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SYLLOGE ON CHINA

Focus: Nuclear, Space, Missiles and other Security Issues

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US plots to undermine regional peace, stability by deploying intermediate-range ballistic missiles overseas, threatens China

Li Zhe

China Military Online, December 21, 2023

US Pacific Army spokesman Rob Phillips recently said that the military plans to deploy intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) in the Indo-Pacific region in 2024. This will mark the country's inaugural deployment of land-based IRBMs in the region since the end of the Cold War, and also its first deployment of such weaponry after withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019. Such a move will inevitably raise the risk of regional wars and severely undermine global strategic stability. According to the plan, the US will deploy the launch system code-named "Typhon" as well as land-based Standard SM-6 missiles and Tomahawk cruise missiles with a range of 500 to 2,700 kilometers.

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/OPINIONS_209196/Opinions_209197/16275333.html

Ending long freeze, top Pentagon general talks to Chinese counterpart

Dan Lamothe

The Washington Post, December 21, 2023

The U.S. military's top general spoke with his Chinese counterpart, the Pentagon said, a thawing in a long freeze after China broke off military-to-military communication more than a year ago following pointed disagreements. Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke with Gen. Liu Zhenli, chief of the joint staff for the People's Liberation Army, Pentagon officials said. It marked Brown's first meeting with his Chinese counterpart and the first time that a Joint Chiefs chairman had done so since Gen. Mark A. Milley, Brown's predecessor, held a similar call in July 2022. Brown focused on the "importance of working together to responsibly manage competition, avoid miscalculations, and maintain open and direct lines of communication," said Navy Capt. Jereal Dorsey, a spokesman for Brown.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/12/21/pentagon-china-communication-taiwan/>

China is showing off its oversized air-to-air missile

Sébastien Roblin

Popular Mechanics, December 21, 2023

Early in December, the website ChinaMil posted (and later took down) a dramatic photo showing a flight of four Chinese J-16 heavy fighters, allegedly from combat training flights on November

25. Two of the J-16 are seen bristling with no less than 10 air-to-air missiles, each one of four types. The Shenyang J-16 is a Chinese derivative of the large Russian two-seat Sukhoi Su-30MKK Flanker-G strike plane, exported to China between 2000 and 2004. It's conceptually similar to the U.S. Air Force's versatile and heavy-lifting F-15E Strike Eagle jet, so its ability to carry a lot of weapons isn't surprising in itself. What attracted attention were the missiles protruding like lances from under a DF-4 pylon on the jets' left wings: a PL-17 very-long-range air-to-air missile, or VLRAAM.

<https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/aviation/a46042683/china-shows-off-oversized-air-to-air-missile/>

China's spy agency now watches for doomsayers

Katsuji Nakazawa

Nikkei Asia, December 21, 2023

China's leadership earlier this month held its annual conference to set economic policies for the coming year, but it was the intelligence agency that first reported what was decided there in detail. If this was strange so too was a line within the statement posted on the WeChat social network by the Ministry of State Security. It hinted at a crackdown on negative opinions regarding China's economy. "Various cliches that denigrate the Chinese economy have emerged," the line says, appearing in a section referring to stepping up control on illegal acts related to economic security. It goes on, "False theories about 'China's deterioration' are being circulated to attack China's unique socialist system."

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/China-up-close/Analysis-China-s-spy-agency-now-watches-for-doomsayers>

To shoot or not to shoot: Chinese-developed 'golden veil' could make deadly missiles look like passenger planes

Stephen Chen

South China Morning Post, December 22, 2023

A gold-plated camouflage veil that can make a cruise missile look like a passenger plane on a radar screen could "change the face of war", according to the team of Chinese scientists behind the design. The low-cost technology can confuse expensive air defence systems and significantly reduce the time available for military commanders to respond – if at all. Developed by a research team in northwest China, the project is part of an ongoing effort by China to build up a wide range of ways it can penetrate air defence systems in the first island chain, Guam or even the US homeland. While China's overall military posture remains defensive, such abilities would serve as

an effective deterrence against foreign intervention in regional affairs such as Taiwan or the South China Sea, according to some Chinese military experts.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3240861/shoot-or-not-shoot-chinese-developed-golden-veil-could-make-deadly-missiles-look-passenger-planes>

