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USINDOPACOM Legal Vigilance Update

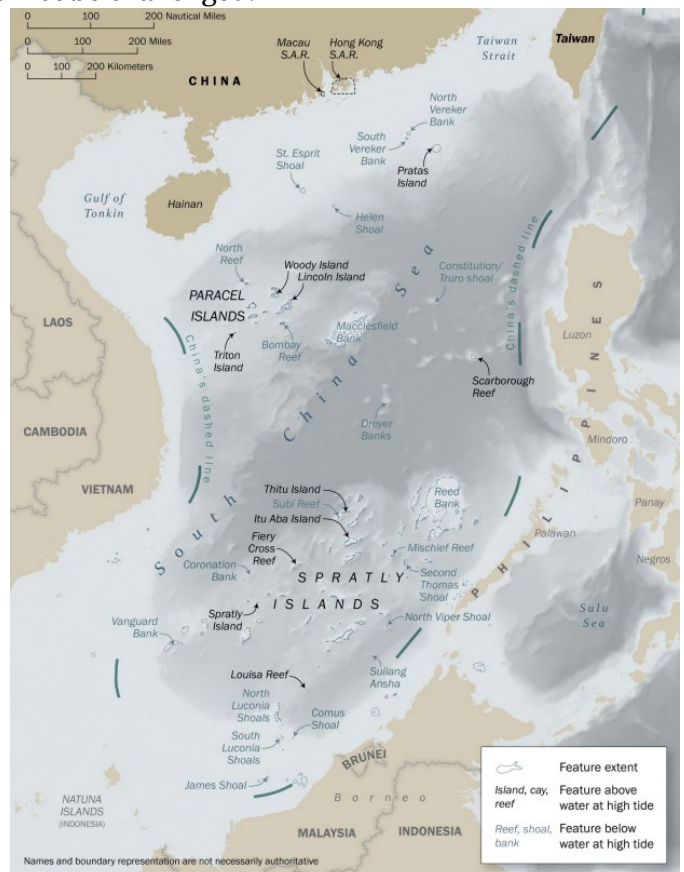
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PREVAIL

Teammates,

Below please find the 32nd 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/>.

- **12 May 2025:** China releases new National Security White Paper.
 - **Bottom-line:** the State Council of the People's Republic of China issued a national security white paper reasserting common coercive and legally baseless CCP claims to Taiwan and the South China Sea.
 - **References:**
 - [*China's National Security in the New Era* \(State Council Information Office, May 12, 2025\)](#)
 - [*Andrew S. Erickson, New White Paper: "China's National Security in the New Era" \(May 12, 2025\)*](#)
 - [*Nadege Rolland and Bates Gill, An Analysis of China's White Paper on National Security in the New Era* \(National Bureau of Asian Research, May 16, 2025\)](#)
 - **Key points:**
 - In discussing U.S.-China relations, the White Paper declares that the CCP's "four red lines of the Taiwan issue, democracy and human rights, the road system and the right to development cannot be challenged."
 - In the maritime domain, China's White Paper baselessly asserts "indisputable sovereignty" over the Spratly Islands and farcically portrays its militarized construction on South China Sea features as beneficial for navigation.
 - Contrary to CCP assertions, UNGAR 2758 did not support China's claim of territorial sovereignty over Taiwan.
 - The White Paper reasserts common CCP misrepresentations and coercive threats regarding Taiwan, signals continued CCP meddling in domestic Taiwan affairs, and renews threats to use force to unify with Taiwan.



Map 1. Overview map of the South China Sea with key features labeled.

