



# USINDOPACOM Legal Vigilance Update

## Issue #56, 28 November 2025

PREVAIL

Teammates,

Happy Thanksgiving! Below please find the 56<sup>th</sup> edition of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's (USINDOPACOM) Legal Vigilance Update (LVU). To access previous LVUs, please visit <https://www.pacom.mil/Contact/Directory/Jo/Jo6-Staff-Judge-Advocate/>.

### Quote of the Week:

**“I’ve spent nearly two decades on the frontlines across the Taiwan Strait, and one thing is painfully clear: foreign interference doesn’t knock; it walks straight in, wearing a suit, quoting international law and demanding compliance.**

**...Taiwan has been living this for more than 20 years. We’re not a case study; we’re a proving ground. Beijing doesn’t need missiles to reshape the region. It uses law as a weapon—twisting resolutions, weaponizing global systems and normalizing coercion under a thin veil of protecting sovereignty.”**

Ray Ming-Tse Lu  
Director General, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office Melbourne  
[\*Taiwan’s lessons from China’s lawfare and hybrid operations\*](#)  
Australian Strategic Policy Initiative, November 18, 2025

### • November 2025:

- **Bottom-line:** a new report from the Australian Strategic Policy Initiative (ASPI) “explores how Beijing increasingly wields military pressure against Taiwan” — detailing China’s military coercion against Taiwan, how Taiwan is responding to China’s destabilizing activities, and how the U.S. and other countries support Taiwan’s preparedness.
  - References:
    - [\*Pressure Points: Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait \(ASPI, November 2025\)\*](#)
  - Key Points:
    - According to ASPI: “China’s coercion of Taiwan isn’t a new trend. For decades, the CCP has subjected Taiwan, its government, its people and its international partners to a wide range of tactics designed to alter the status quo and accelerate Beijing’s goal of unification.”
    - The report details how ***Beijing’s military coercion against Taiwan “employs military and paramilitary actions, economic pressure, espionage and interference, information and narrative warfare, cyber operations, diplomatic coercion, and lawfare.”***
    - ASPI examines China’s near-daily air and naval patrols around Taiwan, stating that “those activities are used to intimidate Taiwan, undermine its sovereignty and prepare the PLA for potential future conflict,” with “the cumulative effect of those operations [designed] to shrink Taiwan’s operating space and normalize coercion.”
    - ASPI writes:
      - “Since 2022, China has sharply escalated its conduct of military exercises around Taiwan. Once largely symbolic or seasonal, those drills have grown in frequency, scope and ambition, evolving into full-spectrum, joint-force rehearsals that closely simulate real-world combat.
      - The tempo and sophistication of those operations suggest that Beijing is shifting from mere demonstration to active preparation. ***The PLA is now***

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*rehearsing nearly the full range of actions it might employ in a future invasion, including precision missile strikes, air and naval blockades, joint land–sea–air coordination and small-island seizures.* The PLA Rocket Force and China’s aircraft carriers are increasingly integrated into the drills, and surface combatants and aircraft are at times operating within Taiwan’s contiguous zone, or within 24 nautical miles of Taiwan’s coast.”

| Exercise  | Purpose  | Aircraft and ships  | Unique highlight  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Encirclement drills</b><br>(4–7 August 2022) | Response to Pelosi visit                             |  68 aircraft  13 naval vessels      | First full encirclement; 11 ballistic missiles launched, some over Taiwan into Japan’s exclusive economic zone              |
| <b>Joint Sword 2023</b><br>(8–10 April 2023)    | Response to Tsai–McCarthy meeting                    |  91 aircraft  12 naval vessels      | Precision strikes and aerial blockade; <i>Shandong</i> carrier involved; destroyers come within 24 nautical miles of Taiwan |
| <b>Joint Sword 2024A</b><br>(23–24 May 2024)    | Warning after inauguration of President Lai Ching-te |  111 aircraft  46 naval vessels     | CCG involved for the first time; activity targeting Taiwan’s outlying islands   |
| <b>Joint Sword 2024B</b><br>(14 October 2024)   | Response to National Day speech                      |  153 aircraft  26 naval vessels     | Focus on blockade and control of key ports; increased CCG involvement; <i>Liaoning</i> carrier deployed                     |
| <b>Unnamed drills</b><br>(9–11 December 2024)   | Reaction to Lai’s Pacific trip                       |  ~90 naval vessels   | Simulated blocking foreign intervention; largest PLA maritime operation since 1996.   |
| <b>Strait Thunder 2025A</b><br>(1–2 April 2025) | Response to Lai’s 17 March speech                    |  135 aircraft  50 naval vessels | Layered encirclement tactic; CCG conducted boarding and blockade; carrier within 24 nautical miles                          |

