



Building China's Militia: An Integral Part of China's Armed Forces

OE Watch Commentary: According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on National Defense, promulgated in 1997, China's armed forces must consist of active-duty forces and reserve forces of the People Liberation Army (PLA), the People's Armed Police Force, and the militia. Like the People's Armed Police, the militia is a largely paramilitary reserve group that is not considered part of the PLA, even though it conducts military training. The militia falls under the unified leadership of the State Council, the Central Military Commission (CMC), and the leadership of local Party committees, local governments, and local military commands. An important part of China's security apparatus, their duties include providing logistics and security support to the PLA, as well as disaster relief and internal security. In times of national emergency, they are expected to integrate with the military.

The militia is expected to achieve "first-rate combat power," but, as the accompanying article extract explains, it has some weaknesses that need to be addressed. According to the article, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, these weaknesses can be attributed to what some analysts might refer to as "peace disease." Some members of the militia possess "peacetime" thinking more than "wartime" thinking, which makes "their identification as 'soldiers' become less pronounced."

According to the article, another challenge is that the militia consists of a large number of people from diverse backgrounds, which makes them more complex and results in "uneven military preparation." They also face training and equipment issues, and possess few specialized cadres. Finally, the article points out the difficulty in organizing training for the militia given that "the militia-organizing enterprises focus on economic activities and [are] unwilling to train."

The article goes on to recommend a number of steps to resolve some of the inefficiencies of the militia. For example, it suggests making the militia's military training central, important, and essential because "it is the most important task in the construction of militia forces in the new era." It also pushes for them to make combat-realistic training tough. In the past, training was "unoriginal" with the same routines being rehashed every year. Training should follow the mission and talented individuals should be the lynchpin. The goal, according to the author, is to "improve the militia's capability to carry out a diverse set of missions, constantly innovating in respect of the construction of the militia forces in the new era, and ensuring the long-term development thereof." **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Failure to faithfully and rigorously carry out the militia’s military training will result in a lack of innovation and progress in the generation of combat power, leading to the embarrassing situation of the militia being useless during peacetime and ineffective during wartime.”

Source: “Du Xin and Li Yingjiu, “全力推动民兵军事训练提质增效 (Fully Advancing the Militia’s Military Training to Improve Quality and Effectiveness),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 30 June 2020. http://www.81.cn/gfbmap/content/2020-06/30/content_264804.htm

Fully Advancing the Militia’s Military Training to Improve Quality and Effectiveness

As an important part of the armed forces, the militia must be able to “mobilize effectively, deploy efficiently, and perform successfully” at the critical juncture. ...

...there is still much room for improvement in the ability of militia forces to carry out missions. The underlying reason is that, with the expansion of the militia’s missions and tasks, some people possess “peacetime” thinking more than “wartime” thinking, with their identification as “soldiers” becoming less pronounced. At the same time, the makeup of the militia is complex, consisting of a large number of persons from a wide variety of backgrounds, with uneven military preparation. Also, the militia faces many practical difficulties, such as issues relating to training facilities and equipment. Several factors also cause the quality of the militia’s military training to be lacking in improvement, such as a low number of specialized military cadres at the rank and file and difficulty of organizing for training, the militia-organizing enterprises’ focus on economic activities and unwillingness to train, as well as individual soldiers’ fear of hardship and unwillingness to train, etc.

The fact is, the militia’s military training must be a task that remains central, important, and essential; it is the most important task in the construction of militia forces in the new era, directly affecting the [militia’s] ability to carry out a diversified set of missions. Failure to faithfully and rigorously carry out the militia’s military training will result in a lack of innovation and progress in the generation of combat power, leading to the embarrassing situation of the militia being useless during peacetime and ineffective during wartime.

...Therefore, we must promote national defense education so that it expands to and permeates various fields...

The rules of the battlefield are written in blood; they are not in any way contrived. To generate combat power that is effective in actual combat, combat-realistic training must be tough. Thus, to take the initiative in the militia’s military training, we must abandon traditional practices that involve unoriginal training, the same routines every year, and repeated foundational training... Instead, by taking our mission as the guiding force, the training outline as the basis, talented individuals as the lynchpin, task force units as the focus, our bases as the foundation, and institutions as the guarantee, we must appropriately reduce the amount and time required for training on basic subjects and increase the proportion of training on subjects that have greater applicability, urgency, and relevance to war fighting... We must truly improve the militia’s capability to carry out a diverse set of missions, constantly innovating in respect of the construction of militia forces in the new era, and ensuring the long-term development thereof.