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- Specifically, the CCP White Paper states:
 - *“The legal effect of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 is unquestionable. Taiwan is a province of China and has no basis, reason or right to participate in the United Nations and other international organizations that only sovereign states can participate in. We will firmly oppose ‘Taiwan independence’ secession and external interference, crack down on ‘Taiwan independence’ diehards in accordance with the law, and effectively deter ‘Taiwan independence’ secessionist forces.”*
 - *“China has always strived for peaceful reunification with the utmost sincerity and made its utmost efforts, but it will never promise to give up the use of force and reserve the option of taking all necessary measures.”*
 - The U.S. continues to have an [abiding interest in peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait](#) and expects cross-Strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means, free from coercion, in a manner acceptable to the people on both sides of the Strait.
 - The U.S. will continue to support Taiwan’s meaningful participation in international organizations, including membership where applicable.
 - The 2016 Arbitral Tribunal [firmly rejected](#) China’s baseless dashed-line claim to the South China Sea.
- 13 May 2025: new Wall Street Journal video story details China’s amphibious “invasion platforms.”
 - **Bottom-line:** Beijing’s new ships can land on beaches and link to form massive mobile piers, with analysts assessing that they are intended to rapidly offload military equipment and possibly designed for a D-Day-style invasion of Taiwan.
 - References:
 - [Wall Street Journal, Why China’s Amphibious ‘Invasion Platforms’ Are Troubling Sign for Taiwan \(May 13, 2025\)](#)
 - Key points:
 - In a video story, the Wall Street Journal provides detailed imagery and analysis of new PLA barges which link to form a bridge and potentially give China a way to land large numbers of vehicles and troops on Taiwan.
 - Relatedly, in a [new Foreign Affairs article](#), experts from CSIS and Brookings detail how the pace of China’s military activities (as well as its rhetoric regarding Taiwan) are increasing.
 - Bonny Lin (CSIS), John Culver (Brookings), and Brian Hart (CSIS) write:
 - In a significant shift, the PLA is now using such large-scale military exercises to punish Lai’s administration for domestic political acts. All of China’s past major exercises—in 1995–96, 2022, and 2023—were launched after Taiwan’s leaders traveled to the United States or met with senior U.S. officials. Last December, China did engage in a major—but unnamed—drill after Lai made stops in Hawaii and Guam on a tour of the Pacific. But all three recent large-scale exercises responded to domestic speeches or statements by Lai.



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- These military activities have become markedly more provocative, unpredictable, and complex. In April's exercise, named Strait Thunder-2025A, PLA naval vessels reportedly ventured within 24 nautical miles of the island's shores. China is engaging in large-scale operations around Taiwan year round and increasing activities to the east of Taiwan. In a break with the past, the PLA now provides little or no advance warning of its drills. This has raised concerns in Washington and Taipei about how much lead time the United States and Taiwan might have should China decide to use force to seize the island.
- In another shift from earlier years, recent rounds of exercises have witnessed China's coast guard joining with the navy to practice blockading Taiwan. China's maritime militia, a state-backed network of civilian vessels often deployed to assert Chinese territorial claims, has also become increasingly involved. The participation of these new actors suggests that China is preparing to conduct a broad variety of operations, such as an invasion, a PLA navy-led blockade, and a Chinese coast guard-led quarantine of Taiwan.
- 14 May 2025: India rejects China's unilateral attempt to rename places in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.
 - **Bottom-line:** India forcefully rejected China's latest toponymic campaign in which China unilaterally renamed 27 locations within the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, an area that the United States recognizes as Indian territory.
 - References:
 - [Xinyu Liang, China reasserts India border claims with list of 'standard' place names \(South China Morning Post, May 15, 2025\)](#)
 - [India rejects China's latest renaming of places in Arunachal border state \(Reuters, May 13, 2025\)](#)
 - Key points:
 - On May 13, China's Ministry of Civil Affairs released a list of 27 newly "standardized" names in Indian-controlled Arunachal Pradesh.
 - India dismissed the move as "vain and preposterous," noting that "Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India."
 - Beijing has attempted to impose new names in Indian-administered territory five times since 2015.
 - In March 2024, [the U.S. Department of State stated](#) that "[t]he United States recognizes Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory and we strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control."
 - China's renaming effort is a calculated maneuver to normalize excessive and legally baseless territorial claims through repetition and erode other states' sovereignty through symbolism.
- 13 May 2025: PORCUPINE Act introduced in U.S. Senate to streamline U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.
 - **Bottom-line:** a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators has introduced the PORCUPINE Act, a legislative proposal that would accelerate arms transfers to Taiwan by treating it as a NATO Plus country under the Arms Export Control Act (AECA).
 - References:
 - [US senators back bill to aid Taiwan weapons sales \(Taipei Times, May 16, 2025\)](#)
 - Key points:
 - On May 13, Senators Pete Ricketts and Chris Coons introduced the [Providing Our Regional Companions Upgraded Protections in Nefarious Environments \(PORCUPINE\) Act](#), aimed at modernizing U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan.