US the blocker of space cooperation with China

China Daily, December 22, 2023

Responding to media inquiries about United States Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns' recent claim that Beijing has no plan to cooperate with the US in lunar exploration, a spokesperson for the China National Space Administration denied the allegation, stating the real obstacle is the barriers Washington has erected. Burns' comment stemmed from a US complaint that the Chinese space agency has refused to give NASA access to the lunar soil China's Chang'e 5 space mission brought back from the moon in 2020. The Chinese mission collected and brought home 1,731 grams of moon soil, and in a goodwill gesture to facilitate international collaboration, the Chinese space authorities offered to share the soil samples with interested international scientific institutions. Beginning October, interested parties could submit an application to obtain some of the soil.

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202312/22/WS6584ebfda31040ac301a902e.html>

China preparing to test new generation nuclear weapons? Satellite images reveal dangerous visuals

Mint, December 22, 2023

Amid a major diplomatic tussle with the United States, China is probably preparing to test a new generation of nuclear arms with an aim to increase the lethality of its rapidly expanding missile force, a report by the New York Times said. The report, substantiated by satellite images claims to confirm the concerns around China's old base Lop Nur. The base where China detonated its first atomic bomb nearly 60 years ago has recently seen some massive infrastructural installments which include a deep vertical shaft. Chinese authorities have recently restarted excavation and construction in the horizontal tunnels bored into the side of the mountains. These tunnels were used for the past nuclear weapons testing. The satellite imagery also confirms the addition of several new roads around the area.

<https://www.livemint.com/news/world/china-preparing-to-test-new-generation-nuclear-weapons-satellite-images-reveal-dangerous-visuals-11703253164271.html>

Long March-7 Y8 carrier rocket for Tianzhou-7 mission transferred to Wenchang launch site

CGTN, December 22, 2023

The Long March-7 Y8 carrier rocket for the Tianzhou-7 mission was transferred to the Wenchang launch site in south China's Hainan Province, according to the China Manned Space Agency. Final assembly and testing will be carried out later at the launch site, together with the Tianzhou-7 cargo spacecraft that arrived in November. Currently, all testing systems at the launch site are gearing up for the launch as planned, said the agency.

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-12-22/Long-March-7-Y8-carrier-rocket-transferred-to-Wenchang-launch-site-1pJB4j0qndK/p.html>

Japan's Patriot-missile transfer to U.S. stuns Indo-Pacific watchers

Ken Moriyasu

Nikkei Asia, December 23, 2023

Japan's decision to ship Patriot missiles to the U.S. to help backfill stocks of air-defense systems for Ukraine has surprised analysts focusing on Indo-Pacific affairs. Kelly Grieco, a senior fellow at the Stimson Center, said that while there is clearly a need to ramp up air-defense missile stockpiles in Japan, she sees two positive implications for the country in the long run. One is that it sets a precedent for Japan to transfer weapons to the U.S., which could pave the way for similar actions in a conflict between China and Taiwan. But such long-term benefits only matter if China will not take military action to force Taiwan unification in the near term, which might be the conclusion the Biden administration has arrived at following the meeting between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the San Francisco APEC meeting last month.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/Japan-s-Patriot-missile-transfer-to-U.S.-stuns-Indo-Pacific-watchers>

How China and Cold War II are upending the international order

Chris Anstey

Bloomberg, December 23, 2023

China's single-party state, once outside of the institutions formed largely by Americans and Europeans, is in some cases seeking to reorient the international organizations it now belongs to. In other cases, it has effectively undermined them by ignoring the spirit in which they were established. China is also setting up an entirely new architecture through which it can shape the

global agenda in Beijing's desired direction. In the case of the World Trade Organization, the new tensions have effectively crippled the institution. After China benefited from low-tariff access to developed markets while manipulating its production costs for competitive advantage, the US walked away from the WTO's adjudication structure, leaving the organization at an impasse.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2023-12-23/how-china-and-cold-war-ii-are-upending-the-international-order>

