

Chinese PLA Showing Signs of Possible Escalation in Sino-Indian Border Dispute

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OE Watch Commentary

In the ongoing Sino-Indian Border dispute, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been upgrading its capabilities, reinforcing its positions, and rotating troops in areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory. The first article, published in *Global Times*, an English-language Chinese publication sponsored by *People's Daily*, explains that an unidentified unit affiliated with the PLA's Xinjiang Military Command recently replaced its outdated artillery with at least 10 PHL-3 long-range multiple rocket launchers. The PHL-3 is a 12-round, 300 mm Multi-Launch Rocket System that was developed by China North Industries Corporation. According to the article, the rocket systems will be advantageous in the high-altitude plateau regions because they offer wider coverage capability with concentrated firepower from a safe distance. They also enhance the PLA's all-weather combat capability. Eight vehicles, which observers said might provide command and communications support, are also believed to have been included in the unit's upgrades.

The second article, published in *Times of India*, an Indian English-language daily newspaper, explains that the PLA is rapidly converting its "temporary structures, ammunition dumps, helipads, and surface-



Chinese PHL-03 300mm long-range multiple rocket launcher.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PHL-03_Multiple_rocket_launchers_20170902.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

to-air missile positions, which it had set up last year within 25 to 120 kilometers of the LAC, into permanent positions.

While China's reporting of these upgraded weapons systems could be considered a show of force, the deployment of these systems challenges the status quo along the disputed border with India.

“China is now further reinforcing its military positions and rotating troops in the ‘depth areas’ along the Line of Actual Control in a clear signal that it has no intent to de-escalate anytime soon.”

Source: Liu Xuanzun, “New Rocket Launcher System Delivered to PLA’s High-Altitude Plateau Unit,” *Global Times* (English-language Chinese publication sponsored by *People’s Daily*, the daily newspaper of the CPC Central Committee), 10 May 2021. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202105/1223012.shtml>

A unit affiliated with the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Xinjiang Military Command deployed in a high-altitude plateau recently replaced its outdated artillery with digital, long-range heavy rocket artillery, greatly enhancing its all-weather combat capability in the border region.

The unidentified unit, currently deployed in a snow-covered region at an elevation of more than 5,200 meters, recently received delivery of a batch of new self-propelled heavy rocket launchers, which are highly mobile, fast-reacting, highly accurate, very deadly and jamming-resistant, China Central Television (CCTV) reported on Saturday.

They will be deployed for missions like fast deployment, seizing and control of key regions, and group assault in many types of terrains, including high-altitude terrains and deserts as well as close to rivers and lakes, under all weather conditions, the report said.

Source: Rajat Pandit, “Year After Pangong Clash, China Reinforces Positions, Rotates Troops Along LAC,” *Times of India* (An Indian-English-language daily newspaper and the third largest newspaper in India), 5 May 2021. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/year-after-pangong-clash-china-reinforces-positions-rotates-troops-along-lac/articleshow/82396364.cms?frmapp=yes&from=mdr>

A year after Indian and Chinese soldiers first clashed on the north bank of Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh, China is now further reinforcing its military positions and rotating troops in the “depth areas” along the Line of Actual Control in a clear signal that it has no intent to de-escalate anytime soon.

With the harsh winter having receded, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is fast converting the temporary structures, ammunition dumps, helipads and surface-to-air missile positions it had set up last year in the “depth areas”, ranging from 25 to 120-km from the LAC, into permanent positions now.

“There is no fresh accretion of PLA troops on the frontlines in eastern Ladakh. But China continues to maintain sizeable forces in the areas to the rear of the friction points, while it reinforces military positions all along the frontier in the region,” said a senior officer on Tuesday...