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- The bill would put Taiwan in the NATO-Plus category for shorter formal Congressional notification times and higher weapons value thresholds, alongside Japan, Australia, South Korea, New Zealand, and Israel.
 - Under the Arms Export Control Act, the standard formal congressional notification period for arms sales is 30 days. For NATO Plus countries, the period is reduced to 15 days.
 - The bill would also require the U.S. Secretary of State to establish an expedited decision-making process for blanket third party transfers of defense articles and services from NATO and NATO-Plus member countries to Taiwan, including transfers and re-transfers of U.S. origin grant, foreign military sales, and Direct Commercial Sales end-items not covered by an exemption under the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).
 - The legislative push follows an April 2025 bipartisan Senate delegation visit to Taiwan, where Senators Ricketts, Coons, and Budd discussed arms sales delays with Taiwan President William Lai.
- 14 May 2025: Germany and the Philippines sign defense cooperation agreement.
 - **Bottom-line:** Germany and the Philippines have formalized a new defense cooperation agreement covering cybersecurity, defense logistics, arms cooperation, and peacekeeping, a first between Berlin and Manila.
 - References:
 - [Germany, Philippines sign defense agreement \(Reuters, May 14, 2025\)](#)
 - Key points:
 - On May 15 in Berlin, Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius signed an arrangement concerning defense cooperation.
 - The agreement follows Pistorius's August 2024 visit to Manila and adds Germany to a growing list of Philippine defense partners, including [New Zealand](#) and Japan.
 - The Philippines remains in talks with Canada and France regarding further defense cooperation.
 - Pistorius reaffirmed Germany's recognition of the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling which held that China's dashed-line claim in the South China Sea has no legal basis.
 - In analyzing the Philippines-New Zealand agreement, [the Lowy Institute observed](#): "the Philippines has relied on defense cooperation to enhance capabilities, demonstrate resolve, and serve as force multipliers to deter Chinese threats. China routinely condemns what it calls 'bloc politics along ideological lines and ganging up to form anti-China cliques,' but Beijing's continued threats only strengthen other countries' resolve."



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- 14 May 2025: Japan to recognize Taiwan as place of origin in family registration system.
 - **Bottom-line:** starting May 26, individuals from Taiwan will be allowed to list "Taiwan," rather than "China," as their place of origin in Japan's family registration system.
 - References:
 - [The Japan Times, Japan to recognize Taiwan as place of origin in family registration system \(May 14, 2025\)](#)
 - Key points:
 - Until now, Japan has required individuals from Taiwan acquiring Japanese nationality or marrying Japanese citizens to list "China" in the nationality field of their family registers.
 - The change comes under a revised Justice Ministry ordinance, which updates the nationality field in the family register to a country or region of origin field, allowing for greater flexibility in self-identification.
 - China has protested the revision.
 - As of the end of June 2024, Japan was home to more than 67,000 residents of Taiwanese ancestry.
- 12 May 2025: Taiwan legislators propose tougher penalties to counter China's United Front infiltration.
 - **Bottom-line:** Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) proposed sweeping amendments to Taiwan's National Security Act to expand criminal liability for individuals and organizations supporting China-directed United Front activities.
 - References:
 - [Lee Wen-Hsin and Sam Garcia, Amendments target China Collusion \(Taipei Times, May 12, 2025\)](#)
 - [Chen Yu-fu, Controversial Chinese temple group leaves \(Taipei Times, May 14, 2024\)](#)
 - Key points:
 - The proposed amendments would expand the scope of Taiwan's National Security Act, Anti-Infiltration Act, and National Intelligence Services to target indirect forms of China-directed political interference.
 - The proposed revisions would penalize individuals who "pass or receive instruction, commissions, or funding" from hostile actors.
 - Another amendment would strip retirement benefits from public officials who violate the act and increase penalties by up to 50 percent for public servants who develop organizations on behalf of hostile foreign forces, including those from China, Hong Kong, and Macau.
 - The legal reforms reflect Taiwan's growing resolve to proactively deter and punish CCP influence operations and reinforce domestic resilience through expanded counterintelligence authorities.
- 14 May 2025: Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te urges "non-red" supply chain to counter China.
 - **Bottom-line:** Taiwan President Lai Ching-te uses first foreign media interview of 2025 to advocate for a greater alignment between Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and the U.S. to create a "non-red" semiconductor supply chain.
 - References:
 - [Hollie Younger, Region needs Japan's leadership: Lai \(Taipei Times, May 14, 2025\)](#)
 - Key points:
 - In remarks to Nikkei Asia, Lai directly addressed ongoing CCP gray zone activity and advocated for Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and U.S. to unify to face China's military intimidation head on.
 - Lai praised Japanese technological and democratic strength, calling on Tokyo to assume a leading Indo-Pacific role.

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- Outlining Taiwan's plan to create an independent semiconductor ecosystem independent of China, Lai pointed out the comparative advantages that each of the democracies bring to the table.
- Lai described China as the "biggest crisis" to the global free trade system due to plagiarism, dumping, and intellectual property theft.
- Lai said he has introduced 17 strategies to address [five major threats from China](#), namely:
 - China's threat to national sovereignty
 - Efforts to confuse Taiwanese national identity
 - Recruitment of Taiwanese military officers for spying
 - Infiltration through exchanges and united front influence efforts
 - Beijing's economic "integration plan" targeting Taiwanese youth and businesses.
- 14 May 2025: U.S. sanctions China and Iran-based actors supporting Iran's ballistic missile program.
 - **Bottom-line:** the U.S. has imposed sanctions on China and Hong Kong-based entities and individuals for materially supporting Iran's ballistic missile program.
 - References:
 - [Tammy Bruce, *Imposing Sanctions on China-and Iran-based Entities and Individuals that Support Iran's Ballistic Missile Program* \(Department of State, May 14, 2025\)](#)
 - Key points:
 - The sanctioned individuals and entities provided advanced carbon fiber materials, precursors, and manufacturing to subcomponents of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which are essential developers in Iran's ballistic missile program.
 - The sanctions follow E.O. 13382, which targets WMD proliferators and their supporters by freezing assets and prohibiting U.S. persons from engaging in transactions with designated parties.
 - The actions come as a part of the "maximum pressure" campaign designed to degrade the IRGC's operational capabilities and its procurement network.
- 16 May 2025: China and Russia expand global influence through state media, narrative laundering.
 - **Bottom-line:** China and Russia are aggressively expanding their global media footprints through state-run news services, journalist training programs, and influence operations that embed pro-regime narratives in foreign outlets.
 - References:
 - [China and Russia are deploying powerful new weapons: ideas \(The Economist, May 15, 2025\)](#)
 - Key points:
 - A press training program in Mali run by Moscow's "Africa Initiative" has been revealed to be a Russian intelligence front, which exemplifies how Moscow builds influence under the guise of journalism.
 - In parallel, China's Xinhua and China Global Television Network (CGTN) have rapidly scaled global operations, with Xinhua expanding its number of Africa bureaus to a total of 37 in 2024. CGTN has become the most followed news outlet on Facebook, ahead of CNN and the New York Times.
 - Russia's Sputnik and RT have launched new Africa-facing platforms and partnered with Iran's HispanTV and Venezuela's Telesur to blur the lines between journalism and propaganda.
 - Moscow and Beijing increasingly bypass direct state-branded news by inserting stories into local outlets or using regional influencers and TikTok personalities to reshape public discourse to fit their coercive and manipulative narratives.