The US and China are looking into big boxes full of missiles to give their navies new firepower

Michael Peck

Business Insider, December 24, 2023

Call them prepackaged missiles or missiles-in-a-box, but containerized missile launchers, which can be fitted to most any commercial or military vessel, have the potential to revolutionize naval warfare. The massive expenditure of munitions in Ukraine has underscored for many Western military leaders that huge arsenals will be needed to wage modern warfare. US Navy leaders in particular are worried about their ability to keep their ships' magazines filled in a showdown with China's rapidly expanding air and maritime forces. Containerized launchers have appeal as a relatively easy way to arm a ship with more missiles and have resurrected interest in "Q-ships," the warships disguised as merchant vessels that prowled the seas during World War I and II.

<https://www.businessinsider.in/international/news/the-us-and-china-are-looking-into-big-boxes-full-of-missiles-to-give-their-navies-new-firepower/articleshow/106253373.cms>

China launches four Tianmu-1 satellites to form a weather constellation

CGTN, December 25, 2023

China launched a new set of four satellites as part of the Tianmu-1 weather constellation into space. These satellites have successfully entered their preset orbit and will be utilized to provide commercial meteorological data services. Tianmu-1 01 and 02 were launched on January 9, followed by satellites 03-06 on March 22, and satellites 07-10 on July 20. The Tianmu-1 satellite constellation aims to collect global atmosphere data for comprehensive detection of the ocean, atmosphere and ionosphere worldwide at all times. This launch marks the 23rd flight mission conducted by the Kuaizhou-1A carrier rockets.

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-12-25/China-launches-four-new-satellites-to-form-a-weather-constellation-1pOCD9ug8EM/p.html>

China is stealing AI secrets to turbocharge spying, U.S. says

Robert McMillan

The Wall Street Journal, December 25, 2023

On a July day in 2018, Xiaolang Zhang headed to the San Jose, Calif., airport to board a flight to Beijing. He had passed the checkpoint at Terminal B when his journey was abruptly cut short by federal agents. After a tipoff by Apple's security team, the former Apple employee was arrested and charged with stealing trade secrets related to the company's autonomous-driving program. It was a skirmish in a continuing shadow war between the U.S. and China for supremacy in artificial intelligence. The two rivals are seeking any advantage to jump ahead in mastering a technology with the potential to reshape economies, geopolitics and war. Artificial intelligence has been on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's list of critical U.S. technologies to protect, just as China placed it on a list of technologies it wanted its scientists to achieve breakthroughs on by 2025. China's AI capabilities are already believed to be formidable, but U.S. intelligence authorities have lately made new warnings beyond the threat.

<https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/china-is-stealing-ai-secrets-to-turbocharge-spying-u-s-says-00413594>

China builds up private security to protect overseas interests in hostile, unstable regions

Channel News Asia, December 25, 2023

But in reality, it is less likely to be the People's Liberation Army swooping in to save the day, and more likely to be a well-paid private security contractor hired to protect the overseas interests of Chinese businesses – especially those with operations in less stable regions. However, given Beijing's limited military presence overseas – it has only one overseas base, in the Horn of Africa; contributes to a UN peacekeeping force; and uses naval warships in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden – analysts say it appears that diplomacy and the use of private security firms will be increasingly relied on, particularly in facilitating the China-led Belt and Road Initiative.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/china-builds-private-security-protect-overseas-interests-hostile-unstable-regions-4009986>

