



南海 战略态势
感知计划

**An Incomplete Report on US Military Activities
in the South China Sea in 2024**

South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative

March 2025

About SCSPI

With a view to maintaining and promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the South China Sea, we launched the South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative (SCSPI) in April of 2019. The Initiative aims to integrate intellectual resources and open-source information worldwide and track important actions and major policy changes of key stakeholders and other parties involved. It provides professional data services and analytical reports to parties concerned, helping them manage competition and seek partnerships.

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Preface

In peacetime, conducting highly intensified military activities in a coastal state's surrounding waters, such as thousands of close-in reconnaissance operations and hundreds of military exercises, is contrary to the spirit of "maintaining international peace and security" of the UN Charter and the principle of "peaceful uses of the seas" established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Since 2009, US military activities against China in the South China Sea have strengthened in both frequency and intensity. Amid the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, US naval and air forces have been constrained by events such as the Red Sea crisis. Despite these challenges, the US has maintained a high-intensity military presence in the South China Sea and surrounding areas.

In 2024, apart from bombers as well as ocean surveillance and survey vessels, the number and frequency of US military platforms operating in the South China Sea have stagnated, reaching their limits. The US has shown greater risk-control awareness, by reducing provocative aerial close-in reconnaissance missions to China. However, it continued to leverage the Philippines as a key node to create "increments", significantly intensifying exercises, drills, and strategic and tactical deployments aimed at the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

The US military presence and operations remain major factors affecting the situation in the South China Sea. Since 2019, the South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative (SCSPI) has been releasing this annual report, *An Incomplete Report on US Military Activities in the South China Sea*. The report is intended to promote the transparency of South China Sea Situations and provide the perspective

of a third-party think tank for reference to government departments, research institutions, media and the public of related parties.

Director of SCSPI Hu Bo

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hu Bo', is positioned below the printed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first character being a large 'H' and the last character being a stylized 'o'.

Content

About SCSPI	i
Preface	ii
I. Continuously Strengthened Strategic Platforms' Activities	2
II. Uneven Increase of Marine and Aerial Reconnaissance	13
III. Low-frequency Declaratory Operations	20
IV. Continuously Boosted Joint Operations with Allies	24
V. Exercises and Drills for Enhancing Combat Readiness	34
VI. Summary and Prospect	40
Appendix.....	42

An Incomplete Report on US Military Activities in the South China Sea in 2024

SCSPI

In 2024, the US military continued to strengthen its military deterrence against China, maintaining high-intensity operations including close-in reconnaissance, Taiwan Strait transits, forward presence, strategic cruising, military exercises and drills, as well as battlefield preparation in the South China Sea and its surrounding areas. Among them, large reconnaissance aircraft conducted about 1,000 missions, and ocean surveillance and measurement vessels accumulated 706 ship days of activity, marking a significant increase compared to 2023. Carrier strike groups (CSGs) have entered the South China Sea 8 times, demonstrating a strong presence. At least 11 nuclear attack submarines, two guided missile submarines and one ballistic missile submarine appeared in the region throughout the year, signaling a clear deterrence intention. Additionally, the number of batches and sorties of bombers entering the South China Sea has significantly increased, with frequent exercises of “north-south double” and “distributed operations”.

I. Continuously Strengthened Strategic Platforms' Activities

1. CSGs

In 2024, the US military dispatched 3 CSGs, USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70), USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN-71) and USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72), for a total of 8 activities accessing the South China Sea with the following characteristics:

Table 1: Activities of US CSGs in the South China Sea in 2024

No.	Date	CSG	Access	Exit
1	Dec.12(2024)-Jan.10	USS <i>Carl Vinson</i> (CVN-70)	Balabac Strait	Bashi Channel
2	Mar.1-Apr.1	USS <i>Theodore Roosevelt</i> (CVN-71)	Bashi Channel	Balabac Strait
3	Apr.18-Jun.13	USS <i>Theodore Roosevelt</i> (CVN-71)	Bashi Channel	Bashi Channel
4	Jul.3-Jul.7	USS <i>Theodore Roosevelt</i> (CVN-71)	Bashi Channel	Strait of Malacca
5	Aug.13-Aug.15	USS <i>Abraham Lincoln</i> (CVN-72)	Balabac Strait	Strait of Malacca
6	Sep.17-Sep.20	USS <i>Theodore Roosevelt</i> (CVN-71)	Strait of Malacca	Balabac Strait
7	Nov.28-Dec.2	USS <i>Abraham Lincoln</i> (CVN-72)	Strait of Malacca	Balabac Strait
8	Dec.23-Dec.26	USS <i>Carl Vinson</i> (CVN-70)	Balabac Strait	Strait of Malacca

First, the frequency increased while the intensity decreased. Compared to the 6 times in 2023, the frequency of the CSGs' activities in the South China Sea rose to 8 times in 2024. However, 5 of them lasted only 3 to 5 days, indicating that the South China Sea was treated more as

a transit route for US CSGs between the Pacific and Indian Oceans than an actual deployment area.

In addition, unlike in 2023 when CSGs prioritized accessing and exiting through the Bashi Channel, in 2024, they were more inclined to choose the Balabac Strait as a passage between the South China Sea and the Philippine Sea. In fast-in and fast-out activities, the routes taken by CSGs crossing the Philippine Islands are mostly from the San Bernardino Strait to the Balabac Strait or from the Leyte Gulf to the Surigao Strait and then to the Balabac Strait. After entering the South China Sea, then go to the Strait of Malacca via the southern waterway to the Spratly Islands before reaching the Indian Ocean. The reverse route applies when traveling from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

It's a helpless move for the US Navy (USN) to reduce the long-term deployment of CSGs in the region and opt for fast in-and-out through the edge. With the escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Red Sea Crisis, the US military has normalized the maintenance of at least one CSG in and around the Red Sea, reallocating some CSGs under the Indo-Pacific Command to the Middle East for support and causing certain shortages of in the South China Sea and the Western Pacific. In addition, American shipyards also dragged their feet. Due to low-level maintenance issues such as welding, USS *George Washington* (CVN-73) failed to take over USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN-75) in the jurisdiction of the 7th Fleet timely.^①

Second, the single CSG has shown outstanding performance and significant presence. From January to October 2024, USS *Theodore Roosevelt* carried out deployment missions for 278 days, including nearly 7 months of extended deployment in the Western Pacific. The CSG

^① The Washington aircraft carrier strike group arrived in Yokosuka, Japan on November 22, 2024, and has not yet been deployed as of March 25, 2025.

conducted 4 activities in and out of the South China Sea: March 1 – April 1, April 18 – June 13, July 3 – 7, and September 17 – 20, totaling 98 days in the region. Notably, the two activities between March and June lasted for more than a month. Especially, from April 18 to June 13, the CSG operated for 58 consecutive days. It is the longest deployment of the US CSGs in the South China Sea in recent years, far exceeding the time approximately 30 days in 2023 and 10 to 20 days in 2022.

