

# China Encircles Taiwan in Warning to ‘Separatists’



This screen grab shows a view of a China Coast Guard boat passing near the coast of Matsu islands, Oct. 14, 2024.

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China deployed an aircraft carrier, other ships and warplanes in large-scale military exercises surrounding Taiwan and its outlying islands Monday, simulating the sealing off of key ports in a move that underscores the tense situation in the Taiwan Strait.

China’s Defense Ministry said the drills were a response to the Taiwanese president’s refusal to accept Beijing’s demand that self-governed Taiwan acknowledge itself as a part of the People’s Republic of China under the rule of the Communist Party.

The drills came four days after Taiwan celebrated the founding of its government on its National Day, when Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te said in a speech that China

has no right to represent Taiwan and declared his commitment to “resist annexation or encroachment.”

A map aired on China’s state broadcaster CCTV showed six large blocks encircling Taiwan indicating where the military drills were being held, along with circles drawn around Taiwan’s outlying islands. China’s Defense Ministry has not said how long the drills will last.

China deployed its Liaoning aircraft carrier for the drills, and CCTV showed a J-15 fighter jet taking off from the deck of the carrier, though the exact location of the ship is unclear.

China’s People’s Liberation Army’s Eastern Theater Command spokesperson Senior Captain Li Xi said the navy, army air force and missile corps were all mobilized for

the drills, which were an integrated operation. “This is a major warning to those who back Taiwan independence and a signifier of our determination to safeguard our national sovereignty,” Li said in a statement on the service’s public media channel.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing that China did not consider relations with Taiwan a diplomatic issue, in keeping with its refusal to recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state.

“I can tell you that Taiwan independence is incompatible with peace in the Taiwan Strait as fire with water. Provocation by the Taiwan independence forces will surely be met with countermeasures,” Mao said.

Taiwan’s Defense Ministry said it deployed warships to designated spots in the ocean to carry out surveillance and stand at ready. It also deployed mobile missile and radar groups on land to track the vessels at sea. It said as of Monday morning, they had tracked 25 Chinese warplanes and seven warships and four Chinese government ships, though it did not specify what types of ships they were.

Taiwan was a Japanese colony before being unified with China at the end of World War II. It split away in 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists fled to the island as Mao Zedong’s Communists defeated them in a civil war and took power.

## Pakistan Under Lockdown for Shanghai Group Summit



Pakistan Army soldiers stand guard at the Red Zone area, ahead of a heads-of-government gathering of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in Islamabad, Oct. 14, 2024.

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) -- Pakistan’s capital was under strict security lockdown starting Monday ahead of the arrival of Chinese Premier Li Qiang for a four-day bilateral visit and a heads-of-government gathering of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) this week.

The government has announced a three-day public holiday in Islamabad, with schools and businesses shut, and large contingents of police and paramilitary forces deployed.

Pakistan army troops will be responsible for the security of the capital’s Red Zone, which will house most of the meetings and is also home to parliament and a diplomatic enclave, according to interior ministry.

The threat alert has been high in the South Asian nation ahead of the SCO summit meeting, especially after the killing of two Chinese engineers and shooting to death of 21 miners.

Tensions have mounted after jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan called for a protest on Oct. 15 to press for his release and agitate against the coalition government, following violence

clashes between his party loyalists and security forces.

Islamabad has sought to curb all movement of Chinese nationals in the city, citing fears of violence from separatist militants.

The SCO’s 23rd meeting, which comprises nine full members including China, India, Iran and Russia, is scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday in Islamabad.

Prime Minister Li is undertaking a bilateral visit to Pakistan from Monday to Thursday, accompanied by senior officials, Pakistan’s foreign office said.

Li and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will lead their respective delegations to discuss economic and trade ties and cooperation under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a \$65 billion investment in the South Asian country under Chinese President Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative.

Li is also likely to inaugurate the CPEC funded Gwadar International Airport in restive southwestern Balochistan province, which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

The SCO participants will be represented by the prime ministers of China, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as the first vice president of Iran and external affairs minister of India, the foreign office said.

## Man Faces Gun Charges Amid New Trump Assassination Talk

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- A man arrested at a security checkpoint near Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump’s California rally on Saturday faces gun charges after he was found in possession of loaded firearms, multiple passports and a fake license plate, the local sheriff said on Sunday.

Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco said he believed his department halted an assassination attempt, though he acknowledged that was “speculation.” The suspect was released on bail on Saturday, jail records showed. A federal official said on Sunday that a federal investigation was underway.

“What we do know is he showed up with multiple passports with different names, an unregistered vehicle with a fake license plate and loaded firearms,” the sheriff said at a news conference

on Sunday afternoon. “I truly do believe that we prevented another assassination attempt.”

The 49-year-old man, identified as Las Vegas resident Vem Miller, was stopped in a black SUV by sheriff’s deputies around 5 p.m. local time on Saturday and taken into custody without incident, according to the sheriff’s office. Trump had not yet taken the stage.

Jail records show Miller was released on \$5,000 bail on Saturday after being charged with possession of a loaded firearm and a high-capacity magazine, both misdemeanors. He could not immediately be reached for comment on Sunday.

“The incident did not impact the safety of former President Trump or attendees of the event,” the sheriff’s office said in a press release.

The U.S. Attorney’s Los Angeles

office, in a statement on its web site on Sunday, also said Trump was not in danger, citing the U.S. Secret Service. The statement added that while no federal arrest had been made, an investigation was ongoing.

Trump narrowly survived an assassination attempt in July, when a gunman’s bullet grazed his ear during a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. In September, another man was charged with trying to assassinate Trump after Secret Service agents discovered him hiding with a rifle near Trump’s Palm Beach golf course. He pleaded not guilty. Those attempts raised questions about Secret Service security planning and response.

Trump’s rally on Saturday took place in the Coachella Valley, an area known for its annual music and arts festival.

## South Korea Says ‘Fully Ready’ to Respond to North’s Fire



A man uses binoculars to look at the North Korean side of the Demilitarized Zone from South Korea’s Odusan Unification Observatory in Paju.

SEOUL (AFP) -- South Korea’s military said Monday it was “fully ready” to respond after North Korea ordered troops on the border to prepare to fire in an escalating dispute over drone flights to Pyongyang.

The nuclear-armed North has accused Seoul of flying drones over its capital to drop propaganda leaflets filled with “inflammatory rumors and rubbish”, and warned Sunday that if another drone was detected, it would consider it “a declaration of war”.

Seoul’s military previously denied it was behind the flights, with local speculation centered on activist groups in the South, which have long sent propaganda and U.S. currency northwards, typically by balloon.

But the North insists Seoul is officially to blame, announcing late Sunday it had told eight artillery brigades already on war footing “to get fully ready to open fire”, and reinforced air observation posts in Pyongyang.

“Our military is closely monitoring the situation and standing fully ready for the North’s provocations,” Lee Seong-joon, a spokesman for the South’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), told a press briefing.

Pyongyang claims propaganda drones have infiltrated the capital’s airspace three times in recent days, with leader

Kim Jong Un’s powerful sister threatening a “horrible disaster” unless they stop.

In a statement early Monday, Kim Yo Jong said the drone flights were “an unpardonable, malicious challenge to our state”.

She has issued three similar back-to-back statements, calling on South Korea’s military to come up with measures to prevent a recurrence of violations of North Korean airspace.

The JCS on Monday neither confirmed nor denied that Seoul’s military was responsible for sending drones across the border, instead calling the North’s claim “shameless”.

Seoul’s military said Monday that the North appeared to be preparing to carry out explosions at roads connected to the South, days after Pyongyang said it would seal the border.

Last week, the North’s Korean People’s Army (KPA) announced the measure will “completely separate” North Korea’s territory from the South.

South Korean JCS spokesman Lee said it was possible the road blasts would take place “as early as today”.

North Korea has been bombarding the South with trash-carrying balloons -- retaliation, it says, for propaganda launched by activists in the South.

## Colonial Columbus Legacy Revives Debate in Latin America



Representatives of the Indigenous Peoples’ Movement attend an event to mark Indigenous Resistance Day, in Caracas, Venezuela October 12, 2024.

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) -- An Argentine claim that European contact brought civilization to the Americas has provoked rebukes from across Latin America, where heated debates often flare up over the era’s contested historical legacy.

Commemorating Christopher Columbus’ landing in the Americas on Oct. 12, 1492, the office of Argentina’s libertarian President Javier Milei posted on social media on Saturday that the Italian explorer’s arrival introduced enlightenment to the region.

“It marked the beginning of civilization in the American continent,” the post boasted, accompanied by a slick video set to triumphant music.

The post argues that Columbus “opened a new era of progress,” while many who agreed online pointed to human sacrifice as practiced by some native cultures as a clear example of cruelty European colonizers fought against.

Columbus’ arrival in the present-day Bahamas led to centuries of Spanish and Portuguese domination of a region stretching from much of today’s United States to near Antarctica.

The conquests and subsequent colonial experience have long generated impassioned debate. Many Latin American leaders now embrace a more critical view, acknowledging the abuses committed, including massacres, forced labor and widespread looting.

Columbus, traditionally thought to have been from Genoa, Italy, was a Sephardic Jew from somewhere in Western Europe, Spanish scientists said on Saturday after a 22-year investigation using DNA analysis.

The debates about his legacy often fall along ideological lines, with leftists especially sensitive to suggestions that the region’s Indigenous cultures are inferior. Mexico’s new leftist leader, President Claudia Sheinbaum, ended a speech on Saturday outside the nation’s capital with a repudiation of the view represented by Milei.

“For many years, they told us that they came from over there to civilize us. No! There were already great cultures here,” said Sheinbaum, who took office earlier this month, ticking off contributions from the Olmecs and Aztecs, among others.

“It’s more than that, Mexico is great because of its original peoples,” she said, speaking in the working class city of Nezahualcoyotl, named for the 15th century king of Texcoco, famed for his poetry, engineering feats and skill on the battlefield.

In 2020 when she was Mexico City mayor, Sheinbaum ordered the removal of a statue of Columbus that had adorned the capital’s most prominent avenue since 1877.

## News in Brief

MOSCOW (AFP) -- Russia’s defense minister has arrived in Beijing for talks with China’s army leadership, Moscow said Monday, as the two countries ramp up military and economic co-operation. Defense Minister Andrei Belousov will “hold a number of negotiations with the country’s military and military-political leadership” during the visit, according to the Russian defense ministry. The two countries declared a “no limits” partnership shortly before Moscow launched its “operation” in Ukraine, and have carried out a series of military drills together since. President Vladimir Putin said in August that Russia’s economic and trade links with China were “yielding results”, and that the two were working on joint “economic and humanitarian” projects. Last month, Russian and Chinese warships carried out joint drills in the Sea of Japan, part of a major naval exercise that Putin said was the largest of its kind for three decades.

NEW DELHI (Reuters) -- India said on Monday that a diplomatic communication from Canada suggesting the Indian High Commissioner and other diplomats were ‘persons of interest’ in a probe were “preposterous imputations” and part of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s political agenda. “India now reserves the right to take further steps in response to these latest efforts of the Canadian Government to concoct allegations against Indian diplomats,” India’s foreign ministry said in a statement. The communication was received on Sunday, New Delhi said.

KYIV, Ukraine (AFP) -- Kyiv said Monday its forces had destroyed a Russian military transport plane stationed at an airfield deep inside Russian territory over the weekend, the latest Ukrainian claim of an attack behind Moscow’s lines. Kyiv’s military intelligence agency said it had destroyed the Tu-134 transport aircraft overnight between Saturday and Sunday at a military airfield in the Orenburg region, which lies around 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from the border with Ukraine. “These Soviet-built airplanes are used mainly to transport leadership of the Russian defense ministry,” the Defense Intelligence of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine said on social media. The agency posted footage of what Ukraine said was an arson attack, showing a blaze burning inside an aircraft, but it did not provide details of how the alleged attack was carried out. Since the start of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, Moscow has detained hundreds of people for alleged sabotage and arson attacks on military, railway and other infrastructure sites.

LONDON (Reuters) -- A public inquiry into the death of a woman who Britain says was unwittingly killed by the Novichok nerve agent following the attempted murder of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal six years ago began on Monday. Dawn Sturgess died from exposure to Novichok in July 2018 after her partner found a counterfeit perfume bottle which police believe had been used by Russian intelligence operatives to smuggle the poison into the country. On Monday, an inquiry into Sturgess’s death finally opens, with hearings held initially in Salisbury. Its aim is to provide her family with answers to how her death came about, and it will hear some confidential evidence in secret from the government and the security services. While British police have charged in absentia three Russians, who they say are GRU military intelligence officers, over the attack on Skripal and his daughter, no formal case has been brought against them over the death of Sturgess, 44.

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka closed schools in the capital Colombo and suburbs on Monday as heavy rains triggered floods in many parts of the island nation. Heavy downpours over the weekend have wreaked havoc in many parts of the country, flooding homes, fields and roads. Three people drowned, while some 134,000 people have been affected by flooding, according to the country’s Disaster Management Centre. The center said rains and floods have damaged 240 houses and nearly 7,000 people have been evacuated. Authorities have cut electricity in some areas as a precaution. Navy and army troops have been deployed to rescue victims and provide food and other essentials. Local television channels showed flooded towns in the suburbs of Colombo. In some areas, waters reached the roofs of houses and shops.

BERLIN (AFP) -- A former East German secret police officer was sentenced to 10 years in jail for shooting dead a Polish man trying to flee to the West 50 years ago, in a landmark ruling Monday. The decision, almost 35 years after the Berlin Wall fell, marks the first murder conviction for a former Stasi officer for a homicide committed on duty, according to historians. The Berlin court found ex-Stasi officer Martin Naumann, 80, guilty of murder for killing Czeslaw Kukuczka at close range as he sought to flee through Berlin’s Friedrichstrasse border point in 1974. Judge Bernd Miezajka said the court had no doubt that Naumann was the gunman in the killing that was “carried out mercilessly” at the orders of the Stasi, adding that those who gave the order could no longer be brought to justice. Speaking ahead of the verdict, Daniela Muenkel, the head of the Stasi archives in Berlin, had said a conviction would have “great symbolic significance” in Germany’s efforts to atone for the injustices of the communist dictatorship.