China warns rocket remnants to hit South China Sea

Reuters, December 26, 2023

China warned that remnants of a rocket would hit an area in the South China Sea, following the sixth deployment of its most powerful launch vehicle eleven days ago. Rocket debris, which

generally burns up in the atmosphere on re-entry, is expected to fall off the coast of China's island province of Hainan, said the China Maritime Safety Administration. China launched a Long March 5 rocket on December 15 from Hainan's Wenchang launch site, a sixth launch of the rocket type since its first flight in 2016. A variant of the rocket, the Long March 5B, was previously used to launch China's probe to Mars and also modules of its space station. A 2021 launch of the Long March 5B caused particular anxiety due to speculation over where remnants would land. In 2020, debris from a Long March 5B fell on Ivory Coast, damaging several buildings.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-warns-rocket-remnants-hit-south-china-sea-maritime-safety-authority-2023-12-26/>

Unleashing the Hypersonic Fury

AK Chawla

SP's Naval Forces, December 26, 2023

The PLA Navy (PLAN) first released the footage of a test firing of the YJ-21 hypersonic AShBM from the universal launch system of their 13,000 tonne Type 055 Renhai-class cruiser (termed as a destroyer by China) in April 2022. It is estimated that the missile can also be fired from the Type 052D destroyers of the PLAN. There is also an aerial version of the missile which can be fired from China's H-6 bombers. Guided by the Beidou satellite navigation system, the missile travels at a speed of Mach 6 during the cruise phase and at Mach 10 in its terminal phase. On January 30, 2023, the official Weibo account of the People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) stated that the YJ-21 could not be intercepted by any anti-missile weapon system in the world.

<https://www.spsnavalforces.com/story/?id=869&h=Unleashing-the-Hypersonic-Fury>

China launches new space technology experiment satellites from sea

CGTN, December 26, 2023

China launched a rocket into space on December 26, successfully placing three satellites into preset orbit. A Long March-11 carrier rocket, taking the satellites coded as Shiyang-24C, blasted off at 6:39 a.m. Beijing Time from waters off the coast of Yangjiang, south China's Guangdong Province. The satellites will be used for space science and technology experiments. The mission marks the 503rd flight of the Long March carrier rocket series.

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-12-26/China-launches-new-space-technology-experiment-satellites-from-sea-1pQIKLpVplu/p.html>

Philippines not provoking conflict in South China Sea, its military says

Voice of America, December 26, 2023

The Philippines is not provoking conflict in the South China Sea, its military spokesperson said, responding to China's accusation that Manila was encroaching on Beijing's territory. It was the latest salvo amid rising tension as the two have traded accusations in recent months over a series of maritime run-ins, including China allegedly ramming a ship this month carrying the Philippines' military chief. "The Philippines is not provoking conflict," Medel Aguilar told state broadcaster PTV. "We follow international law and we are only implementing our domestic law, meaning the limits of our territorial waters and exclusive economic zone, where we have sovereign rights." The comments came a day after the People's Daily, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, wrote that the Philippines had relied on U.S. support to continually provoke China.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/philippines-not-provoking-conflict-in-south-china-sea-its-military-says/7412754.html>

China names submariner Hu Zhongming as top PLA Navy commander

Yuanyue Dang

South China Morning Post, December 26, 2023

China has appointed a submarine expert as its new top naval commander, a job that includes overseeing the contested waters of the South China Sea. State news agency Xinhua confirmed the appointment indirectly in a report that said People's Liberation Army Navy commander Hu Zhongming had been promoted to admiral. It was the first time Hu had been referred to as the navy's top officer. Wang Wenquan, political commissar of the Southern Theatre Command, was also promoted to admiral, replacing Wang Jianwu. The appointments were approved by President Xi Jinping, who also heads the Central Military Commission, which oversees the PLA.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3246281/china-names-submariner-hu-zhongming-top-pla-navy-commander>

Chinese spy agency rising to challenge the C.I.A.

