



# Chinese Central Military Commission Issues New Outline of Joint Operations

**OE Watch Commentary:** China's Central Military Commission (CMC) has issued an outline for improving the joint combat capabilities of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). The CMC is China's senior military authority. According to a press release regarding the outline (which itself is not public) published by state-run press agency *Xinhua*, the document represents the highest level of the Chinese military's system of operational regulations and is meant to clarify responsibilities and generally standardize how operations work at higher levels across the PLA.

While references to the PLA's joint operations appeared in white papers in the early 2000s, real progress toward actually reaching that goal has only appeared in the past ten years. At the end of 2015, the CMC reorganized China's military regions into a system of joint Theater Commands and abolished the General Staff Department in favor of a Joint Staff Department with clearer lines of communication and a less dominant role for PLA ground forces.

The 2019 Defense White Paper released by the Chinese State Council previously committed the PLA to "generally achieve mechanization by the year 2020 with significantly enhanced informatization and greatly improved strategic capabilities," essentially completing modernization by 2035 and "fully transforming" into "world-class forces" by 2050.

In October 2020, a communiqué released after the fifth plenary session of the 19th Chinese Communist Party Central Committee committed China to build a "fully modern military" by 2027, the centennial of the PLA's founding.

According to the excerpted press release, the outline seems to build on the progress detailed in these previous white papers. As such, "The CMC has ordered all levels of the armed forces to study and implement the outline." The adoption of a unified set of guidelines is another important step toward building a joint force. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



General Li Zuocheng, chief of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission.

Source: Chief Petty Officer Elliott Fabrizio via Wikimedia, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/48/China%E2%80%99s\\_Central\\_Military\\_Commission\\_Gen\\_Li\\_Zuocheng.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/48/China%E2%80%99s_Central_Military_Commission_Gen_Li_Zuocheng.jpg), Public Domain

***“The results of these reforms have great significance for the consolidation and deepening of the outcomes of reform regarding leadership and command structure, force structure, as well as for the PLA’s joint operational capabilities.”***

**Source:** “经中央军委主席习近平批准 中央军委印发《中国人民解放军联合作战纲要（试行）》，” (Following Approval by CMC Chairman Xi Jinping, the CMC Issues the Outline of PLA Joint Operations [Trial Implementation]), *Xinhua*, 13 November 2020. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-11/13/c\\_1126735392.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-11/13/c_1126735392.htm)

*Following approval by Central Military Commission (CMC) Chairman Xi Jinping, the CMC has issued the Outline of People's Liberation Army Joint Operations (Trial), which went into effect beginning on 7 November 2020.*

*The Outline adheres to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era, thoroughly implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Strengthening the military and the military's strategic guideline for a New Era. Focusing on achieving the Party's goal of strengthening the military in the New Era, and transforming the people's armed forces into world-class forces, [the Outline] is focused on establishing a system of regulations for joint operations, establishing basic concepts, systems, clarifying basic responsibilities, and answering major questions of "which wars to fight" and "How to fight them" from an institutional level, stressing the importance of combat preparedness.*

*The results of these reforms have great significance for the consolidation and deepening of the outcomes of reform regarding leadership and command structure, force structure, as well as for the PLA's joint operational capabilities.*

*The Outline represents the highest level of the Chinese military's system of operational regulations in the New Era and emphasizes guiding ideas and principles, focusing on providing macro-level guidance and overall standardization, clarifying basic issues of joint operations organization and implementation, unifying thought on combat, clarifying the sequence of authority and responsibility, and clarifies major principles, requirements and basic procedures for conducting joint operations as well as operational support, national defense mobilization, political work, etc.*

*The CMC has ordered all levels of the armed forces to study and implement the outline, and take it as the fundamental basis for organizing joint combat and training activities, so as to comprehensively improve the military's ability to fight and win wars in the new era.*