

India's Scrutiny of Chinese Actions

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OE Watch Commentary

The border standoff between India and China that flared up in May 2020 has caused Indian officials to pay increased attention to Chinese activities near the border and to developments within the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The accompanying excerpted articles report on China's recent announcement of a new commander for the PLA's Western Theater Command and it provides a look at how closely India is scrutinizing Chinese actions.

The article from *Xinhua*, the official state-run press agency of China, reports how Chinese President Xi Jinping recently "presented certificates of order at a ceremony to promote five senior military officers to the rank of general" and that the promoted officers included the PLA's Commander of the Western Theater Command, Wang Haijiang.

The article from *India Today*, an independent news magazine, also reports on General Wang Haijian's recent promotion as well as on related developments. The article notes that this is "the fourth time that the Chinese President" has "changed the top General since the India-China standoff in Ladakh last year" and that Wang "is one of the rare top generals in the [PLA] with actual combat experience." The article also points out that this is not the only change of command, as China has "also posted an additional air force General in the Western Theatre Command since it has increased deployment of both aircraft and air defence formations."

The article goes into more of General Wang's background, including



Image: Map of Western Theatre of PLA

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Western_Theatre_of_PLA.svg
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how he "is seen as a domain expert and has served earlier as a commander in the Tibet Military District and in the Xinjiang military district" and that he "has served in all theatres opposite India." Lastly, the article notes how this comes at a time when "China and India have disengaged from most friction points after 12 rounds of talks at the level of the Corps commanders," but that "tensions remain high." As the situation with the border continues to play out, the articles provide a look at what China is doing with leadership in the Western Theater Command and how closely India continues to follow it.

“He is seen as a domain expert and has served earlier as a commander in the Tibet Military District and in the Xinjiang military district.”

Source: "Xi presents orders to promote military officers to rank of general," *Xinhua* (the official state-run press agency of China), 6 September 2021. http://www.news.cn/english/2021-09/06/c_1310171657.htm

Xi Jinping, chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), on Monday presented certificates of order at a ceremony to promote five senior military officers to the rank of general.

The ceremony was held by the CMC in Beijing... The promoted officers are Commander of the Western Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Wang Haijiang...

Source: Gaurav C Sawant, "China changes Western Theatre Commander again," *India Today* (an independent news magazine), 8 September 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/china-pla-western-theatre-commander-change-president-xi-jinping-1850721-2021-09-08>

Chinese President Xi Jinping has changed the Western Theatre Commander once again. General Wang Haijiang has been promoted to a General and appointed as the top General commanding the Chinese Western Theatre Command (WTC) opposite the line of control from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

This is the fourth time that the Chinese President, who is also the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), changed the top General since the India-China standoff in Ladakh last year...

59-year-old Gen Wang Haijiang is one of the rare top generals in the People's Liberation Army with actual combat experience. He is a Vietnam War veteran... The Chinese armed forces have also posted an additional air force General in the Western Theatre Command since it has increased deployment of both aircraft and air defence formations...

Gen Wang was promoted to the rank of a Lt Gen and made the commander of the Xinjiang region under the Western Theatre command in 2019. He is seen as a domain expert and has served earlier as a commander in the Tibet Military District and in the Xinjiang military district. He has served in all theatres opposite India.

Though China and India have disengaged from most friction points after 12 rounds of talks at the level of the Corps commanders, tensions remain high...