

Civil Air Defense Exercises Held in Western China

OE Watch Commentary: In late May, Chongqing held large-scale integrated civil air defense exercises. Located at the confluence of the Jialing and Yangtze rivers, Chongqing is an important inland port. The city of Chongqing has some 18 million citizens, though the larger municipality surrounding it (also named Chongqing) brings the total to over 30 million. Civil air defense holds special significance for Chongqing, as it was the target of heavy Japanese bombing during World War II.

As the accompanying passage from China's *PLA Daily* discusses, the exercise included a simulated air raid against the Huangyiping Power plant [黄桷坪电厂] in south-central Chongqing to test new modes of evacuation, including use of private cars and buses to rapidly remove people from possible target areas.

While civil air defense is typically something most countries actively prepare for in wartime, passive defensive measures permeate Chinese military and civilian infrastructure. Many universities (including the one attended by the author) have air raid shelters, even in structures built in the past 30 years.

Mirroring a national focus on Military-Civil Fusion, the exercise indicated that the Chinese military is attempting to build better lines of communication with civilian government agencies and the population more generally. Linking the Western Theater Command (which has responsibility for Chongqing) directly into the civil defense plans will likely improve the ability of civil authorities to respond promptly and utilize all available assets in a crisis. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



Chongqing.

Source: Photo by Major Zhu on Unsplash, <https://images.unsplash.com/photo-1523884551123-1ba6db38e1ee?ixlib=rb-1.2.1&ixid=eyJhcHB8aWQiOjE9MDd9&auto=format&fit=crop&w=1489&q=80>, Public Domain.

“Under the guidance of the Ministry, the People’s Air Defense Operation was integrated into the theater’s joint air defense system, with the forces stationed in Chongqing acting as a support force for civil air defense operations to coordinate air interceptions, ground strikes, and rear protection actions to gain the initiative and preparation time for civil air defense.”

Source: “‘渝动·人防-2019’城市人民防空行动演练 - 将人民防空融入战区联合防空体系 (‘Chongqing* Mobilization - Civil Air Defense-2019’ Urban Civil Air Defense Action Exercise- Integrating People’s Air Defense into the Theater Joint Air Defense System),” *PLA Daily*, 1 June 2019. http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilization/2019-06/01/content_4842794.htmhtml?agt=15422

*: The character yu [渝] is an abbreviation for Chongqing.

On May 28, Chongqing held five urban civil air defense operations drills. Ren Yuan [任远], a member of the Jiulongpo District [九龙坡区] Civil Defense Medical Rescue Detachment, found that the exercise “Chongqing Mobilization - Civil Defense-2019” was very different from the past.

From May 28th to 29th, more than 50 military units and more than 4,000 soldiers and civilians participated in the “Chongqing Mobilization - Civil Defense-2019” drill.

“Civil air defense is closely linked with field air defense and high-value asset air defense. It is impossible to purely study civil air defense [without this greater context] and fall into the old routine of independent design.” According to the commanders of the Chongqing Garrison District, “Based on this understanding, the garrison district is mobilized under the authority of the Western Theater Command and the National Defense Mobilization Department of the Central Military Commission. Under the guidance of the Ministry, the People’s Air Defense Operation was integrated into the theater’s joint air defense system, with the forces stationed in Chongqing acting as a support force for civil air defense operations to coordinate air interceptions, ground strikes, and rear protection actions to gain the initiative and preparation time for civil air defense.

Due to the clarification of the thinking of the people’s air defense operations and the division of responsibilities between the military and the various departments, and previous essential training, actual military drills, and overall training were effective. This exercise introduced a number of innovative measures: Yuzhong District [渝中区] changed its previous population evacuation plan and focused on evacuating people in target areas to adjacent districts and integrating use of busses and private cars to increase speed and efficiency. After the simulated air raid on the Huangyiping Power plant [黄桷坪电厂], military units continued to supply electricity and the city. ...

At the drill site, Li Guokun [李国坤], a staff member of the Chongqing Garrison War Readiness Development Bureau, told the reporter: “For the next step, we will focus on integration of civil and military, air defense and ground defense to improve coordination. We will further integrate all forces together to create an indestructible shield of the people.”