

Weekly Dispatch

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SYLLOGE ON CHINA

Focus: Nuclear, Space, Missiles and other Security Issues

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रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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PLA sends supplies to help militaries in 12 countries combat COVID-19

China Military Online, May 14, 2020

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Tuesday and Wednesday sent COVID-19 prevention and control supplies, including protective gowns and face masks, at the request of military forces from 12 different countries. The countries are Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The PLA vowed to strengthen international cooperation with the defense authorities and militaries of other countries to fight COVID-19.

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-05/14/content_9813231.htm

US Navy warship transits Taiwan Strait as PLA starts live-fire drills

Lawrence Chung

South China Morning Post, May 14, 2020

The United States sent a warship through the Taiwan Strait on Thursday as the Chinese military embarked on more than two months of live-fire naval drills off the mainland's northern coast. The passage by the USS McCampbell was the sixth through the strait by a US Navy vessel this year and comes a week before Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party, is expected to be sworn in for a second term in office.

According to Taiwan's defence ministry, the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer transited the narrow body of water separating Taiwan from mainland China from north to south "in a routine mission". "It is continuing its southward voyage and the military is monitoring its movement through the intelligence it has gathered," the ministry said. In a statement on its Facebook page, the US Pacific Fleet said the McCampbell transited the Taiwan Strait as part of ongoing operations in the Indo-Pacific. Analysts said the passage was a response to the People's Liberation Army's increasing military activity near Taiwan and in the wider region.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3084401/us-navy-warship-transits-taiwan-strait-pla-starts-live-fire>

Probe into former aircraft carrier program commander unlikely to impact China's naval devt

Liu Xuanzun and Yang Sheng

Global Times, May 13, 2020

Hu Wenming, former chairman of China's shipbuilding conglomerate and former chief commander of China's aircraft carrier program, is being investigated for suspected serious

violations of discipline and law, China's top anti-graft agency said Tuesday. Chinese military observers said on Wednesday Hu's case will unlikely impact China's naval development programs despite his significant role in the arms industry.

Hu, former Party chief and chairman of the China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC), is being investigated by the Communist Party of China Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission, according to a statement the commission released on its website on Tuesday.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1188196.shtml>

China reveals large destroyer's replenishment training for 1st time

Liu Xuanzun

Global Times, May 12, 2020

The Nanchang, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy's first Type 055 large destroyer, recently completed its first known maritime replenishment training, an operation that military experts said is crucial for the newly commissioned warship's combat capability. China's most advanced destroyer is soon expected to be put into action and accompany aircraft carriers in far sea operations, experts predicted. The supply ship Taihu and Nanchang recently conducted replenishment training, the PLA Navy announced on its Sina Weibo account on Monday. The post also came with a video of the operation.

This is the first time a maritime replenishment training by the 10,000 ton-class Nanchang has been publicly revealed, the PLA Navy said. Beijing-based naval expert Li Jie told the Global Times on Tuesday that "The Nanchang is China's largest destroyer, and its significance, to some extent, is no less than an aircraft carrier." The replenishment training is an important part of its combat capability generation program, and since it is expected to conduct missions of an extended time period in the far sea and accompany aircraft carriers or lead independent naval task groups, it needs to be capable of conducting replenishment operations through supply ships, Li said.

According to the PLA Navy, the Type 055 has a displacement of more than 12,000 tons. It has 112 vertical launch missile cells capable of firing a combination of surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles, anti-submarine missiles and land-attack missiles, making it one of the most powerful destroyers in the world, analysts said. In addition to the Nanchang, China has launched at least five more Type 055 destroyers in the Dalian Shipyard, Northeast China's Liaoning Province, and Jiangnan Shipyard in Shanghai. Two more are reportedly under construction, military observers said.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1188157.shtml>

China fires its latest underwater nuclear missile into spotlight with science prize

Liu Zhen

South China Morning Post, May 12 , 2020

Researchers involved in the development of China's most advanced submarine-launched nuclear missile, the JL-3, have been recognised in one of the country's top science awards.