Edward Wong, Julian E. Barnes, Muye Xiao and Chris Buckley

The New York Times, December 27, 2023

The Chinese spies wanted more. In meetings during the pandemic with Chinese technology contractors, they complained that surveillance cameras tracking foreign diplomats, military officers and intelligence operatives in Beijing's embassy district fell short of their needs. The A.I.-generated profiles would allow the Chinese spies to select targets and pinpoint their networks and

vulnerabilities, according to internal meeting memos obtained by The New York Times. The spies' interest in the technology, disclosed here for the first time, reveals some of the vast ambitions of the Ministry of State Security, China's main intelligence agency. In recent years, it has built itself up through wider recruitment, including of American citizens.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/27/us/politics/china-cia-spy-mss.html>

The Beijing balance: Additional steps are needed to safeguard the US against China

Richard Weitz

The Hill, December 27, 2023

President Biden's meeting with Xi Jinping at last month's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in San Francisco, combined with the attention given to the Gaza War and other issues, may have quieted near-term concerns regarding Sino-American relations. But as U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns recently observed, being hopeful about the relationship differs from being optimistic. Sino-U.S. ties are still primed for problems. The U.S. must take additional steps to address critical Chinese challenges to U.S. national security. The APEC meeting failed to realize immediate progress on the topics that had dominated the U.S. agenda for the talks; most Chinese commitments were long term or simply statements to consider issues rather than resolve them.

<https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/4370673-the-beijing-balance-additional-steps-are-needed-to-safeguard-the-us-against-china/>

Three defence industry leaders removed from China advisory body

Amy Hawkins

The Guardian, December 28, 2023

Three senior aerospace and defence business leaders have been removed from a top political advisory body to the Chinese Communist party (CCP), in the latest purge of figures linked to China's military. State media reported that the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) had revoked the seats of Liu Shiquan, the chair of the weapons manufacturer China North Industries Group; Wu Yansheng, the chair of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation; and Wang Changqing, a deputy manager of the state-owned China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (Casic). The CPPCC is a government advisory body that consists of CCP delegates and representatives from industry groups.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/28/three-defence-industry-leaders-removed-from-china-advisory-body>

In bid to counter China, US ramps up effort to boost military ties in Asia

Zaheena Rasheed

Al Jazeera, December 28, 2023

On May 30, the United States accused China of intercepting one of its spy planes in an “unnecessarily aggressive manoeuvre” over the South China Sea. The American RC-135 plane, according to the US military, was conducting routine operations over the sensitive waterway when a Chinese fighter jet flew directly in front of its nose. A video shared by the US Indo-Pacific Command showed the cockpit of the RC-135 shaking in the wake of turbulence of the Chinese jet. Days later, on June 5, the US again accused China of carrying out what it said was an “unsafe” manoeuvre near one of its vessels. This time it was around a warship in the Taiwan Strait. The US Indo-Pacific Command again released a video of the incident, showing a Chinese vessel cutting sharply across the path of a US destroyer at a distance of some 137 metres (150 yards), forcing the latter to slow down to avoid a collision.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/28/in-bid-to-counter-china-us-ramps-up-effort-to-boost-military-ties-in-asia>

Taiwan investment in China plummets as it soars in U.S. and Germany

Hideaki Ryugen

Nikkei Asia, December 29, 2023

Taiwanese investment in China plunged in 2023 to just over 10% of the island's total outbound direct investment, the lowest share in decades and well below its fast-growing spending in the U.S. and Germany. Even as Taiwan's approved foreign direct investment between January and November jumped 87% on the year to \$25.7 billion, investment in China slumped 34% to \$2.9 billion, making up just 12% of the total, official Taiwanese data shows. The drop-off stems from China's economic doldrums as well as from the influence of the long-standing and mounting tensions between the two sides. Taiwanese companies are also finding it harder to do business on the mainland amid the friction between Washington and Beijing that has led to American duties on Chinese goods.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Taiwan-investment-in-China-plummets-as-it-soars-in-U.S.-and-Germany>

The Philippines’ provocation over Ren’ai Jiao infringes China’s sovereignty: Chinese FM