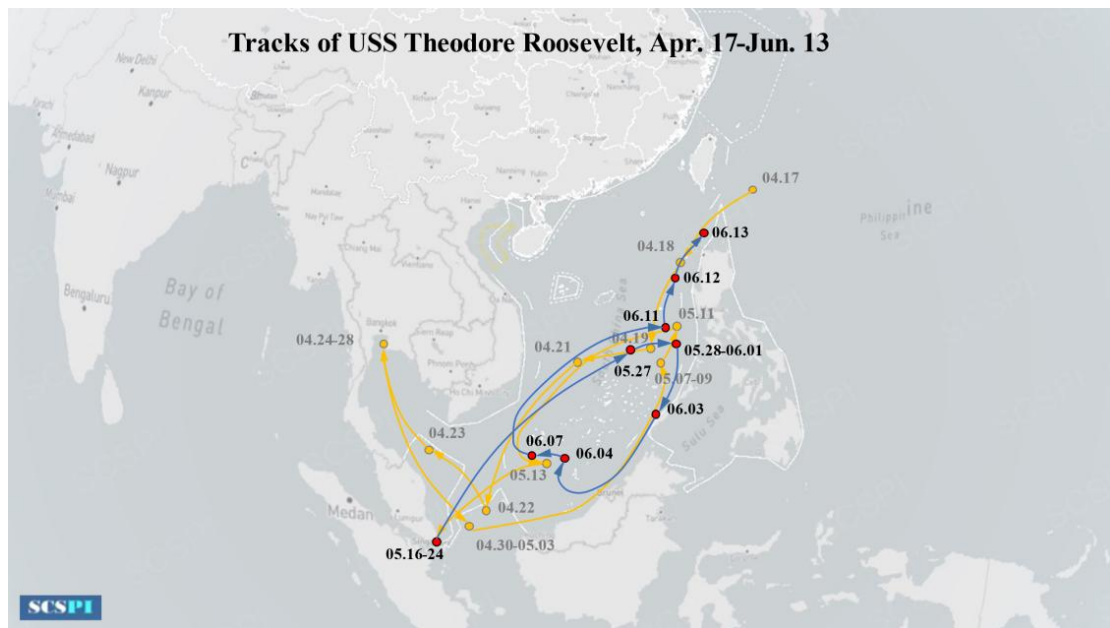


Figure 1: Tracks of USS *Theodore Roosevelt*, Apr. 17-Jun. 13, 2024

Long-term activities led to CSGs' high demand for material supplies, resulting in frequent maritime supply activities. According to incomplete statistics, during the 58 days, USS *Theodore Roosevelt* received 6 replenishments from different tenders, including USNS *John Ericsson* (T-AO-194), USNS *Wally Schirra* (T-AKE-8) and USNS *Big Horn* (T-AO-198). These replenishments happened mostly near the Indonesia-Malaysia boundary waters and south of Scarborough Shoal, the US CSGs' traditional activity areas.

Unlike multiple targeted exercises and drills during the deployment

of USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) in the South China Sea in 2023, USS *Theodore Roosevelt* did not engage in high-intensity activities in its long-term deployment. Most of the time, the CSG carried out routine training flights of carrier-based aircraft, demonstrating its combat capabilities and military presence. From May 7 to 10, during *Balikatan* 2024, USS *Theodore Roosevelt* appeared near the exercise area multiple times without direct participation. On June 7, the CSG conducted a formation navigation with French and Canadian naval frigates in the waters near Vanguard Bank, as part of Valiant Shield 2024 organized by the US.

Third, CSGs served as diplomatic platforms to strengthen relationships with regional allies and partners. In 2024, the USN CSGs visited Manila, Philippines; Laem Chabang Port, Thailand; Changi Naval Base, Singapore and Port Klang, Malaysia. From April 24 to 28, USS *Theodore Roosevelt* made a scheduled port visit to Laem Chabang Port, Thailand, marking its first visit to the country since 2018. From November 23 to 27, USS *Abraham Lincoln* visited Port Klang, Malaysia before entering the South China Sea, which was the first time in 12 years that a USN CSG has docked at the port. From December 29 to January 2, 2025, USS *Carl Vinson* visited Port Klang again. Edgard D. Kagan, US Ambassador to Malaysia, claimed that “The back-to-back visits of the *Carl Vinson* Carrier Strike Group and the USS *Abraham Lincoln* to Malaysia underscore the depth and strength of our security ties — an enduring cornerstone of the U.S.-Malaysia Comprehensive Partnership”.^①

^① Second San Diego-Based Aircraft Carrier Visits Malaysia in Just Over a Month, Times of San Diego, December 31, 2024, <https://timesofsandiego.com/military/2024/12/31/second-san-diego-based-aircraft-carrier-visits-malaysia-in-just-over-a-month/>

2. Amphibious Ready Groups (ARGs)

In 2024, the US military deployed two ARGs in the Western Pacific, USS *Boxer* (LHD-4) and USS *America* (LHA-6), but neither entered the South China Sea.

USS *Boxer* was originally scheduled to appear in the Western Pacific in April and enter the South China Sea to participate in a series of drills. Due to rudder failure and occupation of the Port of San Diego's dry dock, the deployment was postponed until July 2024 and was ultimately not deployed in the South China Sea. Members of the ARG, USS *Somerset* (LPD-25) and USS *Harpers Ferry* (LSD-49), were deployed to the Western Pacific in February and April 2024 respectively for 4 activities in the South China Sea, involving Tiger Strike 2024, Cobra Gold 2024 and Balikatan 2024. USS *Boxer* arrived at the area in early August and operated in the waters around the Korean Peninsula and Japan. On October 18, it briefly entered the Sulu Sea through Tablas Strait and returned to San Diego, USA in November after less than 4 months of deployment in the Western Pacific.

In December 2024, a report released by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) stated that according to USN standards, 16 out of 32 ARG vessels were in “unsatisfactory condition”, and the delay or cancellation of maintenance has hindered the Marine Corps to conduct training and deployment on time. USS *Boxer* was originally scheduled to be deployed in September 2023, but the amphibious assault ships and 2 dock landing ships in the ARG met maintenance delays. USS *America* cannot be deployed as a complete ARG in 2024 due to the mere availability of 1 amphibious assault ship and 1 dock landing ship.

The vacuum of USN ARG activities in the South China Sea in 2024 also indicates the difficulty of maintaining normal presence in the SCS of

ARGs. The latest GAO report reveals quality problems faced by ARGs such as long maintenance cycles, shortage of spare parts and equipment design defects, which prevent the Marine Corps from carrying out combat, training and other tasks.^①

3. Submarines

In 2024, according to limited information, the US Navy has at least 11 nuclear attack submarines, namely USS *Seawolf* (SSN-21), USS *Asheville* (SSN-758), USS *Jefferson City* (SSN-759), USS *Annapolis* (SSN-760), USS *Springfield* (SSN-761), USS *Minnesota* (SSN-783), USS *Missouri* (SSN-780), USS *Mississippi* (SSN-782), USS *Vermont* (SSN-792), USS *Columbia* (SSN-771) and USS *Charlotte* (SSN-766), as well as two guided nuclear missile submarines, USS *Michigan* (SSGN-727) and USS *Florida* (SSGN-728), one ballistic nuclear missile submarine, USS *Louisiana* (SSBN-743), and two submarine tenders, USS *Frank Cable* (AS-40) and USS *Emory S. Land* (AS-39) to carry out cruise missions in the Western Pacific including the South China Sea.

