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# USINDOPACOM Legal Vigilance Update

## Issue #57, 12 December 2025

Teammates,

Below please find the 57<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:

**“There is, rightly, much focus on Taiwan, partly because of Taiwan’s dominance of semiconductor production, but mostly because Taiwan provides direct access to the Second Island Chain and splits Northeast and Southeast Asia into two distinct theaters. Given that one-third of global shipping passes annually through the South China Sea, this has major implications for the U.S. economy. Hence deterring a conflict over Taiwan, ideally by preserving military overmatch, is a priority. We will also maintain our longstanding declaratory policy on Taiwan, meaning that the United States does not support any unilateral change to the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.”**

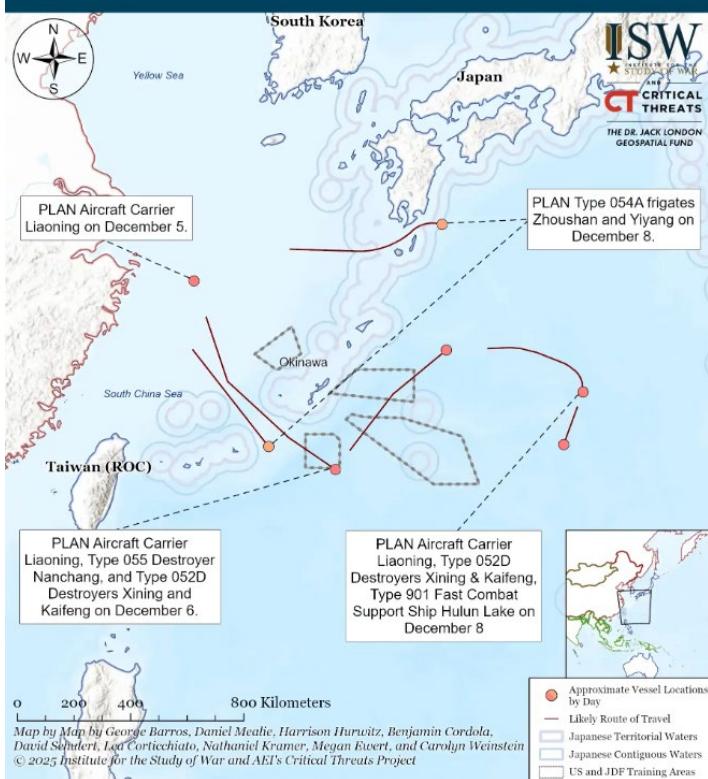
[National Security Strategy of the United States of America](#)

November 2025

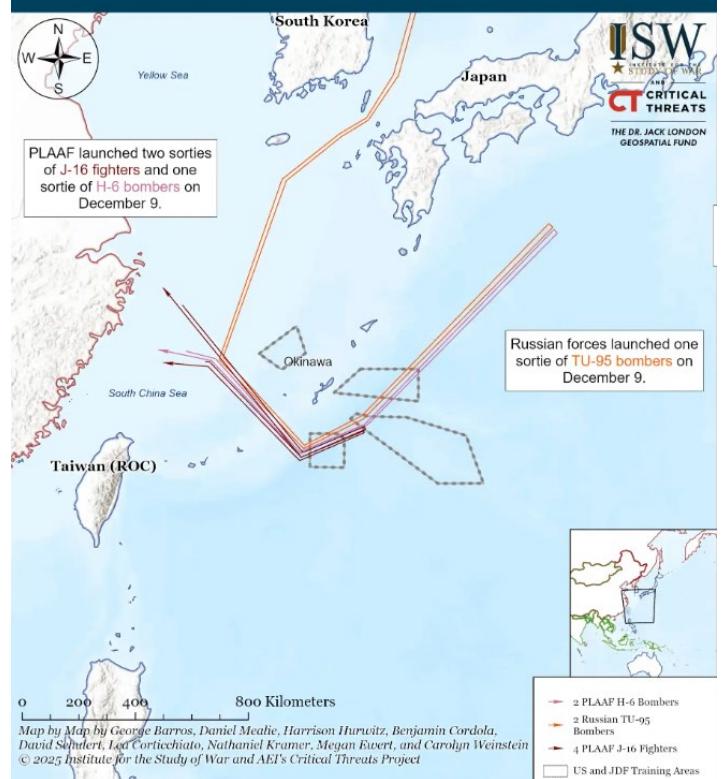
- 6 December 2025: Japan and U.S. denounce **China’s People Liberation Army (PLA) destabilizing use of aircraft radar directed at Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) aircraft**.
  - **Bottom-line:** according to Japan’s Ministry of Defense, on 6 December PLA military aircraft intermittently illuminated JASDF fighter aircraft with radar for approximately 30 minutes while operating in the vicinity of Japan’s island chain — actions that both Japan and the U.S. described as **“not conducive to regional peace and stability.”**
    - **References:**
      - [U.S. backs Japan in dispute with China over radar incident \(Reuters, Dec. 10, 2025\)](#)
      - [Japan Ministry of Defense Statement on the Radar Incident against Japan Air Self-Defense Force Aircraft by Chinese Military Aircraft on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> \(Dec. 10, 2025\)](#)
      - [Seong Hyeon Choi, Japan, US defence chiefs cover radar row and other China tensions in phone call \(South China Morning Post, Dec. 12, 2025\)](#)
    - **Key Points:**
      - The PLA aircraft’s actions coincided with a period of heightened PLA activity in the vicinity of Japan — including PLA Navy aircraft carrier operations near Okinawa (5-9 December) and PLA Air Force and Russian bomber flights (9 December).
      - Japan’s Ministry of Defense stated that it “takes pride in the JASDF pilots who calmly carried out their mission under an extremely tense situation in which they were subjected to prolonged radar illumination,” noting that “JSDF will continue to demonstrate such professionalism and respond in a calm and resolute manner.”
      - According to Japan’s Ministry of Defense, on 12 December Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth “exchanged candid views on the increasingly severe security situation in the Indo-Pacific region, including the radar incident,” with the leaders **“express[ing] serious concern over any actions to increase regional tensions, as China’s actions are not conducive to regional peace and stability, and concurred to closely communicate and collaborate with each other.”**

