



China Holds Naval Review in the South China Sea

OE Watch Commentary: On 12 April the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) held its largest-ever naval review in the South China Sea near Hainan province as reported on in the accompanying excerpted article from *People's Daily*. Led by a complement of submarines, and with the Liaoning aircraft carrier in a prominent place, the review included 48 warships and submarines, 76 combat aircraft and more than 10,000 personnel.

Notably, more than half of the naval vessels that participated were commissioned after the 18th Party Congress in 2012, when Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping came to power. The review appears to be the capstone of a 6-month cycle of political achievements for Xi, who further consolidated his power at the 19th Party Congress in October of last year, and during China's National People's Congress in March, where the body changed term limits to allow Xi to remain president beyond 2023. The review also took place right before the PLAN's 69th anniversary on 23 April. Speaking from the deck of the Changsha, a Type-052 Destroyer, and accompanied by the Central Military Commission (CMC) Vice Chairman Xu Qiliang (许其亮) and CMC members Zhang Youxia (张又侠), Wei Fenghe (微风和), Miao Hua (苗华) and Zhang Shengmin (张升民), Xi emphasized the role that the PLAN plays in what he frequently describes as the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese people."

Xi Jinping has made large-scale military parades a more regular feature of his tenure as Party Secretary. In 2017 he reviewed a PLA parade commemorating the 90th anniversary of the PLA in Zhurihe, Inner Mongolia after the conclusion of annual exercises. In both cases, the parades have been a prelude to, or conclusion of, combat training, rather than a stand-alone event. This reflects the emphasis Xi has placed on improving the PLA's training.

After the review, many of the forces involved are expected to depart for inter-regional (跨区), actual combat training exercises near the Taiwan Strait. The review and subsequent exercises are also regarded as sending a deterrent message to the region, particularly in the light of recent remarks by Republic of China (Taiwan) Premier William Lai's (赖清德) regarding Taiwan's sovereignty—which Chinese government officials described as "dangerous and presumptuous." Editorial commentaries in the official government mouthpiece *People's Daily* article further linked the threat of Taiwanese independence to the need for a strong navy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

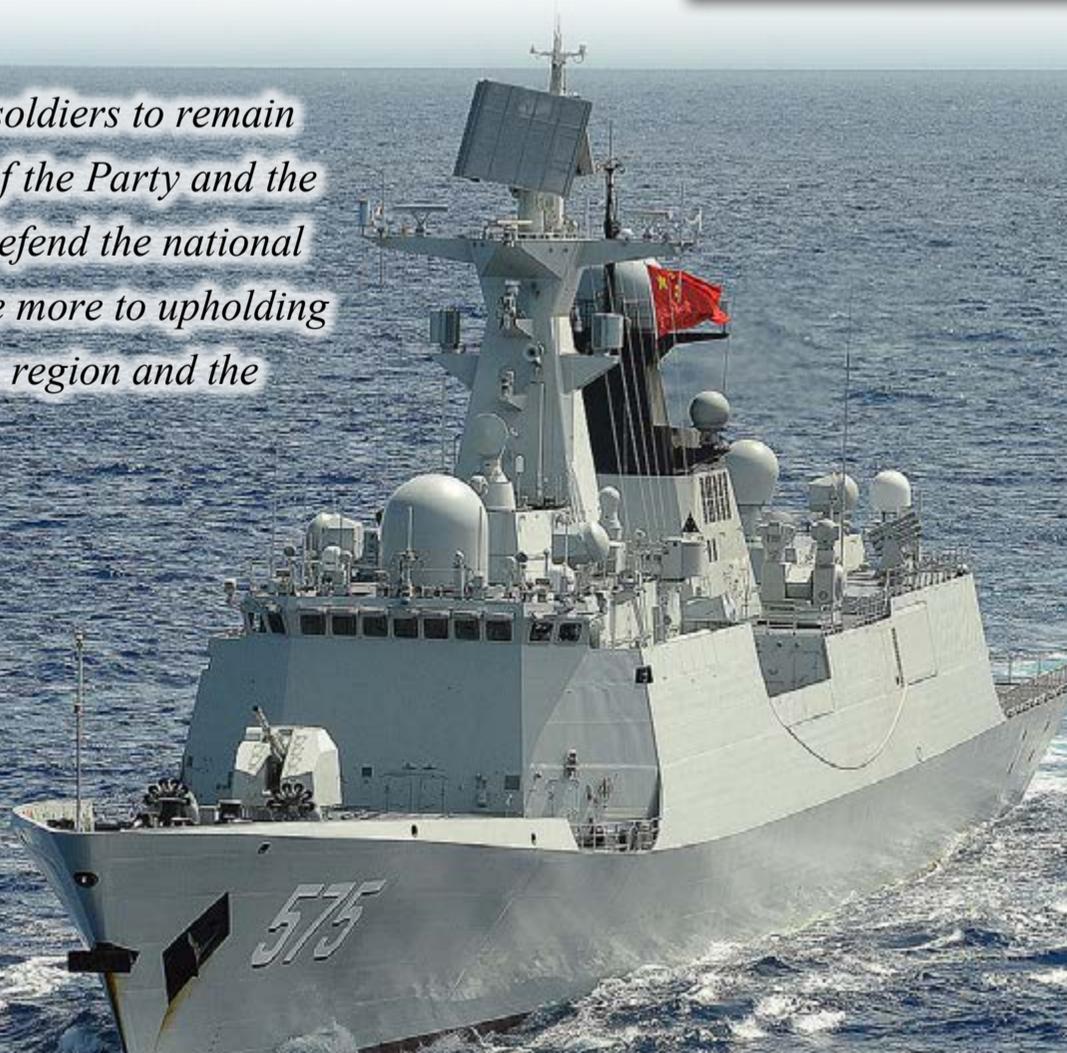
Source: “习近平在出席南海海域海上阅兵时强调:深入贯彻新时代党的强军思想 把人民海军全面建成世界一流海军 (Xi Jinping Presiding at South China Sea Naval Review Emphasizes: Deepen Implementation of the Party's New Era Strong Military Thought; Build the People's Navy Into a World-Class Navy),” *People's Daily*, 13 April 2018. http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2018-04/13/nw.D110000renmrb_20180413_2-01.htm

It has always been China's aspiration to have a strong navy, which serves as a key guarantee to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

[Xi] asked naval officers and soldiers to fully implement the Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces, be firm in ideals and convictions, and uphold the glorious traditions, while pushing for technological innovation, developing new types of battle forces, and building a modern maritime combat system.

Xi asked naval officers and soldiers to remain on high alert, answer the calls of the Party and the people at all times, resolutely defend the national interests, and strive to contribute more to upholding the peace and stability of the region and the world.

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People's Liberation Army Navy frigate Yueyang.

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