

Indo-Pacific Defense Debrief

October 7, 2024

This debrief covers the period from September 30 - October 6, providing summaries of events and developments related to the Department of Defense's operations in the Indo-Pacific region.

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Executive Office

In a statement, the White House said Biden had delegated the Secretary of State the authority "to direct the **drawdown of up to \$567 million in defense articles and services** of the Department of Defense, and military education and training, to provide assistance to Taiwan".
(White House)

Department of Defense

China is the dominant supplier of batteries, motors, sensors, rare-earth materials and other key components needed by U.S. defense companies. The industry's outside reliance on China for materials to build everything from drones to ships and missiles has become an untenable reality in Washington. **Breaking up with China is expensive and often befuddling, defense startups say, yet it is necessary for business survival.** Evolving and often unclear regulations in the U.S., as well as export restrictions in China, have pushed startups to improvise solutions and make bets on which parts will become off-limits. The hodgepodge of strategies includes manufacturing in Southeast Asia, sourcing parts from Mexico, building components in the U.S. and using 3-D printers to make replacements. *(Wall Street Journal)*

Army

The first batch of equipment for a new American rotational force employing the Stryker fighting vehicle arrived at a southern port over the weekend, the U.S. Army in South Korea said Wednesday. Stryker vehicles and other pieces of equipment belonging to the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team were unloaded in Gwangyang, 291 kilometers south of Seoul, on Sunday to replace the current 3rd Cavalry Regiment as part of a regular rotation, according to the Eighth Army. *(Yonhap News)*

The Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense-affiliated Chungshan Institute of Science and Technology is in the process of getting **certified to assemble an additional 1,985 Stinger missiles** on top of those from US arms sales, a senior defense official said yesterday. Washington is to send a team to Taiwan to evaluate the institute's manufacturing capabilities and information security, said the official, who commented on condition of anonymity. The ministry initially bought 500 missiles for the army and navy, but later increased the order to 2,485 in response to an increase in Beijing's military activities around the nation, and to meet the army's urgent need for mobile weapons in large quantities to counter Chinese air power and drones, the official said. *(Taipei Times)*

Navy

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti released a highly anticipated report this month (*Navigation Plan 2024*) that outlines seven strategies the Navy will follow to ensure the U.S. is prepared for a potential conflict with China by 2027. In a September event with the Center for Strategic and International Studies this month, Franchetti said her plan, which follows strategic guidelines called Project 33, addresses a “changing geopolitical environment” driven by China, domestic challenges and the shift in modern warfare. (*The Hill*)

The USS Preble, the only Navy destroyer outfitted with a high-energy laser capable of shooting down drones and missiles, has left San Diego for Yokosuka, Japan, where it will be homeported for the foreseeable future to protect American interests in the Indo-Pacific and Middle East. The Preble is part of a decades-long practice of rotating ships in and out of Japan, a U.S. ally that is physically located in a spot that permits the Navy to quickly dispatch warships to potential trouble spots, such as the waters off China. (*San Diego Union-Tribune*)

Marines

The Marine Corps recently tested a mobile 5G network during a training exercise at Twentynine Palms, using repurposed trucks with 5G towers to enhance real-time situational awareness for commanders and exercise controllers. This experiment is seen as a major step in improving live, virtual, and constructive (LVC) training environments, offering greater flexibility and cost-effectiveness. The 5G network is expected to support more realistic and efficient training across various domains, including joint operations with other military branches. A key focus is deploying this capability in the Indo-Pacific, particularly to counter adversaries like China, with plans to expand 5G training networks in Okinawa next year. (*USNI News*)

The U.S. Marine Corps is cautiously reintroducing its Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) after two surf rollovers in 2021 led to a suspension of water operations. To ensure safety, they conducted a thorough hydrographic study before using the ACV in a U.S.-Korean exercise, marking its debut on the Korean Peninsula. The exercises are part of the vehicle’s first deployment, closely monitored to gather data on safe operations. This follows mechanical adjustments and retraining efforts after earlier incidents involving the ACV and its predecessor, the Assault Amphibious Vehicle, which faced a fatal sinking in 2020. (*Defense One*)

Marine Rotational Force — Southeast Asia arrived in the Philippines for its third six-month deployment. To start, they will training with the Philippines’ Sama Sama and Kamandag forces. The force will train in several areas, including aircraft fires integration; combat medical care; logistics support in contested environments; small boat operations; and drone employment. It will also do live-fire training, military operations in urban terrain and hand-to-hand combat, according to the release.

The Marines’ seaborne quick-reaction force on Okinawa now has a dedicated support group. Combat Logistics Battalion 12 became the 12th Littoral Logistics Battalion, an element of the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment, Thursday at the consolidated club on Camp Hansen. The redesignated battalion will provide supply and medical support, general engineering, explosive

ordnance disposal and transportation to the regiment in “actively contested maritime spaces, integrated with allies, partners, and the Joint Force,” according to a 3rd Marine Division news release Sept. 23. (*Stars & Stripes*)

Exercises & Activities

Timor Sea - Ships representing the U.S. Navy, Royal Australian Navy, and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force joined in the Timor Sea to conduct a **multilateral exercise**, including formation sailing, combined communication, and a replenishment-at-sea. Other elements of the exercise included anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare area operations, as well as electronic warfare drills and subject matter expert exchanges. (*US 7th Fleet*)

Philippines - The Royal Australian Navy, Royal Australian Air Force, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, Royal New Zealand Navy, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and the US Navy conducted a **Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA)** within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone. This iteration included training on routine multilateral surface operations, deck landings, hoisting, and search and rescue. (*US 7th Fleet*)

Newly Released Reports

- **The China-Russia Entente in East Asia: Contending with Authoritarian Partnership in a Critical Region** *Center for a New American Security*
- **How American Taxpayers and Universities Fund the CCP's Advanced Military and Technological Research** *Select Committee on the CCP*