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**PLAN Carrier and Escorts near Okinawa December 5 to 9, 2025**



**PLAAF and Russian Air Activity Near Japan and Okinawa on December 9, 2025**



- 9 December 2025: new article highlights China's manipulation of facts regarding Taiwan.
  - **Bottom-line:** quoting Winston Churchill, renowned **China expert Miles Yu outlines “the simplistic and false notion long embedded in Beijing’s propaganda that Taiwan [is] somehow a domestic matter for communist China,” insisting “instead that Taiwan’s status [is], by legal fact and geopolitical reality, an international issue.”**
    - **References:**
      - [Miles Yu, Taiwan’s Future Is Not China’s Internal Affair; It Is the World’s \(Hudson Institute, Dec. 9, 2025\)](#)
    - **Key Points:**
      - Miles Yu (Fellow and Director of the China Center at Hudson Institute) writes: **“China’s claim that Taiwan is a purely internal affair rings with the same hollow logic invoked by aggressors throughout history. North Korea once claimed legitimacy over South Korea, Nazi Germany declared sovereignty over the Sudetenland, and Russia today asserts the right to “reclaim” Ukraine. Cloaking expansionism in the language of “internal affairs,” historical destiny or ethnic kinship does not make it legitimate. It merely reveals the timeless grammar of aggression, a playbook the Chinese Communist Party has studied well.”**
      - Yu observes that “Beijing’s insistence that [Taiwan] is a ‘domestic issue’ is not a statement of sovereignty but a strategy of aggression,” imploring that “the world must not mistake the CCP’s language of national reunification for the logic of conquest.”
- 9 December 2025: new CSIS report details **China’s “creeping sovereignty” tactics in Yellow Sea.**
  - **Bottom-line:** a new report by CSIS documents the approximate locations of China’s maritime structures in the Provisional Measures Zone (PMZ) in the Yellow Sea (West Sea) — noting that

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“these ‘civilian’ installations for potential dual use purposes, and China’s harassment of South Korean vessels, resemble ‘creeping sovereignty’ grey zone tactics in the Yellow Sea that Beijing employed in the militarization of the South and East China Seas.”