The team that worked on the "underwater-launched large solid-fuel carrier rocket", or SLBM, is among the 10 nominated to receive a National Award for Excellence in Innovation. China has not officially confirmed it is developing the JL-3 – or Big Wave – missile, but the Chinese navy has tested it, as reported by the South China Morning Post. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force is developing its third-generation SLBM JL-3, with a range of over 12,000km (7,450 miles), far enough to hit the United States if the missile was launched from the Chinese coast. China conducted a few test flights in 2018 and 2019.

Chinese military observers have said the missile tests were in response to US President Donald Trump's targeting of China in his deterrence strategy. This missile's predecessor, JL-2, which had a range of 7,400km, was deployed on Type 094A nuclear submarines for operational patrol in 2015, signalling that China finally had a credible sea-based nuclear capability. The new intercontinental-range solid-fuel JL-3 is estimated to be fully integrated with the next-generation submarine Type 096 in 2025.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3084063/china-fires-its-latest-underwater-nuclear-missile-spotlight>

An elaboration of my advocacy for why China needs more nuclear deterrence

Hu Xijin

Global Times, May 12, 2020

First, to advocate that China increase the number of nuclear weapons is itself anti-peace. Some people holding this view are idealistic and have a complete aversion to nuclear weapons. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that others, whose positions and feelings are not in line with China's national security interests, will stand against it. In addition, some people say that the money for building nuclear weapons should be used to improve people's livelihood and alleviate poverty. I think it's difficult to talk to them. Just let them vent their emotion. Second, the number of nuclear weapons China needs to keep must be strictly calculated. My advocacy is not based on professional knowledge. I am not an expert in this area. But it is too narrow to think that only arms control experts can talk about nuclear weapons. The game between China and the US is a matter between two big societies. Nuclear deterrence should shape not only the attitude of the

other side's military, but also the psychology of the other side's political, economic and opinion circles, and the national will of the other side as a whole. I am no less knowledgeable about the will of the state than an arms control expert. I mean, obviously, I have a right to participate in this discussion.

Third, China's nuclear deterrent is an ambiguous strategy and I should not spell out how many nuclear weapons China needs. In fact, over 1,000 nuclear warheads and at least 100 DF-41 ICBMs that I mentioned are not exact number, but the concept of magnitude. There are both people who agree and disagree with me, and China's ambiguous strategy of nuclear deterrence has not become "clear" because of my post. China is already defined by the US as a major strategic competitor. If the US continues to believe with certainty that China has only a few hundred nuclear warheads, it will be dangerous for China. China does not need to engage in an arms race with the US, but as Washington's strategic will to crush Beijing grows, so must our nuclear deterrence. Whatever calculation model is used to figure out how many nuclear warheads China needs, this common-sense logic needs to be the basis of all of them.

Fourth, even if China wants to expand its nuclear arsenal, it should just do it and say nothing. China should not make a big noise about it, and I agree. China could quietly increase nuclear warheads in certain phases, but I objected doing that for a long time. Nuclear weapons are for deterrence. If they're completely concealed, what do you need them for? At the Tiananmen military parade, the strategic missile part is the one that attracts the most attention every time, and that is what it shows to the outside world. Finally, I would like to say that my gut feeling is that China will increase its nuclear warheads, and I believe this is also the gut feeling of many people. Because China actually has no choice.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1188101.shtml>

China 'won't win more respect' if it expands nuclear arsenal following calls from national media, analyst says

Liu Zhen

South China Morning Post, May 11, 2020

Calls for Beijing to expand its nuclear arsenal reflect its rocky relations with Washington, and any reckless moves could damage the nation's credibility, according to an analyst. Ties between the two countries have deteriorated sharply since Washington labelled Beijing a strategic rival in 2017, and belligerent opinion leaders in China have called for the People's Liberation Army to add to its stockpile of nuclear warheads to deter an "increasingly irrational" United States.

The latest call came on Friday, when Hu Xijin, editor-in-chief of nationalistic tabloid Global Times, posted on social media that China should increase its nuclear warheads to 1,000, including “at least 100 DF-41” intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach the US mainland. They are the PLA’s most powerful land-based ICBMs and 16 of them featured in a huge National Day military parade in Beijing in October – each able to carry up to 10 nuclear warheads. The Chinese navy has also tested submarine-launched JL-3 ballistic missiles, while its new generation strategic bomber, the H-20, is expected to be ready for delivery this year – giving China the nuclear triad of submarines, ballistic missiles and bombers. Hu’s post received wide support on social media network Weibo, China’s Twitter. China is one of five recognised nuclear powers under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Its nuclear arsenal is believed to be comparable to those of Britain and France, with about 200 to 300 warheads. According to Zhao Tong, a senior fellow in the nuclear policy programme at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Centre for Global Policy in Beijing, the argument made by Hu and others for more warheads was not convincing. He said rising tensions with the US did not justify stockpiling more nuclear weapons, and that the country’s strategy was based on a doomsday scenario. Although China never talks about its tactics, we all know that the PLA does have shorter range nuclear-capable missiles

Zhao Tong, senior fellow at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Centre for Global Policy in Beijing

“China’s nuclear capability was not designed for a good relationship – thus a bad relationship [with the US] makes no difference,” Zhao said. “Concerns about national security in a new international environment are understandable, but in fact they are unfounded,” he added.

One argument from the hawkish voices in China is that it could be at a disadvantage in the event of a conflict because its nuclear arms were seen as strategic deterrence, while the US had tactical weapons. But Zhao said the Chinese military would have plans and the capacity to deal with a regional conflict and to manage any escalation. China dismisses US claims it carried out a nuclear test as ‘a distortion of the facts’ “Although China never talks about its tactics, we all know that the PLA does have shorter range nuclear-capable missiles,” Zhao said.

“Beijing may have given the impression that China would retaliate [against any nuclear attack] with a full-on nuclear war, but this is more about showing its determination – which is part of deterrence.” After China detonated its first atomic bomb in 1964, the country declared that it would never use nuclear weapons unless it was being attacked with them.

Chinese navy video shows nuclear sub launching JL-2 ballistic missiles during drill

The government in a defence white paper last year reiterated its commitment to “not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or nuclear-weapon-free zones unconditionally”. It said: “China advocates the ultimate complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. China does not engage in any nuclear arms race with any other country and keeps its nuclear capabilities at the minimum level required for national security.” Zhao said if Beijing expanded its nuclear arsenal as other major powers reduced theirs it may be

accused of breaking its promises and sabotaging international non-proliferation and arms control efforts – and that could seriously harm China’s credibility and national interests. “Building up a large nuclear arsenal might make a country feel more fearsome, but it won’t win more respect,” he said, adding that such a move would not help Beijing’s global leadership ambitions.

“For generations, Chinese leaders have pledged that China would never seek hegemony,” he said. “This will be an indicator of whether China is keeping its word.” Asked about the latest call to add to the stockpile on Friday, foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said it was Hu’s “personal view” and that Beijing’s policy on nuclear arms control was consistent. “China has always followed the principle of ‘no first use’ of nuclear weapons. We pursue a very responsible and restrained policy,” Hua said at a press briefing in Beijing. She did not comment on China’s nuclear warheads, but said the country with the biggest arsenal should “further reduce its stocks drastically”.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3083897/china-wont-win-more-respect-if-it-answers-calls-expand-nuclear>

First homemade airdrop-capable wheeled armored vehicle enters military service

Liu Xuanzun

Global Times, May 10, 2020

A type of newly developed airborne wheeled armored vehicle is commissioned into the Chinese Air Force in May 2020. Photo: Screenshot from China Central Television. China's first batch of homemade airdrop-capable four-wheeled armored vehicles have entered service, which will boost the all-terrain mobilization capacity of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force and provide paratroopers enhanced firepower, mobility and protection. The airborne armored vehicles armed with machine guns have entered service with a combined arms brigade of the PLA Air Force Airborne Troops in Central China's Hubei Province, the PLA Daily reported on Saturday.