- **18 November 2025:** U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission releases its annual report.
  - **Bottom-line:** in its annual report to Congress, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission detailed how, in the past year, *China “intensified its destabilizing gray zone activities, advanced its preparations for potential military conflict, and deepened its coordination with malign actors like Russia and Iran.”*
    - **References:**
      - [U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission 2025 Annual Report to Congress \(Nov. 18, 2025\)](#)
    - **Key Points:**
      - According to the report:
        - “While claiming to be a source of international stability, China has continued to threaten global security by undertaking gray zone activities in the Indo-Pacific and around the world. *China routinely engages in provocative military maneuvers near Taiwan and in the South and East China Seas, has sabotaged critical undersea communications cables near Taiwan and in the Baltic Sea, and has escalated cyberattacks on the United States.*”
        - “China has also fanned the flames of conflict by supplying dual-use goods to sustain Russia’s war in Ukraine, funding Iran and its terrorist proxies through purchases of sanctioned Iranian oil, and providing North Korea with diplomatic cover and material support that advances its cyber and weapons

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programs, thereby complicating global efforts to constrain these countries’ destabilizing activities.”

- With respect to lawfare, the Commission writes:
  - “China has sought to use ‘lawfare’ to legitimize its claims to almost all of the South China Sea, often invoking the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to support its claims.”
  - **“By using legal arguments and CCG vessels to reinforce its claims, China has sought to create a façade of legality, presenting its activities as legitimate law enforcement actions.”**
- 25 November 2025: new report details the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) role in sustaining Russia’s war in Ukraine.
  - **Bottom-line**: according to the Council on Foreign Relations, “by first providing ammunition and weapons, then sending thousands of its own troops to fight alongside the Russian military, **North Korea has become essential to fueling Russia’s war machine**” – and in return, “Russia has financed several North Korean military programs and given the country air defense equipment, anti-aircraft missiles, and advanced electronic warfare systems.”
    - References:
      - [Molly Carlough and James Kennedy, How North Korea Has Bolstered Russia’s War in Ukraine \(CFR, Nov. 25, 2025\)](#)
    - Key Points:
      - The DPRK has reportedly provided Russia with ballistic missiles, long-range artillery, and multiple launch rocket systems, as well as millions of rounds of ammunition and artillery shells.
      - In exchange for its assistance, **Russia has financed and armed the DPRK’s military, and is also reportedly supporting the development of the DPRK’s satellite and nuclear programs.**

**North Korea’s Critical Military Aid to Russia**

| Aid provided  | Estimated impact   |
|---|--|
|  <p><b>Troops</b><br/>Soldiers, including from North Korea’s elite special forces unit</p>                     | North Korea has provided <b>14,000 to 15,000 troops</b> as of July 2025, and is readying thousands more. While Russia’s army is far larger, this is a substantial force and North Korean troops were used to retake Russian territory held by Ukraine. |
|  <p><b>Artillery</b><br/>Artillery shells, artillery guns, self-propelled artillery systems, mortar rounds</p> | North Korea has provided an estimated <b>12 million artillery shells</b> as of July 2025, ammunition which is essential to the grinding land war. North Korea is thought to supply around <b>one half</b> of the artillery shells fired by Russia.     |
|  <p><b>Missiles</b><br/>Ballistic missiles and multiple launch rocket systems</p>                              | North Korea has provided <b>120 multiple launch rocket systems</b> as of February 2025, along with ballistic missiles. The effectiveness of its ballistic missiles has improved over the course of their involvement.                                  |

Source: *New York Times*; Yonhap News Agency; Reuters; CFR research



- 20 November 2025: bipartisan **Six Assurances to Taiwan Act** introduced into U.S. Senate.
  - **Bottom-line**: the proposed bill – which is a companion of a bill introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives – would **“reaffirm that maintaining the Six Assurances is in the**

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***national, economic, and security interest of the United States and contributes to peace in the Indo-Pacific.”***

