

April 15, 2021

SYLLOGE ON CHINA

Focus: Nuclear, Space, Missiles and other Security Issues

An Initiative by Indian Pugwash Society and Centre for Nuclear Issues and Arms Control
(MP - IDSA)



INDIAN PUGWASH SOCIETY



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China hesitant over J-10C barter deal with cash-strapped Iran: experts

Minnie Chan

South China Morning Post, April 15, 2021

Tehran is said to be interested in buying 36 of the advanced Chinese fighter jets but finding the cash could be difficult. Military analysts say now is not the time to exchange weapons for oil but believe Beijing is considering the move. Beijing is reluctant to let Iran have its J-10C lightweight fighter jet in a barter trade for oil or natural gas, according to military analysts. Reports of Tehran's interest in the jet have been circulating on Chinese social media platforms for months, with the expiry in October last year of the UN's 13-year arms embargo which prohibited Iran from buying foreign weapons like tanks and fighter jets. "The key problem is Iran can't pay dollars or euros in cash to China, they prefer using oil and natural gas to exchange weapons," said Zhou Chenming, a researcher with the Yuan Wang think tank, a Beijing-based military science and technology institute.

"However, China has accumulated too much energy reserves... business is business, all arms deals want to make money. It's impossible for China to get a bad bargain." Zhou said the dramatic deflation of Iran's official currency, the rial, in recent years had forced the Tehran government to hold on to as many foreign currencies as possible. An earlier report from online media platform Sina News said Iran might buy 36 Chinese fighter jets using half of the US\$3 billion in financial help from Qatar. The money was offered by the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani when he met Iranian President Hassan Rowhani in Tehran in January last year. Closer security ties were seen as part of the 25-year strategic cooperation agreement signed in March between Beijing and Tehran to address economic issues amid crippling US sanctions on Iran. Concrete details of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership were not released, but according to China's state broadcaster CCTV, it covers economic activity from oil and mining to promoting industrial activity in Iran, as well as transport and agricultural collaborations. The J-10C is an upgraded version of China's single-engine, lightweight, multi-role J-10, which was designed for air-to-air combat. The advanced version is powered by a modified engine designed for stealth and thrust vectoring.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3129539/china-hesitant-over-j-10c-barter-deal-cash-strapped-iran>

China takes global lead in rolling out nuclear power generators

Global Times, April 14, 2021

China has taken the global lead in nuclear energy construction capacity, as the installed capacity of nuclear power generating units under construction remained the world's largest in the past few years with 17 units currently under construction, according to the Blue Book of Nuclear Energy 2021 released by China Nuclear Energy Association. A total of 17 nuclear power generating units are under construction with a total capacity of 18.53 million kilowatts, CNEA Secretary General Zhang Tingke said in an interview with CCTV on Wednesday, adding that all nuclear power projects under construction are making steady progress, and China has fully mastered the core technology of manufacturing advanced nuclear power equipment. In 2020, China's nuclear power generation capacity reached 366.24 billion kWh, which ranked the second highest in the world with a year-on-year increase of 5.02 percent, Zhang added.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202104/1221064.shtml>

China's military to hold live-fire drills off Taiwan as US delegation visits the island

Kinling Lo

South China Morning Post, April 14, 2021

China's military will begin live-fire drills on Thursday in waters off Taiwan's southwest coast, as an unofficial US delegation visits the self-ruled island. The six-day exercise will be carried out to the south of the Penghu archipelago in the Taiwan Strait, the Guangdong Maritime Safety Administration announced. It has set out a no-go zone for vessels in an area near the islands while the live-fire drills are under way. The People's Liberation Army exercise comes as Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen is due to meet a visiting American delegation on Thursday morning.

Former US senator Chris Dodd and former deputy secretaries of state Richard Armitage and James Steinberg travelled to Taipei on Tuesday for a three-day visit. They were sent by President Joe Biden, with the White House describing the trip as a "personal signal" of his commitment to Taiwan and its democracy. Beijing sees Taiwan as part of its territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary, and it has repeatedly warned Washington over its closer ties with Taipei. Tensions have been rising across the Taiwan Strait and in the region, with both China and the US stepping up military activities in disputed waters.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3129534/chinas-military-hold-live-fire-drills-taiwan-us-delegation>

3rd-party supervision of radioactive water dumping urged; if only Hualong One safety measures were adopted by Fukushima: industry insiders

Liu Caiyu and Ni Hao

Global Times, April 14, 2021

Chinese nuclear power industry insiders on Wednesday urged third-party supervision to ensure every drop of radioactive water that Japan's Fukushima dumps into the ocean conforms to standards, given the previous infamous record of the Japanese nuclear power operator in handling the nuclear accident and the density of the radioactive substances in the wastewater. Chinese insiders made such an appeal at the ongoing China Nuclear Energy Sustainable Development Forum held in Beijing on Wednesday, a day after Japan's decision to dump the wastewater containing radioactive substances into the ocean.

It is normal in nuclear activities to generate wastewater and to dispose them after treatment under universal standards, but dumping radioactive wastewater from the Fukushima nuclear power plant which recorded the highest-level nuclear accident is completely different from releasing wastewater from normally operated power plants, Chinese insiders said.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202104/1221097.shtml>

Beijing shows it's 'not taking its foot off the gas' with latest incursion into Taiwan airspace

Kristin Huang
South China Morning Post, April 13, 2021

Beijing's move to send 25 warplanes into Taiwan's air defence identification zone on Monday aimed to heap more pressure on the island and send a message to Washington, according to analysts. Taiwan's defence ministry said 14 J-16 fighter jets, four J-10 fighter jets, four H-6K bombers, two Y-8 anti-submarine warfare planes and one KJ-500 airborne early warning and control aircraft were sent into the southwest of the ADIZ. It was the biggest ever incursion by People's Liberation Army warplanes into Taiwanese airspace, according to the defence ministry. Jon Grevatt, a warplane specialist and Asia-Pacific defence analyst at Janes, said the aircraft involved suggested the PLA saw it as similar to a combat air patrol, but it was also a show of force. Why has the relationship between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan taken a turn for the worse?

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3129398/beijing-shows-its-not-taking-its-foot-gas-latest-incursion>

Can PLA learn from US Navy tactics with mini-carrier strike group?

Minnie Chan
South China Morning Post, April 13, 2021

As the world's two biggest naval fleets engage in the Indo-Pacific region, China's People's Liberation Army can observe and learn from the United States Navy in adapting future tactical combined operations, according to defence analysts. They said the operators of China's Type 075 amphibious assault vessels could examine the US deployment of an amphibious-ready group (ARG) to the South China Sea which was led by the USS Makin Island landing helicopter dock (LHD) and joined the USS Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group on April 9 for exercises. The USS Makin Island is a 40,000-tonne Wasp-class amphibious assault ship able to carry a detachment of Marine F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters. The LHD and two San Antonio-class landing platform dock (LPD) amphibious transport ships – the USS Somerset and USS San Diego – as well as several helicopter and assault craft units form the Makin Island ARG.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3129257/south-china-sea-can-pla-learn-us-navy-tactics-mini-carrier>

Washington's 'Sinophobia, Russophobia cost high'

Chen Qingqing
Global Times, April 11, 2021

The recently unveiled \$715 billion defense budget by the Biden administration to counter the so-called threats from China and Russia - a real cost of Washington's Russophobia and Sinophobia - is a vivid reflection that the defense spending of Washington being kidnapped by military industrial complex, but such high cost would lead it on a path to nowhere as it is unrealistic for the US government to successfully curb two major powers at the same time, Chinese experts said.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202104/1220780.shtml>

Myanmar junta deploys Chinese drones to monitor protesters and aid military after coup: report

Kristin Huang

South China Morning Post, April 09, 2021

Drones may be emerging as psychological warfare tactic to intimidate the population, says Jane's International Defence Review. China's CH-3A unmanned aerial vehicle can be reconfigured to carry out communications intelligence and electronic warfare. Myanmar's military junta deployed Chinese drones to support its operations against protest movements, according to a report by British military intelligence publication Jane's International Defence Review. The report cited images on social media showing low-flying drones in March over Mandalay, where protests erupted after the military, known as Tatmadaw, seized power from the National League for Democracy-led government in a coup on February 1. The images showed two types of drones flying at altitudes low enough to be seen and heard by residents in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3128898/myanmar-junta-deploys-chinese-drones-monitor-protesters-and>

China urges U.S. to lift all illegal sanctions against Iran as nuclear talks resume

Xinhua, April 07, 2021

A Chinese envoy on Tuesday urged the United States to lift all illegal sanctions against Iran and its "long-arm jurisdiction" against third-party entities and individuals, including those from China, as the Iran nuclear deal talks resumed in Vienna. Senior diplomats from China, France, Germany, Russia, Britain and Iran met behind closed doors in the Grand Hotel Wien. On top of the agenda are lifting sanctions on Iran and nuclear implementation measures. The meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known as the Iran nuclear deal, has drawn public attention as representatives from the United States are in Vienna to save the deal. The U.S. should lift all illegal sanctions against Tehran, and the Iranian side should resume full compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal on that basis, said Wang Qun, Chinese envoy to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna, after the meeting.

Wang said that the U.S. withdrawal from the deal and its maximum pressure against Iran is the root cause of the current situation. Therefore, the early return of the U.S. to the accord is the key to cracking the problem. "The justified request of the injured party, rather than the offending party, should be confirmed and satisfied first. This is a basic right-or-wrong question. The U.S. should lift all sanctions against Tehran and on this basis, Iran can resume full compliance to the nuclear deal," Wang said in a statement. He stressed that China firmly opposes any illegal unilateral sanctions imposed by the U.S. and will safeguard its legitimate rights and interests. Wang added that China supports the Joint Commission's efforts in setting up two expert-level groups, one on sanctions-lifting and nuclear issues, and the other on "close contact" with the U.S. He said China hopes the two groups can make progress as soon as possible.