Global Times, December 29, 2023

The Philippines' blatant claim of building a permanent structure on the Ren'ai Jiao (Ren'ai Reef) in the South China Sea is a major move that once again serves as an attempt at breaking a promise,

a change in policy, and the destruction of the uninhabited status of Ren'ai Jiao, the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated. The move seriously infringes on China's sovereignty and violates international law and the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a routine press conference, adding that China will resolutely respond to any infringement and provocation and firmly safeguard its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202312/1304517.shtml>

The U.S. needs more munitions to deter China

Wilson Beaver

The Heritage Foundation, December 29, 2023

America is preparing for a conflict with China over Taiwan, but North Korea could decide to invade South Korea at any time—and the most dangerous window might be while the U.S. is engaged in a war over Taiwan. The United States has treaty obligations to help South Korea defend itself, and expending munitions in such a war would further endanger America's capacity to fight China. Frederick the Great once said that when you defend everything, you defend nothing. With U.S. attention fixated on supplying Ukraine with munitions needed for its war with Russia, and a probable continuation of violence in the Middle East, the U.S. risks being drawn into fights in three regions at the same time. This will be more than the U.S. can manage with its current munitions stores.

<https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/the-us-needs-more-munitions-deter-china>

China appoints new defence minister after predecessor's disappearance

Edward White, Cheng Leng and Chan Ho-him

Financial Times, December 29, 2023

China has appointed a former navy chief as its new defence minister, four months after his predecessor disappeared from public view. Dong Jun, 62, replaces Li Shangfu, who was officially removed as defence minister and member of China's cabinet in October. The Financial Times previously reported that US officials believe Li, who was last seen in public in August, was under investigation for corruption. The appointment of a new defence minister, a position that in China serves as the People's Liberation Army's face to the outside world, could help smooth engagement between Beijing and Washington on defence matters as the two powers seek to thaw icy bilateral relations. Dong's appointment comes as President Xi Jinping tightens control over the China's armed forces amid a widening crackdown on alleged corruption among senior government officials.

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20231229/p2g/00m/0in/041000c>

China's Belt and Road in limbo

Nikkei Asia, December 29, 2023

China's Belt and Road Initiative is facing new snags, with Italy announcing its withdrawal from the program while security concerns in Pakistan and elsewhere cloud the prospects for ongoing infrastructure projects. While China continues to face criticism that it is creating debt traps for financially distressed countries, President Xi Jinping's government is making moves that could potentially benefit the huge infrastructure building drive, such as drawing closer to Afghanistan's Taliban government. Here is a selection of stories on the latest developments. Italy this month decided to pull out of the Belt and Road Initiative. The country's right-wing leader, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, had been vocal about wanting to withdraw, at one point saying the program had not produced the hoped-for results. What does this mean for relations between the two countries?

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Belt-and-Road/On-topic-China-s-Belt-and-Road-in-limbo>

China's State Council approves new nuclear plants

Wang Keju

China Daily, December 30, 2023

China's State Council granted approval to two new nuclear power projects, and called for intensified support for the innovation and development of the country's nuclear power industry with an emphasis on boosting competitiveness in related equipment and industries. Approval has been granted for the Taipingling nuclear power project in South China's Guangdong province, as well as the Jinqimen nuclear power project in Zhejiang province, according to an executive meeting of China's Cabinet chaired by Premier Li Qiang. It was highlighted at the meeting that the security of nuclear power is of utmost importance, emphasizing the need to adhere to the highest global safety standards and requirements while advancing project construction in a well-paced fashion.