Developed by state-owned China North Industries Group Corporation (NORINCO), the light armored vehicles can be airdropped from China's main transport aircraft and boast a high strategic mobilization capability, accurate firepower, a digital system and good comprehensive protection, the report said. "Three of this type of vehicle can be consecutively airdropped from one cargo aircraft," Yang Liang, a PLA Air Force officer, said on China Central Television (CCTV). "It runs fast, shoots accurately, can sail in water, has good armor and can conduct assault and armed reconnaissance missions in plateaus and cold regions." Its commissioning boosted the PLA's all-terrain combat capability, Yang said.

Once on the ground, the paratroopers are empowered by the vehicle to become an airborne infantry force with high mobility and firepower. The reports did not reveal the designation of this new vehicle. This type of new vehicle can be used together with the ZBD-03 airborne infantry fighting vehicle showcased at the 2019 National Day military parade in Beijing, a Beijing military expert who asked not to be named told the Global Times on Sunday. The new vehicle on wheels should be faster and lighter than the ZBD-03, formerly the only air force armored vehicle that could be airdropped, he noted. The ZBD-03 has greater firepower but relies on crawler tracks. China has also developed an airdrop-capable four-wheeled vehicle with a fixed turret larger caliber gun, an airborne multiple launch rocket system and an airborne 120mm howitzer. These three types of airdrop-capable light armored vehicles were displayed at Airshow China 2018 held in Zhuhai, South China's Guangdong Province alongside the PLA Y-20 and Y-9 cargo planes. It is unknown if the PLA plans to use them.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1187900.shtml>

US-China tensions in South China Sea fuelled by increase in military operations

Kristin Huang

South China Morning Post, May 10, 2020

US aircraft have carried out 39 flights over waters near China – two of them close to Hong Kong – since start of the year, while navy has also ramped up its activity. US defence secretary says he wants to boost investment in region. The United States has ramped up its military operations in waters close to China this year as the risk of confrontation between the two nations continues to grow. So far this year, aircraft from the US armed forces have conducted 39 flights over the South China Sea, East China Sea, Yellow Sea and the Taiwan Strait – more than three times the number carried out in the equivalent period of 2019. Two of the flights passed close to Hong Kong, a rare move that indicated their proximity to mainland China. Meanwhile, the US Navy conducted four freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea in the first four months of the year – compared with just eight for the whole of 2019 – with the latest on April 29, as guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill sailed through the Spratly Islands chain.

The littoral combat ship USS Montgomery and cargo vessel USNS Cesar Chavez were also reported to be operating in the South China Sea. “Our forces fly, sail and operate in the international waters of the South China Sea at our discretion and in accordance with maritime norms and international law, showing the wide range of naval capability we have available in the Indo-Pacific,” said Fred Kacher, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 7.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3083698/us-china-tensions-south-china-sea-fuelled-increase-military>

To safeguard national security, it is time for China to build up nuclear deterrent

Hu Xijin

Global Times, May 9, 2020

From China's current standpoint, the nuclear deterrence this country needs today is of a different magnitude from what was required in the past. China needs to possess the real power to prevent the US politicians from gambling with its nuclear armament and harming China. To clarify it, if the US initiates a nuclear war at China, it must not have any chance of winning -- that's the kind of nuclear deterrent China must secure. In the event of a serious military confrontation between China and the US in the Taiwan Straits or the South China Sea, the first shot fired by the two sides will immediately remind people of the comparison of nuclear power between them. It is ultimately the nuclear arsenal that will inspire either side not to retreat.

China now has far fewer nuclear weapons than the US. The Taiwan Straits and the South China Sea are the core interests of China, which are geographically far away from the US and can be deemed as non-core interests. However, if the US believes it must subdue China in the Taiwan Straits or in the South China Sea, and considers defeating China in order to maintain its global hegemony, then China must fix its nuclear gap with the US. Look at all those insanities gripping top US politicians over the last two years, and how Washington is moving aggressively and even hysterically to contain China. Nuclear war causes dreadful human disaster and is unthinkable, but nuclear deterrence sits silently at the corner, functioning every minute. Some may agree that US' arrogance against China derives from its nuclear advantage over China, and the arrogance will increasingly dominate US policies toward China.