China continues to unswervingly uphold the JCPOA, and hopes that all parties can enhance

their sense of urgency, seize the current opportunities, and push the JCPOA back on track through fair and reasonable negotiations, Wang noted. He pledged that China will work with all parties to continue advancing the political settlement of the Iran nuclear issue, and strive to restore the full implementation of the 2015 accord as early as possible.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-04/07/c_139863180.htm

China issues guidelines on ideological, political education of military

Xinhua, April 07, 2021

The Central Military Commission, with the approval of its chairman Xi Jinping, has issued guidelines on promoting ideological and political education within the Chinese military. The guidelines focus on strengthening the Communist Party of China's ideological and political leadership over the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and specify the direction, fundamental tasks, methods and other key elements in constructing the system of military ideological and political education in the new era. The guidelines underscore the building of the PLA into a world-class military that follows the Party's command, is capable of winning battles and exhibits excellent conduct.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-04/07/c_139864797.htm

China's Chang'e-4 probe resumes work for 29th lunar day

Xinhua, April 07, 2021

The lander and rover of the Chang'e-4 probe have resumed work for a 29th lunar day on the far side of the moon. The lander woke up at 9:43 p.m. Tuesday (Beijing Time), and the rover, Yutu-2 (Jade Rabbit-2), awoke at 3:54 a.m. Tuesday, according to the Lunar Exploration and Space Program Center of the China National Space Administration. The Chang'e-4 probe, switching to dormant mode during the lunar night due to the lack of solar power, has survived about 825 Earth days on the moon. A lunar day is equal to 14 days on Earth, and a lunar night is the same length.

Located in the northwest of Chang'e-4's landing site, the rover has traveled about 682.8 meters. The linear distance between the rover and the landing site is about 455 meters. During its 29th lunar day, the rover will continue to move northwest toward the basalt distribution area located about 1.2 km away from the rover. The equipment aboard the rover, including a panoramic camera, an infrared imaging spectrometer, a neutral atom detector and a lunar radar, will continue to carry out scientific explorations.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-04/07/c_139864638.htm

China's 'new' border rules in Tibet point to same old dispute with India

Minnie Chan

South China Morning Post, April 07, 2021

China's Tibetan government has issued a set of bans to tighten controls on areas bordering India, weeks after the two countries' troops disengaged from a disputed part of their frontier

following a months-long confrontation. The Tibet autonomous region on Tuesday introduced 15 border regulations “to maintain security and stability of the border area”, the official Tibet Daily reported. A military insider said the regulations – reiterating that actions such as moving border markers and damaging military facilities were illegal – were aimed at “preventing any infiltration activities”. “All the bans are updated rules based on previous border regulations, with the key mission being to prevent exiled Tibetans trying to infiltrate Chinese borders,” the insider, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter, told the South China Morning Post. They added that, according to Chinese officials, more than 10,000 exiled Tibetan were being trained as “special operation troops” by India.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3128652/chinas-new-border-rules-tibet-point-same-old-dispute-india>

China's aircraft carrier formation conducts training in waters around Taiwan: Navy Spokesperson

China Military Online, April 06, 2021

Recently the Liaoning aircraft carrier formation conducted the training exercise in waters around Taiwan, said the Chinese PLA Navy Spokesperson Senior Captain Gao Xiucheng in a written statement on April 5. It was a routine training exercise organized according to the annual work plan to test the troops’ training effectiveness and beef up their capability to safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, the Spokesperson added. In the future, the PLA Navy will continue to carry out such exercise and training activities on a regular basis as planned, stressed the spokesperson.

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-04/06/content_10016824.htm

Beijing accuses Philippines of ‘hype’ over Chinese fleet at Whitsun Reef

Catherine Wong

South China Morning Post, April 06, 2021

China has asked Manila to “stop hyping up” the fleet of Chinese vessels moored around Whitsun Reef in the disputed South China Sea. The Philippines has been protesting against the continued presence of Chinese vessels, initially numbering in the hundreds but dropping to dozens in recent days, inside the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone at the reef in the Spratly Islands, known as the Nansha Islands in China. The Philippines says the ships are maritime militia but China insists they are civilian fishing boats “sheltering from wind” in their own traditional fishing ground.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3128510/south-china-sea-beijing-accuses-philippines-hype-over-chinese>

Taiwan reports new incursion by Chinese jets into defence zone

Reuters, April 05, 2021

Taiwan’s Defence Ministry on Monday reported a new incursion by China’s air force into the island’s air defence identification zone, made up of eight fighter jets and two other

aircraft, one of which flew through the strategic Bashi Channel. Chinese-claimed Taiwan has complained over the last few months of repeated missions by China's air force near the island, concentrated in the southwestern part its air defence zone near the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands. Late last month Taiwan reported 20 Chinese aircraft were involved in one such incursion.

In the latest incident, Taiwan's Defence Ministry said four Chinese J-16 and four J-10 fighters were involved, as well as an early warning plane and anti-submarine aircraft, the latter of which flew to the south of Taiwan through the Bashi Channel that connects the Pacific to the South China Sea. Taiwan's air force sent up a combat air patrol and warned the Chinese aircraft away, the ministry added. There was no immediate response from China's Defence Ministry, but the flights coincided with other Chinese military activity to Taiwan's north.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-china-defence-idUSKBN2BS0U8>