- **References:**
  - [Senator John Curtis Press Release, Curtis and Merkley Work to Codify Taiwan Six Assurances \(Nov. 20, 2025\)](#)
  - [U.S. senators introduce bill to prevent changes to ‘Six Assurances’ \(Focus Taiwan, Nov. 20, 2025\)](#)
- **Key Points:**
  - The proposed bill — [S. 3208](#) — would “codify the Six Assurances to Taiwan, provide congressional review of the Six Assurances, protect Taiwan from coercion, and for other purposes.”
  - The United States has a [longstanding one China policy](#), which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances.
  - **The Six Assurances state:**
    - The U.S. has not agreed to set a date for ending arms sales to Taiwan.
    - The U.S. has not agreed to consult with the PRC on arms sales to Taiwan.
    - The U.S. will not play a mediation role between Taiwan and the PRC.
    - The U.S. has not agreed to revise the Taiwan Relations Act.
    - The U.S. has not altered its position on the issue of Taiwan sovereignty.
    - The U.S. will not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with the PRC.
  - The Six Assurances to Taiwan Act would require Congressional notification and oversight prior to any change to the U.S. policy on arms sales to Taiwan.

**Table 1. The Language of the Six Assurances**

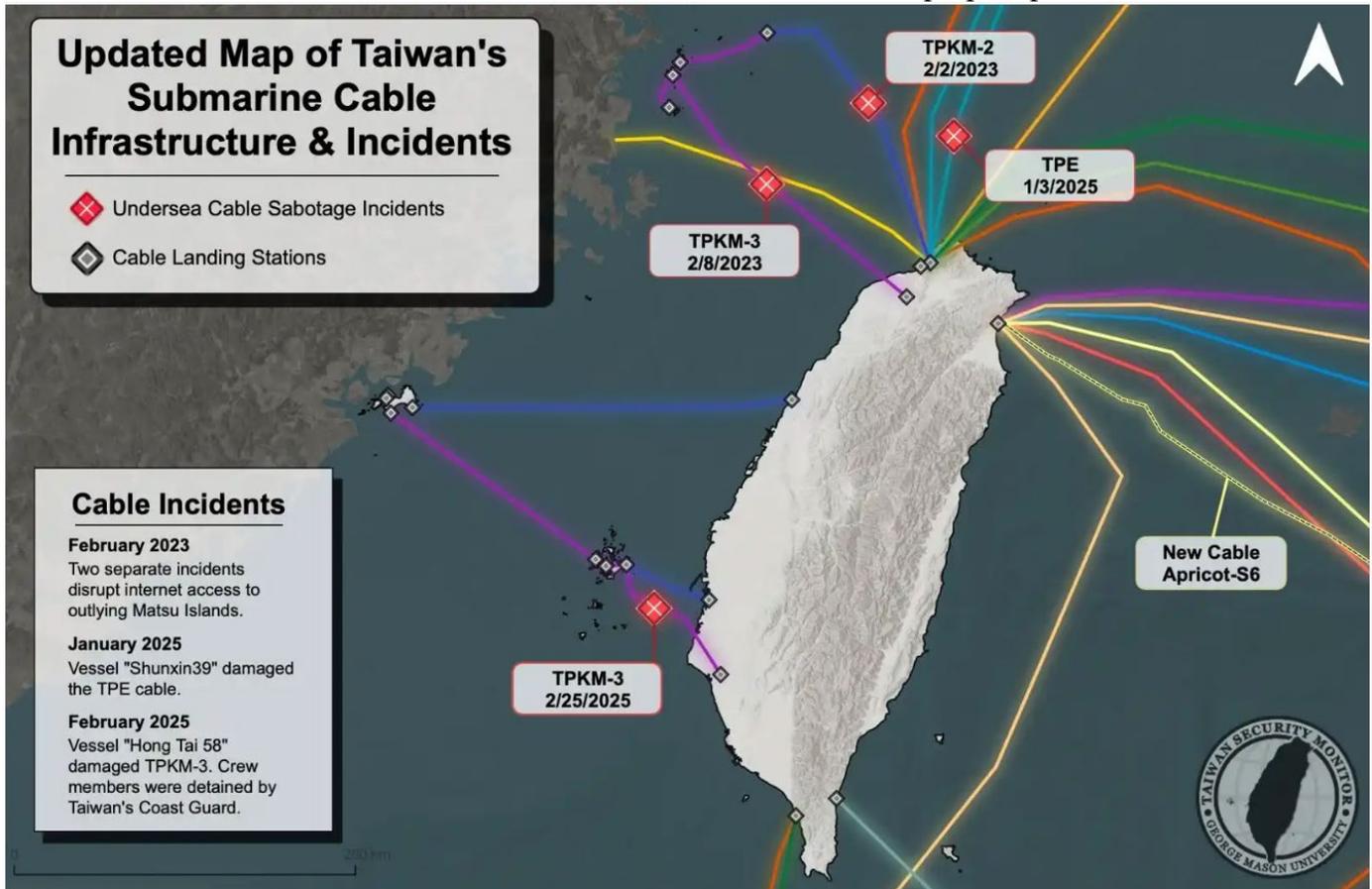
CRS has bolded the verb tenses

| Eagleburger cable: for Taiwan Pres. Chiang (7/10/82)   | Shultz cable: for Taiwan to make public (8/17/1982)   | Holdridge testimony before Senate (8/17/1982)  |
|--|---|--|
| "We <b>have not</b> agreed to set a date certain for ending arms sales to Taiwan."   | The U.S. " <b>has not</b> agreed to set a date for ending arms sales to Taiwan."              | "[W]e <b>did not</b> agree to set a date certain for ending arms sales to Taiwan."   |
| "We <b>have not</b> agreed to prior consultation on arms sales."   | The U.S. " <b>has not</b> agreed to consult with the PRC on arms sales to Taiwan."            | "[The 1982 Joint Communiqué] should not be read to imply that we have agreed to engage in prior consultations with Beijing on arms sales to Taiwan." |
| "We <b>have not</b> agreed to any mediation role for the U.S."   | The U.S. " <b>will not</b> play any mediation role between Taipei and Beijing."               | "[W]e <b>see no</b> mediation role for the United States."   |
| "We <b>have not</b> agreed to revise the Taiwan Relations Act."  | The U.S. " <b>has not</b> agreed to revise the Taiwan Relations Act."                         | "We <b>have no</b> plans to seek any such revisions [to the TRA]."   |