The Chinese experts who claim China does not need a bigger depot of nuclear weapons should think about this: Since President Donald Trump took office, which country is the target of US' sharply increased nuclear arsenal investment? When Washington is getting itself increasingly prepared, how could China just sit back and take no action at all? I am not a warmonger but a staunch peace lover. I firmly oppose nuclear war as well as conventional war. However, a country is unable to beg for peace. Everybody knows that nuclear weapons should never be used in reality. But nuclear arsenal is not only military weaponry, but also the cornerstone of American politics and psychology. China is committed not to be the first to launch nuclear weapons, and it will never threaten non-nuclear countries with its nuclear arsenal. However, if China's nuclear deterrence is comparatively weakened, China's national interests and national security will be harmed. In conclusion, I would like to say that at a time when China is considered as the biggest strategic competitor of the US, if China continues to adhere to the US definition of nuclear deterrence to guide our actions, it would bring us a tragedy.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1187841.shtml>

China needs to increase its nuclear warheads to 1,000

Hu Xijin

Global Times, May 8, 2020

China needs to expand the number of its nuclear warheads to 1,000 in a relatively short time. It needs to have at least 100 Dongfeng-41 strategic missiles. We are a peace-loving nation and have committed to never being the first to use nuclear weapons, but we need a larger nuclear arsenal to curb US strategic ambitions and impulses toward China. Maybe we have to deal with challenges with stronger determination in the near future, which requires the support of the Dongfeng and Julang missiles. Don't be naïve. Don't assume that nuclear warheads are useless. In fact, they are being used every day as a deterrent to shape the attitudes of US elites toward China. Some Chinese experts say we don't need more nuclear weapons, I think they are as naïve as children.

Some people may call me a "war monger" because I want the country to have more nuclear warheads. They should instead give this label to US politicians who are openly hostile to China. I always hope China and the US can get along with each other, but peaceful coexistence between the two countries is not a thing that can be begged for; it's shaped by strategic tools. This is particularly true as we are facing an increasingly irrational US, which only believes in strength. We don't have much time debating the need for increased nuclear warheads, we just need to accelerate the steps that make it happen.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1187766.shtml>

China urged to expand nuclear arsenal to deter US warmongers

Liu Xuanzun

Global Times, May 8, 2020

Facing rising strategic threats from the US, China needs to increase its number of nuclear warheads and complete a technologically advanced nuclear triad by developing the H-20 strategic stealth bomber and JL-3 submarine-launched ballistic missiles to deter potential impulsive military action by US warmongers, experts said on Friday. Having a nuclear arsenal appropriate to China's position will help establish a more stable and peaceful world order, which will be beneficial for the whole world, they said. This year, the US has been applying amplified military pressure on China, sending all manner of warships and warplanes at an increasing frequency to areas including the South China Sea, East China Sea and Taiwan Straits.

The Pentagon is also planning to deploy ground-launched Tomahawk cruise missile installations to the first island chain to contain China's military development, which would not have been possible had the US not quit the INF Treaty, Reuters reported on Wednesday. Since May 1, the

US has sent B-1B strategic bombers to the East China Sea on at least three occasions, edging near the island of Taiwan. The USS Theodore Roosevelt nuclear-powered aircraft carrier strike group and the USS America amphibious assault ship carried out exercises on March 15 in the South China Sea. After COVID-19 broke out on the aircraft carrier, even more frequent military provocations were made by the US in an attempt to show the US' military strength had not been hindered. Making matters worse, the US has been advocating the development and actual use of low-yield nuclear weapons, claiming they are "safer" than more destructive ones.

Chinese military experts urged the country to expand its nuclear arsenal to deter the US from its ambition to contain China through military means and dispel thoughts of irrational military action by US warmongers. China needs to expand the number of its nuclear warheads to 1,000 in a relatively short time and have at least 100 DF-41 strategic missiles to curb US strategic ambitions and impulses toward China, said Global Times Editor-in-Chief Hu Xijin on Friday.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1187775.shtml>