

# China Flies 38 Warplanes Near Taiwan, 6 Navy Vessels in Area



China's military flew five SU-30 and two J-16 aircraftfighter and other warplanes near Taiwan.

BEIJING (Dispatches) — China's military flew 38 fighter jets and other warplanes near Taiwan, the Taiwanese defense ministry said Friday.

Naval vessels were also seen in the area as part of China's long-running campaign of intimidation against Taiwan.

Later Friday, China's People's Liberation Army issued a protest over the flight of a United States Navy P-8A Poseidon anti-submarine patrol aircraft through the Taiwan Strait.

Calling Thursday's flight a provocation that the U.S. "openly hyped up," the PLA's Eastern Theater Command said it scrambled fighter jets to monitor the plane's flight.

Such acts "fully prove that the U.S. is a disruptor of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and a creator of security risks," the statement said. "Theater troops maintain a high level of alert at all times and resolutely defend national sovereignty and security as

well as regional peace and stability."

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Tan Kefei told a news briefing on Thursday, said that Taiwan was inviting "wolves" into the home by hosting a U.S. defense industry forum next week, and that the U.S. military-industrial complex sought to export war for profit.

He said China was "extremely concerned" to learn of the forum, which is scheduled to be held in Taipei. "The Democratic Progressive Party authorities' practice of bringing wolves into the home is repugnant and will only bring a deep disaster to Taiwanese compatriots," Tan stated, referring to Taiwan's ruling party.

He warned that the U.S. military-industrial complex sought to export war for profit. "These 'military-industrial complexes' of the United States have always been keen to sell arms around the world, export wars and seek windfall profits."

Organizers say the Taiwan-U.S. Defense

Industry Forum will be held on Wednesday. Steven Rudder, previously commander of the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific, is giving a keynote opening address at the event.

The United States is Taiwan's principal international supporter and arms supplier, despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations.

Beijing views Chinese Taipei as an inseparable part of China, repeatedly warning Washington against unwise provocations in this regard.

The United States does not recognize Taiwan as a country and officially supports the "One China" policy but regularly oversteps its own principles.

China on Thursday warned the U.S. and South Korea against "stirring up tensions" and "provoking confrontation" with the North following Washington's decision to deploy nuclear submarines to Seoul to purportedly protect it against Pyongyang.

Beijing strongly reacted to the U.S. decision to send nuclear armed submarines to South Korea by warning both Washington and Seoul against "provoking confrontation" with Pyongyang, Seoul's arch-foe.

"All parties should face up to the crux of the (Korean) peninsula issue and play a constructive role in promoting a peaceful settlement of the issue," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning at a press conference.

She further warned the U.S. and South Korea against "deliberately stirring up tensions, provoking confrontation and playing up threats."

Mao also lambasted the so-called Washington Declaration pact with Seoul, insisting that the U.S. "ignores regional security and insists on exploiting the peninsula issue to create tension."

## NATO: Ukraine Allies Sent 1,550 Combat Vehicles, 230 Tanks



Soldiers of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment stand next to a Stryker combat vehicle in Vilseck, Germany, Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2022.

KYIV, Ukraine (Dispatches) — NATO allies and partner countries have delivered more than 98% of the combat vehicles promised to Ukraine during the war, the military alliance's chief said Thursday.

Along with more than 1,550 armored vehicles, 230 tanks and other equipment, Ukraine's allies have sent "vast amounts of ammunition" and also trained and equipped more than nine new Ukrainian brigades, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

More than 30,000 troops are estimated to make up the new brigades. Some NATO partner countries, such as Sweden and Australia, have also provided armored vehicles.

"This will put Ukraine in a strong position to continue to retake occupied territory," Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels.

Russia fired more than 20 cruise missiles and two drones at Ukraine early Friday.

The missile attacks included the first one against Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, in nearly two months, although there were no reports of any targets hit. The city government al-

leged that Ukraine's air force intercepted 11 cruise missiles and two unmanned aerial vehicles over Kyiv.

The strikes on the nine-story residential building in central Ukraine occurred in Uman, a city located around 215 kilometers (134 miles) south of Kyiv. Twenty people died in that attack, according to the Interior Ministry.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the long-range cruise missiles launched overnight were aimed at places where Ukrainian military reserve units were staying before their deployment to the battlefield.