- References:
  - [Victor Cha, Creeping Sovereignty? China’s Maritime Structures in the Yellow Sea \(West Sea\) \(Beyond Parallel, A Product of the CSIS Korea Chair, Dec. 9, 2025\)](#)
- Key Points:
  - The PMZ was established by South Korea and China through a bilateral agreement signed in 2001 to temporarily manage their overlapping EEZ claims in the Yellow Sea—the PMZ allows fishing activities from both sides, but does not authorize other actions such as installation of fixed structures.
  - Despite this agreement, since 2018, China has unilaterally deployed 13 buoys in and around the PMZ in the Yellow Sea, and has also constructed two aquaculture cages (ostensibly to breed fish) and an integrated management platform in the PMZ — all without prior consultation with South Korea.
  - According to CSIS, China “repeatedly rejected South Korean requests to relocate the structures outside of the PMZ, but it has also unilaterally declared ‘no-sail’ zones within the PMZ.”
  - As CSIS previously reported: ***[w]hile available information suggests that the platforms are genuinely focused on aquaculture, concerns that the platforms may be dual-use are not unfounded, given China’s track record in the South China Sea, where what were originally weather stations later developed into major military outposts. Even without further expansion, the platforms are likely already collecting data that could have value for undersea navigation and detection.***



CHINA’S STRUCTURES IN THE YELLOW SEA (WEST SEA)

1 China Marine Observation Buoy QF 107 Date: 2/22/2018	2 China Marine Surveillance Buoy QF 110 Date: 2/14/2018	3 China Marine Observation Buoy QF 103 Date: 3/14/2020	4 China Marine Observation Buoy QF 218 Date: 2/21/2018
5 China Marine Observation Buoy QF 112 Date: 2/23/2018	6 Carbon Dioxide Flow Monitoring Buoy Date: 7/28/2019	7 China Marine Observation Buoy QF 214 Date: 3/26/2018	8 China Marine Monitoring Buoy QF 209 Date: 6/1/2018
9 China Marine Observation Buoy QF 205 Date: 7/8/2018	10 China Maritime Surveillance Buoy QF 219 Date: 4/15/2020	11 China Marine Observation Buoy Date: 5/20/2023	12 China Marine Observation Buoy Date: 5/20/2023
13 China Marine Observation Buoy QF 222 Date: 5/20/2023	14 Atlantic Amsterdam (MMSI: 636021201) Date: 4/27/2025	15 Shen Lan 1 (MMSI: 412563263) Date: 4/27/2025	16 Shen Lan 2 (MMSI: 412230903) Date: 4/27/2025

Note: The locations for buoys 1-13 were collected between 2018 to 2023

Sources: CSIS Beyond Parallel and South Korea’s Navy Headquarters Report submitted to the South Korean National Assembly, shared with the press

Note: Dates denote the time of South Korean Navy observation

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- 10 December 2025: U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China releases annual report for 2025.
  - **Bottom-line:** in its annual report for 2025, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China concluded that ***China “routinely enters into treaties, conventions, and international agreements but then fails to fulfill those obligations in practice”*** — noting that “[d]espite being a State Party [to UNCLOS] for nearly three decades, the PRC’s aggressive assertion of an extralegal ‘nine-dash line’ over much of what traditionally has been known as the ‘South China Sea’ as its exclusive maritime domain violates numerous provisions of the UNCLOS treaty it ratified.”
    - References:
      - [U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Annual Report 2025 \(Dec. 2025\)](#)
    - Key Points:
      - In the report, the Commission’s co-Chairs write:  
*“Promises made, promises broken: the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—in reality, a party state run by and for the benefit of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)—makes solemn commitments, then governs as if those commitments are optional. The gap between promise and practice runs through the Congressional-Executive Commission on China’s evaluation of the PRC’s record on such issues as religious freedom, labor rights, Hong Kong, free expression, and adherence to international law and treaties. Broken promises are not an exception; they are a feature of how the CCP deals with the world and with its own people.”*
      - The Congressional-Executive Commission on China was established by the U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000, (Public Law No. 106-286, §§301-309) to monitor human rights and the development of the rule of law in China and to submit an annual report to the President and Congress.
- 9 December 2025: U.S. Coast Guard executes largest at-sea drug interdiction since March 2007.
  - **Bottom-line:** the U.S. Coast Guard seized more than 150,000 pounds of cocaine in the Eastern Pacific Ocean since launching Operation Pacific Viper in early August — including ***over 20,000 pounds of cocaine seized in a single interdiction in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard’s largest at-sea drug interdiction since March 2007.***
    - References:
      - [Coast Guard seizes 150,000 pounds of cocaine through Operation Pacific Viper, interdicts drug smuggling vessel loaded with over 20,000 pounds of cocaine \(U.S. Coast Guard Press Release, Dec. 9, 2025\)](#)
    - Key Points:
      - Through Operation Pacific Viper, the U.S. Coast Guard has been accelerating counter-drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.
      - These operations deny smugglers from using Eastern Pacific maritime routes to transport illicit narcotics from South and Central America to the United States.
      - The Coast Guard is the United States’ lead federal agency for maritime drug interdiction.

