State Secretary Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will meet their Philippine counterparts next week, following the announcement of four additional US military bases in the Philippines that are believed to directly target the South China Sea and China's Taiwan.

The 2+2 meeting follows the

announcement on Monday that Manila will allow US military forces to access four additional bases.

Three of the sites are in the northern Philippines, including a naval base at Cagayan's Santa Ana, which is only about 400 kilometers from China's island of Taiwan. Another is on Balabac Island near the South China Sea, media reported.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning slammed the US' strengthened

military deployment in the region on Tuesday, saying the move is driven by a zero-sum mentality in pursuit of selfish interests, which would only lead to more tensions and less stability in the region.

US Forces already had access to five military bases under the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Arrangement, and the new deal will allow the US to rotate troops to a total of nine bases throughout the Philippines and store military equip-

ment and supplies.

The bases mainly serve three purposes of the US. First, to meet the needs of its military deployment in the Taiwan Straits and second, to enhance US military presence in the First Island Chain to serve its military operations in the South China Sea," said Chen Xiangmiao, director of the World Navy Research Center at the National Institute for South China Sea Studies.

But the latest move is more

symbolic than practical, because the Philippines does not truly believe that the US will go very far in helping its country with security. Manila still questions on the commitments that Washington has made, and that is why the military bases only allow the US to rotate troops but not station troops there permanently, experts said.