"The strike has achieved its goal. All the designated facilities have been hit," Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, the Defense Ministry's spokesperson, said. He didn't mention any specific areas or residential buildings getting hit.

Russia has been carrying out what it calls a special military operation in Ukraine since February 2022, saying the operation aims to stop Kiev's persecution of the pro-Russian population in eastern Ukraine and to "de-Nazify" the ex-Soviet republic.

## Heavy Clashes Rock Sudan's Capital Despite Truce Extension



Airstrikes, tank fire have rocked Sudan's capital region despite a ceasefire which started Friday.

CAIRO (AP) — Heavy explosions and gunfire rocked Sudan's capital, Khartoum and its twin city of Omdurman early Friday, residents said, despite the extension of a fragile truce between the country's two top generals whose power struggle has killed hundreds.

After two weeks of fighting that has turned the capital into a war zone and thrown Sudan into turmoil, a wide-ranging group of international mediators — including African and Arab nations, the UN and the United States — were intensifying their pressure on the rival generals to enter talks on resolving the crisis.

So far, however, they have managed to achieve only a series of fragile temporary cease-fires that failed to stop clashes but created enough of a lull for tens of thousands of Sudanese to flee to safer areas

and for foreign nations to evacuate thousands of their citizens by land, air and sea.

In a sign of the persistent chaos, Turkey said one of its evacuation planes was hit by gunfire outside Khartoum with no casualties on Friday, hours after both sides accepted a 72-hour truce extension, apparently to allow foreign governments complete the evacuation of their citizens.

Fierce clashes with frequent explosions and gunfire continued Friday in Khartoum's upscale neighborhood of Kafouri, where the military earlier used warplanes to bomb its rivals, the Rapid Support Forces, residents said. Clashes were also reported around the military's headquarters, the Republican Palace and the area close to the Khartoum international airport. All these areas have been flashpoints since the war between the military

and the RSF erupted on April 15.

Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have reportedly opened fire on a Turkish evacuation plane as it was landing at an airport outside Khartoum amid fighting between rivaling groups to seize power despite a truce signed between Sudan's de facto ruler Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the RSF head Hamdan Dagalo.

Sudan's regular army announced on Friday that the Turkish plane had come under RSF fire as it was landing at the Wadi Seyidna airport, adding that the Turkish aircraft's fuel system was being repaired after sustaining damage in the attack.

RSF has denied the allegations, claiming Sudan's army was "spreading lies" to damage the paramilitary forces' image.

"Our forces have remained strictly committed to the humanitarian truce that we agreed upon since midnight, and it is not true that we targeted any aircraft in the sky of Wadi Seyidna in Omdurman," the RSF said in a statement.

However, the Turkish government confirmed the attack against its C-130 evacuation plane. Ankara's defense ministry said there had been no injuries reported in the attack.

Over the past 14 days of pummeling each other, the military led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan and the RSF led by Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, have each failed to deal a decisive blow to the other in their struggle for control of Africa's third largest nation.

## Report: Hate Crimes in U.S. Poised to Surge During 2024 Presidential Campaign

NEW YORK (Yahoo News) - An April report by a coalition of human rights organizations is warning that the 2024 presidential election is once again poised to give rise to an increase in hate crimes.

"From the mainstreaming of hate and the failure of social media platforms to adequately address disinformation, the current climate is rife with opportunities for the trend of increased hate to continue into the 2024 election — unless action is taken," the report by the Leadership Conference Education Fund, the research arm of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, states.

The report, which draws on findings from 230 national human rights organizations, charts "an unmistakable pattern that has emerged during the last four presidential campaign cycles" showing "reported hate crimes increase during elections."

As the U.S. heads into what experts believe will be another deeply polarizing election cycle, the report warns of what is to come, based on FBI data that captures upticks of hate crimes from past presidential cycles, beginning with the 2008 election of the nation's first Black president, Barack Obama.

The number of reported hate crimes increased by about 5% in the election year of 2012 from the year before. According to the report, FBI data shows that hate crimes have increased by more than 80% since 2015. From 2014 to 2015, reported hate crimes against U.S. Muslims rose by 70%. In November 2016, the month Donald Trump was elected president, the FBI reported the highest number of hate crimes recorded in over a decade. From 2019 to 2020, the numbers in reported hate crimes leaped by more than 13% amid violence surrounding the year's racial justice demonstrations.

## British Public Support for Monarchy at Historic Low, Poll Reveals



Anti-monarchy campaigners plan to protest on the coronation day of King Charles in May.

LONDON (The Guardian) - Only three in 10 Britons think the monarchy is "very important", the lowest support on record, a poll shows as the king's coronation approaches.

A survey by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) shows public support for the monarchy has fallen to a historic low. A total of 45% of respondents said either it should be abolished, was not at all important or not very important.

In 2022, the year of the late queen's platinum jubilee, 35% of respondents gave one of the same three answers. Overall, answers in 2023 displayed a drop in support for the monarchy to roughly the levels last seen in 2021.

The data, based on 6,638 interviews, builds on 40 years of data collected for the annual British Social Attitudes survey. It shows the number of people who say the monarchy is "very important" has fallen to 29%, from 38% in 2022. This reflects a long-term trend of

declining support for the monarchy, with the new research showing the number of those answering "very important" at the lowest level since data collection began in 1983.

But the return to 2021 levels is in keeping with the bump in popularity the Windsors tend to receive during showpiece events such as jubilees, weddings or births, NatCen noted.

Guy Goodwin, the chief executive of NatCen, said: "Whilst we are observing a downward trend in support for the monarchy, it is clear from the data that important national events and celebrations, such as jubilees, marriages and births, have a clear and positive effect on society's views towards the monarchy."

A total of 26% of people surveyed said the monarchy was "quite important", up two percentage points on 2021. But 20% said it was "not very important", also up two points since 2021. A quarter of those questioned said the monarchy was "not at all important/should be abolished", a proportion that has remained unchanged since 2021.

## News in Brief

LONDON (Reuters) - BBC Chairman Richard Sharp resigned on Friday after an independent report found he breached rules for public appointments in relation to a loan for then Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Sharp said he had agreed to a request to stay on until the end of June to give the government time to find his successor. The country's public appointments watchdog has been investigating the way in which Sharp was selected by the government to chair the broadcaster in 2021. The report found that while he did breach the government's code for public appointments by failing to disclose a potential conflict of interest, it was also the case that a breach did not necessarily invalidate his appointment. But Sharp said staying until the end of his four year term would be a distraction from the broadcaster's "good work".

LONDON (The Independent) - Rail workers at 14 train operators are to strike on the day of the Eurovision Song Contest final after union leaders rejected the latest offer aimed at resolving a long-running pay dispute. Members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) will walk out on May 13 after the union's executive turned down a "clarification" on an offer from the Rail Delivery Group (RDG). The RMT said the offer included a first-year payment of 5% but only if the union terminated its industrial mandate, meaning no further strike action could take place.

ALASKA (AP) — Two U.S. Army helicopters collided and crashed Thursday in Alaska while returning from a training flight, killing three soldiers and injuring a fourth. Two of the soldiers died at the scene of the crash near Healy, Alaska, and a third died on the way to a hospital in Fairbanks. A fourth soldier was being treated at a hospital for injuries, the Army said in a statement. The names of those killed were being withheld until relatives could be notified, the Army said. Each AH-64 Apache helicopter was carrying two people at the time of the crash, John Pennell, a spokesperson for the U.S. Army Alaska, said earlier Thursday.

BRASÍLIA (AP) — Brazil President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on Friday granted official recognition of nearly 800 square miles of Indigenous lands, following through on a campaign promise in a move that also protects critical Amazon rainforest from commercial exploitation. Lula recognized six ancestral lands. The two largest are in the Amazon, the world's largest tropical forest and an important carbon sink that helps moderate climate change. The total area of recognized lands in the biome is 161,500 hectares (620 square miles).

BERLIN (AP) — Climate activists staged a 10th straight day of protests in Berlin, blocking key roads during rush hour and bringing parts of the German capital to a standstill Friday before being removed by police. Members of the Last Generation group glued themselves to the road, causing a traffic jam for commuters driving into the city. The group wants to draw attention to the threat of global warming and the need for governments to step up measures to curb greenhouse gas emissions.