<https://www.chinadailyhk.com/article/369029>

What China's new defence minister tells us about Xi's military purge

Christian Shepherd

The Washington Post, December 30, 2023

A dramatic clear-out and reshuffle of the Chinese military's top brass escalated this week when the ruling Communist Party dismissed high-ranking officers and appointed a naval commander as defense minister four months after his predecessor disappeared amid a sweeping corruption

crackdown. A year into his third term, Xi Jinping, China's most powerful leader in decades, is attempting — once again — to curb deep-rooted graft that threatens his ambition of turning the People's Liberation Army into a “world-class” fighting force able to go toe-to-toe with the United States. The promotion of Admiral Dong Jun, the 62-year-old former head of the Chinese navy, came alongside announcements that a dozen generals and senior executives from state-run military enterprises had been removed from the country's legislature and top political advisory body.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/30/china-defense-minister-xi-military/>

China expels 9 army officials from parliament

Voice of America, December 30, 2023

China has expelled nine military officials from its parliament, including four generals of the army's strategic missile unit, in a sweeping reshuffle following the appointment of a new defense minister. The decision came after a meeting of the Central Committee of the ruling Communist Party. No explanation was given for the officials' removal. Their removal is one of a series of high-level restructuring moves in the military establishment since defense minister Li Shangfu was abruptly sacked in October following months of speculation about his whereabouts. Appointed in March, Li disappeared from public view in August before being formally dismissed in October.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/china-expels-9-army-officials-from-parliament-/7419013.html>

China's Earth observing satellites begin operation

Zhao Lei

China Daily, December 30, 2023

The Land Surveyor 1-01A and 1-01B satellites, a pair of Earth observation radar satellites, were put to formal operations, according to the China National Space Administration. The administration said in a news release that the control of the two satellites was transferred to the Ministry of Natural Resources, the spacecraft's main user, at a handover ceremony in Beijing. The two satellites had completed all of their in-orbit technical tests and had been ready for formal operations, it noted. The Land Surveyor 1-01A satellite was launched in January 2022 by a Long March 4C carrier rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China. The Land Surveyor 1-01B was lifted by the same rocket model from Jiuquan the next month.

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202312/30/WS658f7ddda3105f21a5079d0b.html>

China's state-owned space giant CASC completes all 48 launch missions for 2023 with a perfect success rate

Deng Xiaoci

Global Times, December 30, 2023

Having successfully launched an internet technology test satellite using a Long March-2C rocket from the Northwest China's Gansu Province, China's state-owned space giant China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC) announced that it has completed all 48 missions scheduled for the year of 2023, with a perfect success rate. Sources inside the space industry said the mission marked the completion of China's annual space launch plan in 2023. So far, China has carried out nearly 70 rocket launches this year and 47 of them were conducted by the Long March rocket family, the nation's main launch vehicle fleet.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202312/1304522.shtml>

Xi says China will 'surely be reunified' with self-ruled Taiwan in New Year's address

The Seattle Times, December 31, 2023

Chinese President Xi Jinping said China would "surely be reunified" with Taiwan during his televised New Year's address, renewing Beijing's threats to take over the self-ruled island, which it considers its own. Taiwan split from China amid civil war in 1949, but Beijing continues to regard the island of 23 million with its high-tech economy as Chinese territory and has been ramping up its threat to achieve that by military force if necessary. "China will surely be reunified, and all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait should be bound by a common sense of purpose," Xi said in his annual address, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. China has described Taiwan's Jan. 13 presidential and parliamentary elections as a choice between war and peace.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/china-calls-taiwan-presidential-frontrunner-destroyer-of-peace/>

China's economic engine is running out of fuel

Yi Fuxian

The Korea Times, December 31, 2023

Earlier this month, the ratings agency Moody's cut its outlook on China's sovereign credit rating to negative, citing risks from a deepening property crisis and a prolonged growth slowdown. In fact, Moody's now predicts that annual economic growth will fall to 4 percent in 2024 and 2025,

before slowing further, to 3.8 percent, on average, for the rest of the decade. Potential growth will decline to 3.5 percent by 2030. A major driver of this slowdown will be “weaker demographics.” Not surprisingly, China’s leaders said they were “disappointed” with the downgrade, claiming that the economy still has “huge development resilience and potential” and will remain a powerful engine of global growth. But China’s assessment of its potential growth is based on deeply flawed forecasts.

https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2024/02/137_365937.html

*Sylloge on China is compiled by Mr. Niranjan C. Oak
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