| "We <b>have not</b> agreed to take any position regarding sovereignty over Taiwan."  | The U.S. " <b>has not</b> altered its position regarding sovereignty over Taiwan."            | "[T]here <b>has been no</b> change in our longstanding position on the issue of sovereignty over Taiwan."  |
| "The PRC has at no time urged us to put pressure on Taiwan to negotiate with the PRC; however, we can assure you that we <b>will never</b> do so." | The U.S. " <b>will not</b> exert pressure on Taiwan to enter into negotiations with the PRC." | "[N]or <b>will we</b> attempt to exert pressure on Taiwan to enter into negotiations with the PRC."  |

**Source:** "Declassified Cables," American Institute in Taiwan; U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *U.S. Policy Toward China and Taiwan*, 97<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., August 17, 1982.

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- 24 November 2025: bipartisan “**Strategic Subsea Cables Act of 2025**” introduced into U.S. Senate.
  - **Bottom-line:** the proposed bill would “enhance the U.S. government’s international engagement as it relates to the security, installation and maintenance and repair of subsea fiber-optic cables.”
    - References:
      - [Ranking Member Shaheen, Senator Barrasso Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Boost U.S. Government Coordination and International Engagement on Subsea Cables \(U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Nov. 24, 2025\)](#)
    - Key Points:
      - [The bill](#) expresses the sense of Congress that “the United States should lead efforts to promote the deployment of resilient subsea fiber-optic cable networks, enhance situational awareness, strengthen preparedness, and **formalize collective responses among allies and partners through enhanced information sharing and coordination.**”
      - The bill calls for:
        - increased collaborative efforts with U.S. allies and partners to address the security, maintenance and repair of subsea fiber-optic cables;
        - increased engagement in international bodies such as the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) to advance U.S. interests;
        - **imposition of sanctions against foreign individuals who have intentionally damaged subsea fiber-optic cables;**
        - creation of a federal strategy to work with industry partners, streamline permitting, and prepare for malicious threats; and
        - improved communication with private subsea cable operators and owners to enhance their situational awareness and prepare protective measures.



Taiwan's undersea cable network and recent incidents of damage. (Taiwan Security Monitor image)