Table 2: Activities of US Submarines in the South China Sea and Surrounding Areas in 2024

No.	Submarine	Home Port	Activity
1	USS <i>Seawolf</i>	Bangor	Oct. 4, visited Yokosuka, Japan;
2	USS <i>Asheville</i>	Guam	Jan.16, visited Changi, Singapore; Apr. 15, arrived in Okinawa, Japan; May. 29, returned to Guam;

^① AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE FLEET Navy Needs to Complete Key Efforts to Better Ensure Ships Are Available for Marines, GAO, December 3, 2024, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-106728.pdf>

3	USS <i>Jefferson City</i>	Guam	Jun. 21, transited through Apra Port, Guam; Oct. 7, completed the Western Pacific mission and returned to Guam;
4	USS <i>Annapolis</i>	Guam	Mar. 10, arrived in Perth, Western Australia; Aug. 7, visited Yokosuka, Japan; Oct. 10, returned to Guam;
5	USS <i>Springfield</i>	Guam	May 24, visited Yokosuka, Japan; Jun. 29, returned to Guam;
6	USS <i>Minnesota</i>	Pearl Harbor	Nov. 26, arrived in Guam;
7	USS <i>Missouri</i>	Pearl Harbor	Jan. 9, arrived in Guam; Mar. 31, returned to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii;
8	USS <i>Mississippi</i>	Pearl Harbor	Apr. 18, visited Yokosuka, Japan;
9	USS <i>Vermont</i>	Pearl Harbor	Sep. 23, visited Busan, South Korea; Dec. 9, visited Yokosuka, Japan;
10	USS <i>Columbia</i>	Pearl Harbor	Nov. 18, visited Busan, South Korea;
11	USS <i>Charlotte</i>	Pearl Harbor	Jun. 15, visited Guam;
12	USS <i>Michigan</i>	Kitsap	Nov. 2, stopped at Guam;
13	USS <i>Florida</i>	Kings Bay	In April, docked in Guam for one-month maintenance; Jul. 2, conducted a drill with USS Frank Cable;
14	USS <i>Louisiana</i>	Kings Bay	May. 29, visited Guam.

The deployment of USS *Minnesota* in Guam marked the normalization of the US *Virginia-class* submarine in the Western Pacific. At present, USS *Asheville*, USS *Jefferson City*, USS *Annapolis* and USS *Springfield* are the *Los Angeles-class* submarines deployed in Guam for a long time. After serving for 35 years, USS *Key West* (SSN-722) had returned to the mainland for retirement in 2023. USS *Minnesota* replaced it in the Western Pacific. Arriving in Guam on November 26 of 2024, USS *Minnesota* became the first *Virginia-class* submarine to serve long-term deployment in Guam. The other 4 *Los*

Angeles-class submarines in Guam were enlisted in the retirement plan, expecting to be gradually replaced by *Virginia-class* ones in the coming years. Additionally, the *Virginia-class* USS *Vermont* visited the Busan base, South Korea and the Yokosuka base, Japan in September and December 2024. In Busan Port, the ROK Navy Operations Command communicated with the submarine crew and suggested “strengthening joint defense preparations”. In early October, USS *Sea Wolf* (SSN-21), the first ship of the US Seawolf-class submarine, arrived at Yokosuka base, Japan.

US submarine tenders have intensified the activities in the region, significantly strengthening port visits to allies. Since its deployment on May 17, USS *Emory S. Land* has conducted 14 port visits in 2024, with the first two months of port visits mainly in Darwin, Sydney and Stirling, Australia. On October 21, it departed from Apra Harbor, Guam and subsequently visited Sasebo, Japan; Busan, South Korea; Brunei and Sembawang, Singapore on November 4, November 15, December 12 and December 15 respectively. In July, USS *Frank Cable* sailed southwards to visit Changi, Singapore; Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia; and Jakarta, Indonesia. In October, it went north to visit Jeju, South Korea and Sasebo, Japan. The frequent activities of US submarine tender in the South China Sea also indirectly reflected the continuous strengthening of the USN deployment of underwater forces in the region.

4. Bombers

The US Air Force (USAF) has sent a total of 32 batches of 56 sorties B-52H, B-1B and B-2A bombers for patrol in the Western Pacific. With annually increasing sorties, the number in 2024 is nearly twice that of

2023.

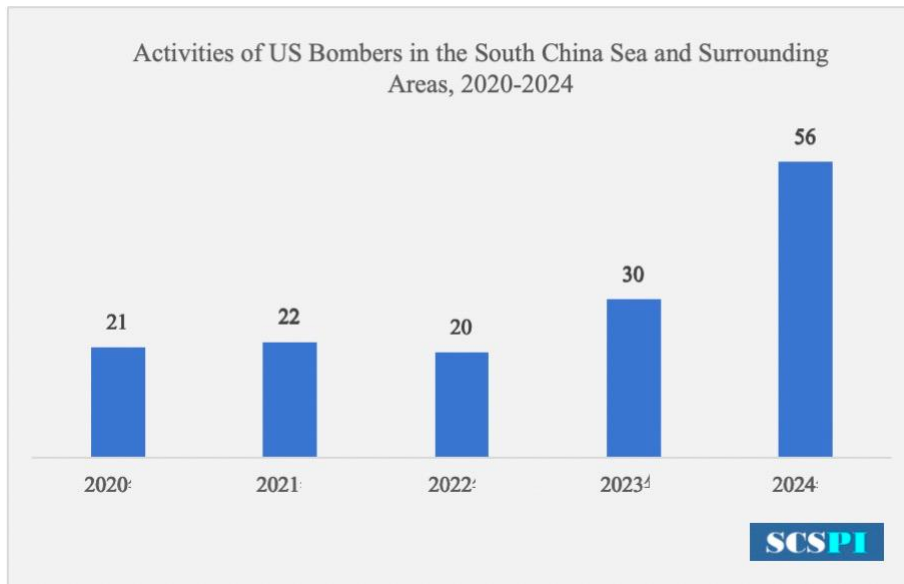


Figure 2: Activities of US Bombers in the South China Sea and Surrounding Areas, 2020-2024

The US bombers conducted more military activities in the first half of the year, especially from January to March when the number of sorties took up two-thirds of the annual activities. The bombers involved were mainly B-52s, with a small number of B-1 bombers. It is rare for B-2 to be active in the South China Sea and its surrounding areas.

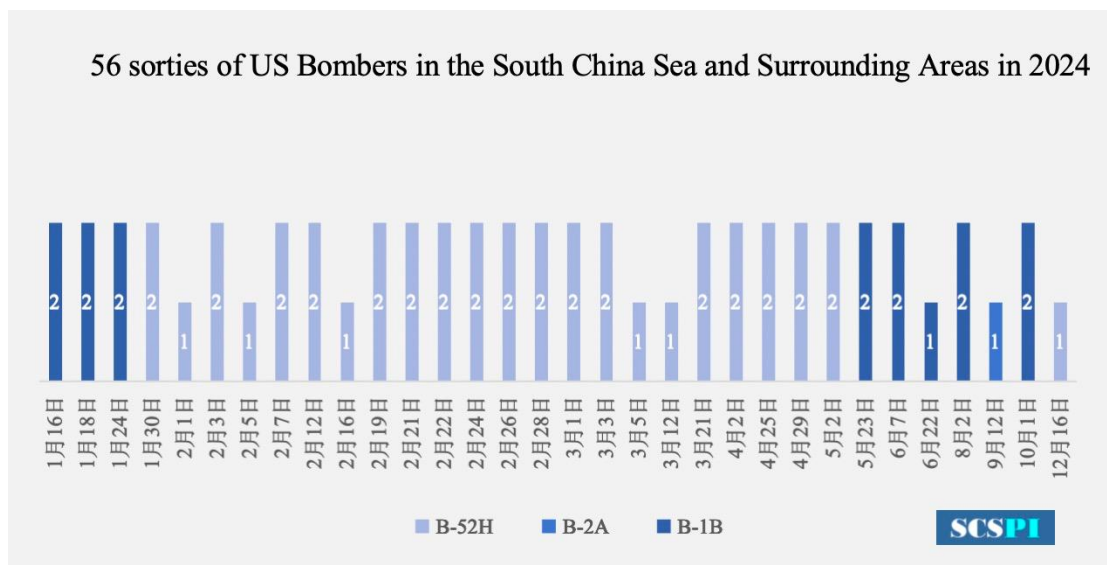


Figure 3: Activities of US Bombers in the South China Sea and Surrounding

Areas in 2024

The US military has strengthened its cooperation with allies in bomber deployment and combat exercises, with Australia becoming an important foreign partner for implementing “dynamic force employment”. At the end of January, 4 B-52 bombers were sent from Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota to Anderson Air Force Base, Guam, operated by the USAF 23rd Expeditionary Bomb Squadron for attending Cope North 24 involving the US, Japan, South Korea, Australia and other countries. In June, the B-2 from Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri and the B-1 from Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota participated in Valiant Shield 2024 and landed at Anderson Air Force Base, Guam, marking the first B-2 landing in Guam in recent years.

On August 16, 3 B-2 bombers from Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, including the 509th and 131st bomb wings, were deployed to Amberley Air Force Base, Australia to practice the USAF “**dynamic force employment**” and “agile combat employment”. Former US Secretary of Defense Austin stated the increase of US military presence in Australia, including more frequent deployment of bombers, after the August 2024 US-Australia Defense Ministers’ Meeting.

The US military weighed on coordinating routes of operations, which enhances the meaning of practical deployment. The main routes for US bombers entering the South China Sea are from the north and south. The north route passes over Bashi Channel on the north side of Luzon Island, Philippines, serving as a common route for bombers to enter the region. The south route is a new one that enters over the Sulu Sea in the southern Philippines. B-52H came in 5 batches participating in Cope North 24, 3 times from the north and 2 from the south. The arrangement indicated that the US bombers also paid more attention to the straits in the Philippine Archipelago when CSGs increasingly

highlighted the passage between the Philippine islands. Also, such exercises of north-south double and converging attacks carried the US military's concept of "dynamic force employment" and "distributed operations".



Figure 4: The North and South Routes of US Bombers from Guam to the South China Sea

II. Uneven Increase of Marine and Aerial Reconnaissance

1. Flat Aerial Close-in Reconnaissance

The US military continued to maintain high-intensity aerial close-in reconnaissance against China, but the increase was relatively limited. In light of incomplete statistics, in 2024, the US military dispatched various types of large reconnaissance aircraft from Kadena base, Okinawa, Osan base, South Korea, Anderson base, Guam, Clark base, Philippines and other places to conduct reconnaissance in the South China Sea. The cumulative deployment included the USN P-8A anti-submarine aircraft and MQ-4C unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), the UNAF RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft, E-3B airborne early-warning aircraft, MQ-9 Reaper UAV and the US Army (USA) ARES reconnaissance aircraft (Global 6500), totaling about 1,000 sorties, with no significant increase compared to 2022 and 2023.

The P-8A and RC-135 are the main aircraft used for reconnaissance in the South China Sea, accounting for over 70% of all frequencies. **Compared to previous years, the US Army ARES reconnaissance has risen significantly.** The ARES is an airborne reconnaissance and electronic warfare system modified from Bombardier Global 6000/6500 business jet. As the technology demonstrator of the Army High Accuracy Detection and Exploitation System (HADES) program, it not only integrates existing ISR capabilities of the US Army but also can increase payload, sensors and stand-off range. In 2022, the US Army officially deployed ARES in the Pacific region. In 2024, the frequency of its setting out was close to the sum of previous years. In early June, it was dispatched to the South China Sea for reconnaissance missions every day for a week.

From the perspective of reconnaissance timing, during sensitive periods or US military activities, there has been a great increase in aircraft types and reconnaissance frequency. During or around activities such as CSG exercises, Taiwan Strait transits and bomber operations in and out of the South China Sea, the US military typically sent multiple reconnaissance aircraft for intelligence support. In Balikatan 2024, the US military dispatched about 17 large reconnaissance aircraft from bases including Clark, Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Magsaysay Fort Army, Lalo Airport, Camilo Osias and Benito Eben in the Philippines as well as Kadena Base, Okinawa in coordination with the drill.

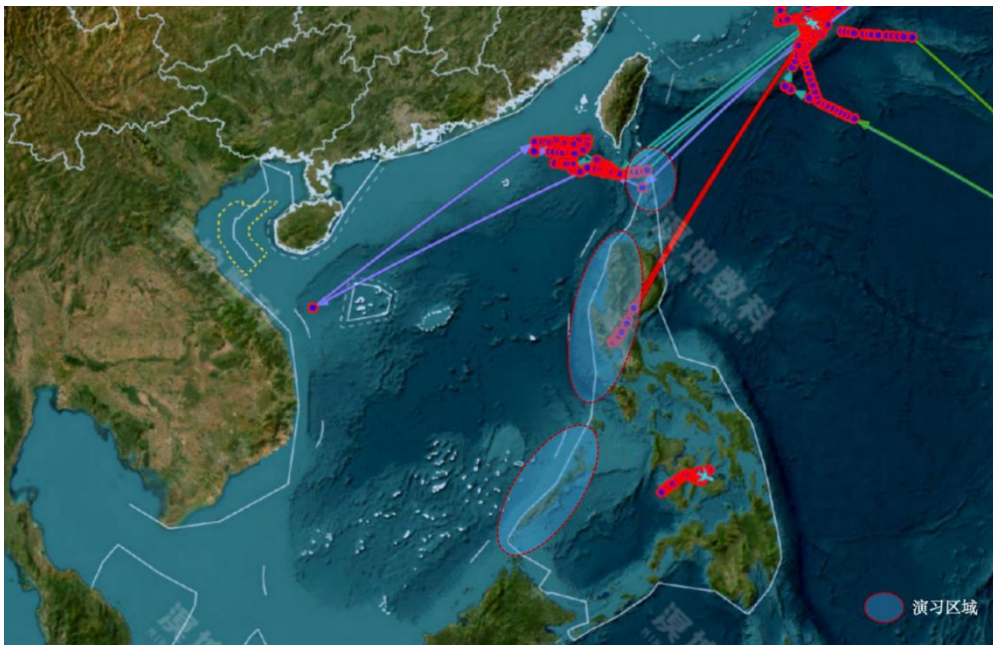


Figure 5: Activities of US Reconnaissance Aircraft During Balikatan 2024

In recent years, the US military has two main aerial reconnaissance routes in the South China Sea. The one is to take off from Kadena base, Japan, pass through the Bashi Channel and fly to the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea for reconnaissance. For example, on May 7, a USAF RC-135U electronic reconnaissance aircraft took off from Kadena, Okinawa, passed through the Bashi Channel and conducted a large-scale

close-in reconnaissance along the coastal waters of Guangdong and Hainan Island and the airspace of the Paracel Islands. The other is to take off from air bases in the Philippines and fly to the South China Sea. The main aircraft taking off from Clark and Cesar Basa bases in the Philippines are P-8A and MQ-9. With the increase of US military assets stationed in Philippine bases and the continuous escalation of tensions between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea, the number of reconnaissance aircraft departing from Philippine bases to the South China Sea has been rising on a yearly basis, approaching 30% by 2024. Given the significant geographical proximity advantage of the Philippine bases compared to Japan, the US military's reconnaissance efficiency in the South China Sea hot zones also got significantly enhanced.



Figure 6: USAF RC-135U Conducted Large-scale Reconnaissance in the South China Sea, May 7, 2024

2. Significantly Intensified Maritime Reconnaissance Activities

In 2024, the US military deployed 4 ocean surveillance vessels, USNS *Victorious* (T-ARGOS 19), USNS *Effective* (T-AGOS 21), USNS *Loyal* (T-AGOS 22) and USNS *Impeccable* (T-AGOS 23), as well as 3 oceanographic survey vessels, USNS *Bowditch* (T-AGS 62), USNS *Henson* (T-AGS 63), and USNS *Mary Sears* (T-AGS 65) in the South China Sea. The total 706 ship-days in activity bypassed the duration in 2023 significantly. There was at least 1 vessel operating in the region for 343 days throughout the year, showing almost no interlude.

Vessel	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May.	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	SUM
T-ARGOS 19	[Activity]							[Activity]		[Activity]		[Activity]	195
T-ARGOS 21	[Activity]							[Activity]			[Activity]		58
T-ARGOS 22		[Activity]					[Activity]		[Activity]				121
T-ARGOS 23	[Activity]	[Activity]	[Activity]	[Activity]									94
T-ARS 62	[Activity]	[Activity]	[Activity]	[Activity]		[Activity]	[Activity]	[Activity]				[Activity]	178
T-ARS 63	[Activity]	[Activity]	[Activity]	[Activity]									47
T-ARS 65												[Activity]	13

Figure 7: Overview of the Activities of USN Reconnaissance Vessels in the South China Sea in 2024

When it came to the route, accessing from the Bashi Channel, US surveillance vessels operated mainly in the northern and southern regions of the South China Sea. The northern region centered on the eastern part of the Paracel Islands, the waters to the west around the Macclesfield Islands, the Philippine Luzon Island and Palawan Island. The southern region mainly encompassed the Indonesia-Malaysia boundary waters. In terms of duration, the 468 ship-days of ocean surveillance vessel activity far exceeded the survey vessel’s 238 ship-days. Specifically, USNS *Victorious* is the most active one with 195-days in operation.

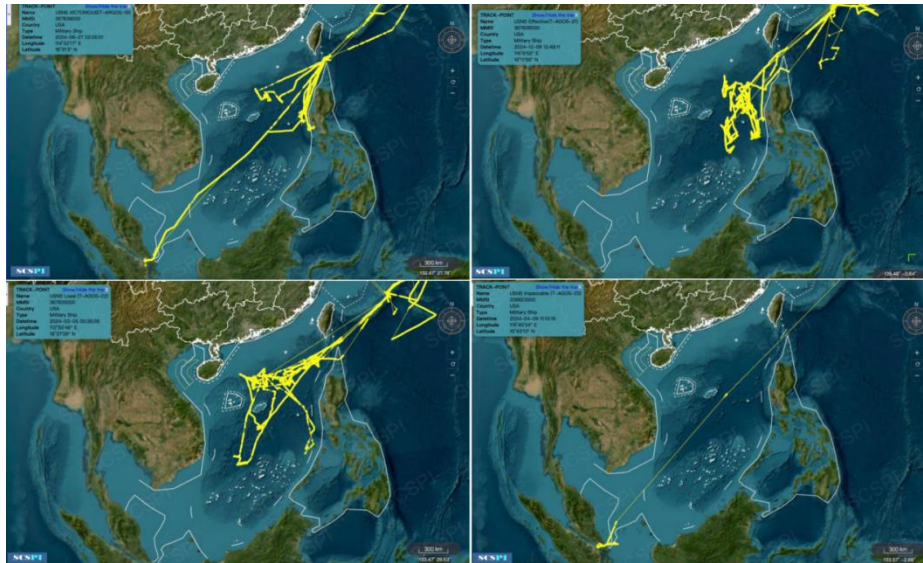


Figure 8: Track of USN Ocean Surveillance Vessels in 2024

There was more diversity in the passage through which survey vessels entered the South China Sea. Despite the Bashi Channel, Balabac Strait and Verde Island Passage were also optional. From March 27 to April 17, USNS *Henson* extended its scope to the rarely involved area to the south of Hainan Island and the west of Paracel Islands.

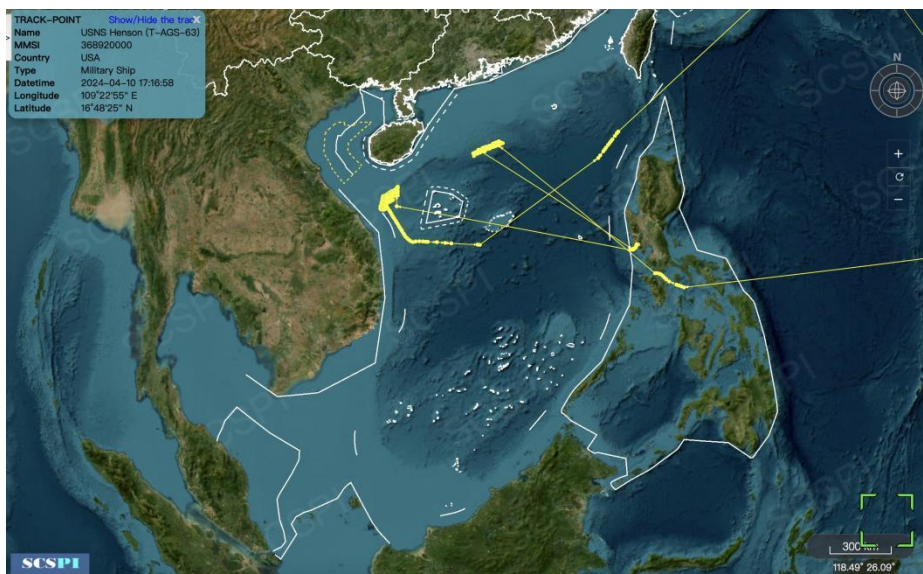


Figure 9: Track of USNS *Henson* Oceanographic Survey Vessel in 2024

Relevant operations mainly adopted rotation duty in the relay with rising intensity. USNS *Henson* and USNS *Loyal* conducted high-intensity operations in the southeastern waters of Hainan Island respectively from February 7 to 10 and from February 14 to 28. The seamless rotation could not only improve reconnaissance efficiency, but also ensure the normalized presence of the USN maritime reconnaissance in the South China Sea, highlighting the USN growing attention to underwater competition and warfare.

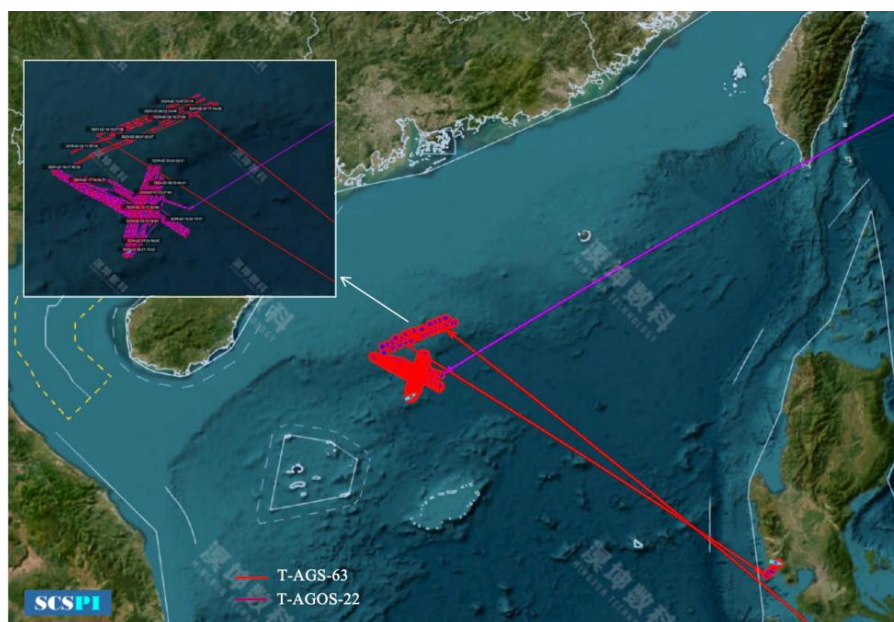


Figure 10: Track of USNS *Henson* and USNS *Loyal* in February 2024

3. Highlighted Joint Marine and Aerial Reconnaissance Operations

In 2024, the joint operations and coordination of marine and aerial reconnaissance platforms were significantly strengthened. **USN reconnaissance vessels weighed more on the coordination with aerial close-in reconnaissance, actively integrating into the US military combat system.** Their activity time and area highly coincided with the

US military's large formations and reconnaissance aircraft, underlining the characteristic of providing further intelligence support for large formations like CSGs in the South China Sea. Especially, when CSGs entered and exited the South China Sea, more frequent activities of reconnaissance vessels and aircraft have been witnessed. USS *Theodore Roosevelt* departed and entered the region through Balabac Strait and Bashi Channel respectively on April 1 and April 17. Meanwhile, USNS *Bowditch* sailed from Balabac Strait to Bashi Channel. The USN MQ-4C drone, which rarely operated near the Philippines, also provided reconnaissance support nearby. Just on April 17, 5 reconnaissance aircraft were operating near the Bashi Channel. Similarly, USS *Theodore Roosevelt* left the South China Sea via Bashi Channel on June 13 and sailed south of Okinawa on June 18. During this period, USNS *Able* (T-AGOS-20) ocean surveillance vessel engaged continuously in high-intensity activities in the nearby waters. Obviously, in terms of underwater operations and combat readiness in the South China Sea, the coordination of the US military's various reconnaissance forces has been further strengthened.

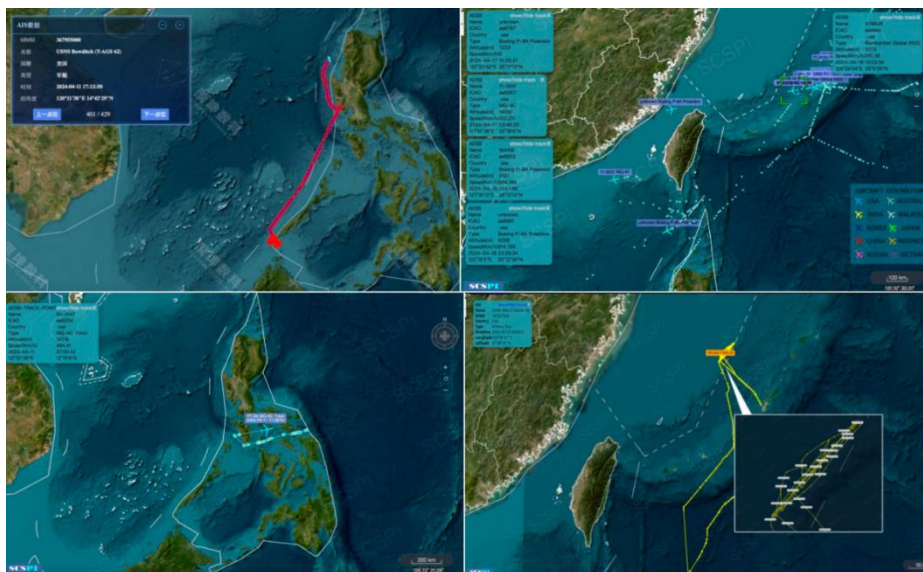


Figure 11: US Marine and Aerial Reconnaissance During the Operation of USS Theodore Roosevelt From April 1 to 17

III. Low-frequency Declaratory Operations

1. Island–intrusive FONOPs

In 2024, the number of the US military’s island-intrusive Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) decreased to 2, only higher than 1 in 2015, suggesting an overall downward trend. However, other types of FONOPs have not weakened. According to the *Freedom of Navigation Report for Fiscal Year 2023* issued by the US Department of Defense, from October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023, the US has challenged 29 “excessive maritime claims” of 17 countries and regions, of which China got involved most with a total of 6 (5 in Mainland China and 1 in Taiwan). Clearly, the US military’s FONOPs in the South China Sea still maintained highly targeted towards China.

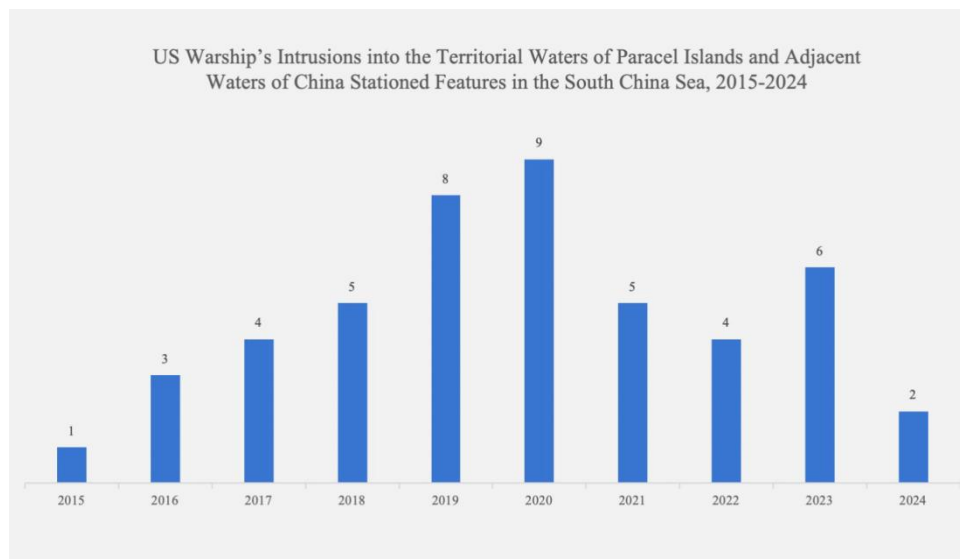
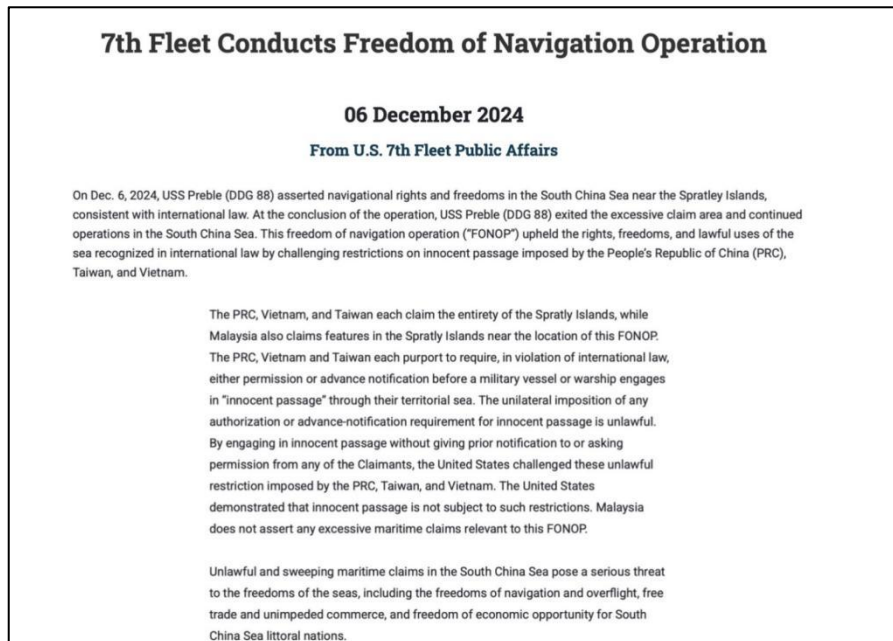


Figure 12: US Warship’s Intrusions into the Territorial Waters of Paracel Islands and Adjacent Waters of China Stationed Features in the South China Sea, 2015-2024

There were 2 FONOPs around China stationed islands and reefs in the South China Sea. On May 10, USS *Halsey* (DDG-97) broke into the

territorial sea of the Paracel Islands, challenging China’s stipulation that “the innocent passage of foreign warships in the territorial sea must be approved”. On December 6, USS *Preble* (DDG-88) intruded into Swallow Reef, Spratly Islands. It was mentioned that this operation was a challenge to China, Vietnam and Malaysia’s maritime claims in December’s US statement.



In addition to declaring through military actions like FONOPs, the US has repeatedly issued statements challenging its perceived “excessive maritime claims” of China. On May 31, the US, Japan and South Korea held the deputy foreign ministers’ consultation and issued a joint statement acknowledging the importance of “opposing illegal maritime claims in the South China Sea”.^① On July 11, the 8th anniversary of the

^① United States-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral Vice Foreign Minister-Level, U. S. Embassy & Consulate in the Republic of Korea, May 31, 2024, Dialogue <https://kr.usembassy.gov/060324-united-states-japan-republic-of-korea-trilateral-vice-for-eign-minister-level-dialogue/>

South China Sea arbitration ruling, the US released a statement declaring its support for the ruling and attacking China’s claims in the region.^①

2. Taiwan Strait Transits

Throughout 2024, the US warships transited the Taiwan Strait 5 times, each accompanied by public hype. Compared to 6 times in 2023, 9 in 2022, 12 in 2021 and 15 in 2020, the frequency has decreased, aligning with a downward trend in the past 5 years.

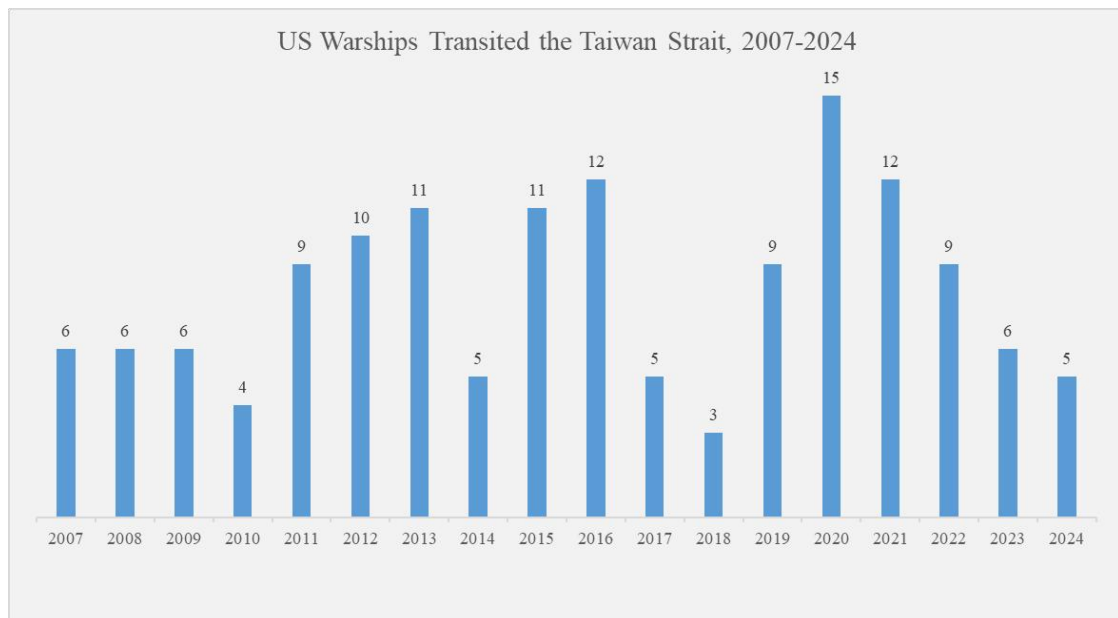


Figure 13: US Warships Transited the Taiwan Strait, 2007- 2024

Normalization of joint transiting between the US and Canada. Since 2021, the 2 countries have held joint transit operations annually in a “1+1” formation, consisting of 1 USN destroyer and 1 Royal Canadian Navy frigate. On October 20, USS *Higgins* (DDG-76) and HMCS *Vancouver* (FFH 331) jointly transited the Taiwan Strait from south to

^① Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian’s Regular Press Conference on July 12, 2024, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The People’s Republic of China, July 12, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202407/t20240730_11463258.html

north. The transit occurred after the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) conducted *Joint Sword-2024B* around the Taiwan Strait on October 14 and *the Joint Declaration of the G7 Ministers of Defence* on October 19. With the Canadian warship activating the AIS signal all the way, a strong sense of declaration pervaded.

Table 3: US warships Transited the Taiwan Strait in 2024

No	Date	Warship
1	Jan. 24	USS <i>John Finn</i> (destroyer)
2	Mar. 5	USS <i>John Finn</i> (destroyer)
3	May. 8	USS <i>Halsey</i> (destroyer)
4	Aug. 22	USS <i>Ralph Johnson</i> (destroyer)
5	Oct. 20	USS <i>Higgins</i> (destroyer), HMCS <i>Vancouver</i> (frigate)

The reconnaissance aircraft maintained its previous transit frequency. On April 17, September 17, November 26 and December 13, 2024, the USN P-8A anti-submarine aircraft transited the Taiwan Strait 4 times. This showed no significant difference compared to 5 in 2023 and 3 in both 2022 and 2021.

However, there were instances of downbeats. On December 13, a USN P-8A flew northward over the Taiwan Strait without any public statement. Earlier, from December 9 to 11, PLA conducted large-scale naval and air drills around Taiwan and the South China Sea. The low-profile transit was clearly aimed at intelligence gathering and reconnaissance.

IV. Continuously Boosted Joint Operations with Allies

In the last final year of the term, the Biden administration used the Philippines as a fulcrum in South China Sea disputes and around, while continuing to strengthen bilateral and multilateral military cooperation with allies to build minilateral military alliances.

1. US–Philippine Military Cooperation

Targeting the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait, the US continued leveraging the Philippines as a strategic “node” to expand its bilateral and multilateral Asia-Pacific security networks through military cooperation such as funding, military bases enhancements, weapon deployment and joint patrols.

By rendering the Philippines with funding, weapons and technology, the US enhanced its military presence in Asia-Pacific. At the end of July, during the Philippines-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, the then US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced \$500 million in military assistance to strengthen Philippines’ defense infrastructure, cybersecurity capabilities and military modernization, especially highlighting maritime defense capabilities to counter the so-called “China threat”. This is the largest US foreign military financing package for the Philippines since the end of the Cold War. About \$125 were allocated for building and improving *Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement* (EDCA) locations.

According to EDCA, the number of US military bases in the Philippines had increased from 5 in 2014 to 9 in 2023, with continued bases’ infrastructure development in 2024. In August, the Pentagon offered a \$32 million contract to upgrade Cesar Basa Air Base, including

the latest project of a temporary apron covering 0.058 square kilometers. In November, senior military officials—led by General John Aquilino, Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, and Lieutenant General Romeo Brawner, Commander in Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines—inspected Camilo Osias Naval Base and Lal-lo Airport. As the disposition of forces, during Balikatan 2024, the US military rapidly deployed the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) at Lal-lo Airport through C-130 transport aircraft, while CH-47F and UH-60M helicopters conducted frequent take-offs and landings for air support missions. On Barabac Island near the Spratly Islands, the US military conducted naval artillery attack training. At Camilo Osias Naval Base in the northern Luzon, the US and Philippine Marine Corps conveyed combat exchanges. In addition, the US military also operated at Fort Magsaysay and Cesar Basa Air Base.



Figure 14: US-Philippine EDCA Locations

The deployment of intermediate-range missile systems in the Philippines was a breakthrough in 2024. According to various sources, the Typhon Weapon System, which was first deployed for a joint drill in

April 2024, was intended for indefinite retainment on Luzon Island. Satellite imagery from September to the end of December 2024 showed the missile system located at Laoag International Airport in the northern part of the island.

Joint patrols between the US and the Philippines were the centerpiece of their drills. In 2024, they held 3 Maritime Cooperative Activities (MCA) in the South China Sea. The largest took place on January 3, involving USS *Carl Vinson*, USS *Princeton* (CG-59), USS *Kidd* (DDG-100) and USS *Sterett* (DDG-104) from USN, alongside the Philippine BRP *Gregorio Del Pilar* (PS-15), BRP *Ramon Alcaraz* (PS-16), BRP *Davao del Sur* (LD-602) and AW-159 helicopter.

Table 4: 1 US-Philippine MCAs in 2024

No.	Name	Date	Participating Forces
1	Maritime Cooperation Activity (MCA)	Jan. 3–Jan. 4	US: USS <i>Carl Vinson</i> , USS <i>Princeton</i> , USS <i>Kidd</i> , and USS <i>Sterett</i> Philippines: BRP <i>Gregorio Del Pilar</i> , BRP <i>Ramon Alcaraz</i> , BRP <i>Davao del Sur</i> and AW-159 helicopter
2	Maritime Cooperation Activity (MCA)	Feb. 9	US: USS <i>Gabrielle Giffords</i> and MH-60S helicopter Philippines: BRP <i>Gregorio Del Pilar</i> and AW-109 helicopter
3	Maritime Cooperation Activity (MCA)	Jul. 31	US: USS <i>Mobile</i> Philippines: BRP <i>Ramon Alcaraz</i>

Besides, both the depth and scope of their military cooperation expanded. In November, during his visit to the Philippines, the then US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin signed *the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)*. By allowing the exchange of classified defense information, the agreement strengthened information sharing and interoperability between the two nations. Additionally, the

US Department of Defense publicly acknowledged the deployment of Task Force-Ayungin on Palawan Island in support of the Philippines' operations in the South China Sea, including assisting the Philippine Armed Forces in maritime exercises and training.^①

Meanwhile, the US also promoted the involvement of its allies, such as Japan and Australia, in US-Philippine military cooperation by various means. Multiple dialogue mechanisms have been established among the US, Japan and the Philippines, encompassing high-level strategic consultations. At the first trilateral summit in April, the 3 parties decided to “strengthen maritime safety cooperation through coordination and cooperation among coastal guards. ” To promote the network of its security framework in the Asia-Pacific region, the US encouraged visiting force agreements between the Philippines and other countries. On July 8, Japan and the Philippines signed the *Reciprocal Access Agreement* (RAA), allowing mutual armies' access for joint military training. Canada and France also brewed similar agreements with the Philippines.

The gray zone approach has become vital in US-Philippine military cooperation under US perspective of great power competition. First, great importance has been placed on para-military forces, such as the Coast Guard, in gray zone competition. The US Coast Guard has closely coordinated with the Philippines to maintain its influence in the South China Sea by providing equipment, training and organizing joint exercises. On July 16, the former's Legend-class cutter and the latter's BRP *Teresa Magbanua* conducted exercises including joint navigation, search and rescue, as well as personnel transfer operations in the South China Sea. On October 28, during the third maritime dialogue with the

^① “U.S. Supporting Philippine Operations in South China Sea with Forward-Deployed Task Force”, USNI, Nov. 21, <https://news.usni.org/2024/11/21/u-s-supporting-philippine-operations-in-south-china-sea-with-forward-deployed-task-force>

Philippines, the US announced 450 million Philippine pesos (about 8 million dollars) in new funding for the modernization of the Philippine Coast Guard. Second, there were gray zone activities targeting China through narrative competition. Highlighting media hype, the US and the Philippines hinted in advance, updated frequently and released various text, video, and audio materials in press conferences for each Second Thomas Shoal supply. Apart from footage from the Philippine Coast Guard and Navy, the US military's reconnaissance aircraft also provided a large amount of aerial audio and video materials.^①

2. Joint Operations with Japan, Australia and Other Allies

First, the US strengthened military coordination with countries such as Japan, Australia and South Korea to enhance deterrence in the Western Pacific. It has been increasing joint exercises and drills with its allies, integrating combat forces of Japan, Australia and others into high-end combat readiness against the backdrop of great power competition.

According to incomplete statistics, **Japan and Australia** participated in dozens of US-led exercises in the Western Pacific in 2024, including major annual ones such as Super Garuda Shield 2024, Balikatan 2024 and Pitch Black 2024. In early February, countries including the US, Japan, Australia and South Korea joined Cope North 24, prioritizing the coordination of manned/unmanned aerial vehicles to enhance interoperability among different air forces. In June, RIMPAC 2024 was held in the Western Pacific, involving 7 European countries in addition to the traditional US allies and partners in the region. The US

^① Hu Bo: "Competition in the 'Grey Zone': Conceptual Generalization and Practical Complexity", published in Pacific Journal, Issue 9, 2024.

attempted to intensify military coordination between its Indo-Pacific and European allies, reinforcing the transatlantic and transpacific partnership.

Second, policy coordination with Japan and Australia had been strengthened to deepen and expand cooperation mechanisms. