



Overview of PLA Military Diplomacy in March 2025

Introduction

This is Exovera's third report that provides an overview of People's Liberation Army (PLA) military diplomacy during March 2025.¹ Both English and Chinese articles from the following sources will be used as the base. Specific sources used in the five categories discussed below are withheld. Please [contact us](#) to obtain the source list and an appendix of articles with English translations.

- English websites:
 - http://english.chinamil.com.cn/china-military/node_87047.htm
 - http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/TopStories/index.html
- Chinese websites:
 - <http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/jswj/lf/index.html> (来访/visitors)
 - <http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/jswj/cf/index.html> (出访/travel abroad)
 - <http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/jswj/jl/index.html> (交流/exchanges)
 - <http://www.81.cn/?big=jian> (key stories on front page)

Based on the format for previous reports about PLA military diplomacy, the data is organized into the following five categories and three sub-categories, and each entry is in chronological order. Of note, the China Military website (eng.chinamil.com.cn) has a section labeled MOOTW (Military Operations Other Than War), which has four subsections labeled Peacekeeping, Escort Missions, Disaster Relief, and Counterterrorism. The information provided in each entry is a gist summary and not necessarily word-for-word entries:

- Category 1: Senior-Level Meetings and Visits
- Category 2: International Bilateral and Joint Military Exercises and Interaction
- Category 3: Functional Exchanges
- Category 4: Academic Exchanges
- Category 5: Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) (aka Nontraditional Security Operations)
 - Subcategory 5-1: Escort Missions (which includes the Gulf of Aden escort task forces, port calls, and the “Peace Ark” hospital ship)

¹ The new CASI Military Diplomacy Report has been published at the following link:
<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/CASI/Display/Article/4113560/senior-pla-leader-military-diplomacy-from-october-2017-through-december-2024/>. Ken Allen, “Senior PLA Leader Military Diplomacy from October 2017 through December 2024,” China Aerospace Studies Institute, 17 March 2025,
<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Research/Other-Topics/2025-03-17%20Senior%20PLA%20Military%20Diplomacy.pdf?ver=pr9F9qmtzpse3vG9lKPdbw%3d%3d>.
Ken Allen, “Appendices to Senior PLA Leader Military Diplomacy report from October 2017 through December 2024,” China Aerospace Studies Institute, 17 March 2025,
<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Research/Other-Topics/2025-03-17%20Appendices%20for%20Senior%20Leader%20Military%20Diplomacy%20since%20October%202017.pdf?ver=e6QVRGy15xuLiLEoFrRLYA%3d%3d>.

- Subcategory 5-2: United Nations Peacekeeping
- Subcategory 5-3: Other MOOTW

See Appendix A for a list of acronyms.

Overview

For comparison purposes, Table 1 below shows the number of English and Chinese articles that were downloaded during January, February, and March.

Table 1: English and Chinese Article Downloaded Each Month

	Jan	Feb	Mar
English	14	16	15
Chinese	8	5	10
TOTAL	22	21	25

Although China's Ministry of National Defense (MND) hosted a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in Qingdao in March, no information was found on the senior PLA leaders who participated. As such, it does not appear that any senior-level leaders have hosted visitors or traveled abroad so far this year.

Unlike January and February, where only a couple articles were published in Chinese and English, several articles were published in both Chinese and English in March but were written by different people with slightly different content.

Category 1: Senior-Level Meetings and Visits

SCO Meeting: From March 26-27, the first meeting of International Military Cooperation Organs of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States for 2025 will be held in Qingdao, Shandong Province. Over 30 representatives from the defense ministries of the member states and the SCO secretariat attended the meeting and exchanged views on future defense and security cooperation. China's MND hosted the meeting. Of note, no information was found concerning what PLA personnel chaired the conference or spoke.

Possible PRC-US Meeting: On March 27, the MND spokesperson stated that exchanges between

the Chinese and United States militaries are progressing as planned, as the two sides have reached initial agreements in this regard. Speaking at a regular press conference, Wu Qian, spokesperson for the MND, said a stable China-U.S. military relationship serves the common interests of both countries and is also the expectation of the international community. Wu underscored that the development of China-U.S. military ties should adhere to the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation. He called for enhanced communication and dialogue between the two sides to properly handle differences and disputes.

Category 2: International Bilateral and Joint Military Exercises and Interaction

PLAAF Bayi Aerobatic Team in Thailand: From March 2-11, the PLA Air Force's (PLAAF) Bayi Aerobatic Team composed of seven J-10 fighters participated in the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of China-Thailand diplomatic relations and the 88th anniversary of the Royal Thai Air Force at Don Mueang International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand. With mid-air refueling support from the YU-20, China's domestically developed large aerial tanker, the performance aircraft flew non-stop to Bangkok, covering a distance of over 3,600 kilometers from its homebase at Yangcun Air Force Base near Tianjin. This mission was the 12th overseas flight demonstration by the aerobatic team. Established over 60 years ago, the team has been equipped with J-5, J-6, J-5, J-7EB, J-7GB, J-10, and J-10C performance aircraft and has performed more than 700 times for over 700 delegations across more than 170 countries and regions. According to the arrangement, the Bayi Aerobatic Team presented two flight shows on March 7-8, respectively, including one adaptive training session and two aerobatic performances and showcased over 20 classic aerobatic maneuvers during the performances. During the adaptive flight training, the acrobatic aircraft left colored smoke trails of four colors, red, white, blue, and gold, which not only represent the elements of the Thai flag but also symbolize the 50 years of golden friendship between China and Thailand.

Joint Naval Exercise in Iran: In March, the Chinese, Iranian, and Russian navies conducted a joint exercise codenamed "Security Belt-2025" in areas near the Iranian Port of Chabahar. The Chinese fleet included the Baotou destroyer (Hull 133) and Gaoyouhu supply ship (Hull 904), which were part of the PLA Navy's (PLAN) 47th Naval Escort Task Force (NETF) in the Gulf of Aden. The exercise plan included drills on striking maritime targets, damage control, as well as joint search and rescue. The aim was to strengthen military mutual trust and foster pragmatic cooperation among the naval forces of the participating countries. The maritime phase of the exercise was held in the sea area near Chabahar Port from March 10-11. The exercise focused on subjects including maritime targets strike, VBSS (visit, board, search, and seizure), damage control, as well as joint search and rescue operations. On the morning of March 10, the participating naval vessels successively sailed to the designated sea area. A live-fire nighttime shooting drill was

conducted on that evening, with the Chinese side serving as the subject commander. The participating naval vessels also carried out drills on subjects such as nighttime heavy machine gun shooting drill and signal lamp ship-to-ship communication. On the morning of March 11, the participating ships formed two mixed task detachments to rescue two “hijacked merchant vessels.” Under the command of the Baotou, the Chinese and Iranian naval vessels deployed boats to covertly approach the “hijacked merchant ships.” Special operations members from both sides boarded the ships and successfully rescued the “hostages.” After the maritime phase of joint exercise, the Chinese, Iranian, and Russian participating naval vessels formed a single-column formation for maritime review.

Joint Naval Exercise with Thailand: From March 25 to April 2, China and Thailand will hold joint maritime exercise “Blue Strike 2025” in air spaces and sea areas near Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province. The exercise will focus on urban counter-terrorism tactics, joint maritime strike operations, and anti-submarine warfare training, the ministry said on its website. This marks the sixth iteration of this series of joint exercises between the two navies. The Chinese side held a welcoming ceremony at the dock. The two sides jointly stressed in their speeches that the joint naval training is a vital practice to implement the consensus between the two countries on strengthening cooperation and will focus on testing the two navies’ capabilities of carrying out joint defensive operations. The Thai side dispatched the landing platform dock ship Angthong (LPD-791), guided-missile frigates Kraburi (FFG-457) and Chao Phraya (FFG-455), and offshore patrol vessel Prachuap Khiri Khan (OPV-552) to take part in the joint training. The Chinese side formed a naval taskforce consisting of the Southern Theater Command Navy’s guided-missile destroyer Kunming (Hull 172), the amphibious dock landing ship Qilianshan (Hull 985), guided-missile frigates Xuchang (Hull 536) and Tianmen (Hull 631), and the comprehensive submarine rescue ship Xiangyanghu (Hull 832), as well as shipborne helicopters and Marines Corps members.

Category 3: Functional Exchanges

Visit to Cuba: On February 28, representatives from the PLAAF and 16 representatives of Cuban flight trainees who had been trained at the PLAAF’s former 12th Aviation School in China gathered in the conference hall of the Foreign Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba. In September 1961, 223 young people with an average age of less than 20 were selected by the Cuban Air Force and sent to China to learn flight and aircraft maintenance technology. Faced with difficulties such as language barriers, the instructors of the Aviation School who undertook the training task carefully formulated the training outline, compiled and printed foreign training materials, used visual teaching aids and models to assist teaching, and taught in-flight teaching to ensure that the students understood the theory thoroughly and practiced the skills.

PLA Sports Team in Switzerland: From March 23-31, the PLA’s sports delegation consisting of male and female military athletes participated in the 5th International Military Sports Council

(CISM) Military World Winter Games in Lucerne, Switzerland. More than 1,000 military athletes from 43 countries competed for trophies during the week. The Chinese military athletes mainly took part in 28 events in seven sports, including cross-country ski, patrol race, climbing, and cross-country running, with an aim to hone their professional skills, learn from other countries' athletes, enhance mutual understanding, and promote friendship through the international military sports platform.

Category 4: Academic Exchanges

No articles.

Category 5: MOOTW

Subcategory 5-1: Escort Missions

Port Visit in Oman: On March 17, the guided-missile frigate Honghe (Hull 523) attached to the 47th NETF in the Gulf of Aden made a technical stop at the Port of Salalah in Oman for a five-day replenishment and rest. During the stop, the warship Honghe will maintain its equipment and resupply fresh water and non-staple food. In addition, it will organize visits and exchange activities in batches. As the second largest city in Oman, Salalah is on the south coast of Oman. It is more than 1,000 kilometers away from Muscat, the capital city of Oman. The Port of Salalah is the largest port in Oman and an important resupply point for ocean-going ships.

Subcategory 5-2: United Nations Peacekeeping (PKO)

Peacekeeping in South Sudan: In early March, the 11th Chinese Peacekeeping Infantry Battalion to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), in collaboration with the 12th Chinese medical team to South Sudan, launched a free medical outreach for the people of a local village close to their mission area. The free medical outreach offered the local villagers with consultations in internal medicine, surgery, dermatology, ophthalmology, and otorhinolaryngology, as well as services such as routine physical examinations and disease diagnosis and treatment. The Chinese medical staff explained to the villagers how to prevent local high-incidence diseases such as malaria, cholera, and monkeypox. They also conducted on-site medical services, including blood pressure and blood sugar measurements, malaria parasite tests, wound dressing, and treatment for common disease. A total of 423 patients were treated, and 1,097 pieces of medical supplies were distributed.

Peacekeeping in South Sudan: In late March, according to the plan of the UNMISS, the Nepalese peacekeeping contingent organized a Peacekeeper Challenge and invited all troop-contributing

countries to participate. A total of 31 teams from 13 countries and units competed in the challenge. The Peacekeeper Challenge mainly consists of military sports events with Nepali characteristics, such as “rope bridge crossing” and “mountain moving.” Compared with their counterparts from other troop-contributing countries, the Chinese peacekeepers are less familiar with most of the events, which is new to them. Team members of the Chinese peacekeeping infantry battalion demonstrated good tactical qualities and teamwork skills in the face of unfamiliar subjects and complex rules. In the end, they won the first and second places in the group competition with their outstanding teamwork skills and excellent military qualities. Since its deployment to the mission area in December 2024, the Chinese peacekeeping infantry battalion has actively participated in various military competitions organized by UNMISS. This has laid a solid foundation for better handling emergencies, reducing mission risks, and carrying out tasks such as patrols, guard, and civilian protection in a more efficient way.

Peacekeeping in South Sudan: In late March, the 15th Chinese Peacekeeping Horizontal Engineering Company to UNMISS successfully carried out the task of building new underground bunkers, laying a solid ground for the security of the barracks. Within 34 working days of continuous hard work, the Chinese peacekeeping engineering contingent deployed more than 510 troops, along with over 150 engineering machines to complete the construction of new underground bunkers. The newly built underground bunkers integrate command, communication, protection, ventilation, washing, toilet, and other functions.

Subcategory 5-3: Other MOOTW

Support to Myanmar: On March 30, a team of 118 members of the China International Search and Rescue (CISAR) flew to Myanmar to assist disaster relief efforts on Sunday evening, according to the Chinese Ministry of Emergency Management. The members departed from Beijing on two PLAAF Y-20 transport aircraft, bringing along with them six search and rescue dogs, two rescue vehicles, and 634 sets of rescue equipment and supplies and medical materials. They will first arrive in Nay Pyi Taw, the capital of Myanmar, and then head to the areas stricken by the earthquake. The team includes earthquake experts, structural engineers, search and rescue personnel, medical staff, and a search dog unit, and it is equipped with life detectors, demolition equipment, and a field hospital system, which enable the team to independently carry out 72-hour high-intensity rescue operations in two directions within the earthquake zone. The CISAR, established in 2001, has assisted in over 20 international rescue missions, including the Indonesian tsunami and earthquakes in Pakistan and Nepal. It is certified by the United Nations as a professional, heavy search-and-rescue team.

Appendix A: Acronyms

Acronym	Full Term
CASI	China Aerospace Studies Institute
CISAR	China International Search and Rescue
CISM	International Military Sports Council
FFG	Guided Missile Frigate
LPD	Landing Platform Dock
MND	Ministry of National Defense
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MOOTW	Military Operations Other Than War
NETF	Naval Escort Task Force
OPV	Offshore Patrol Vessel
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
PLA	People's Liberation Army
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UN	United Nations
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan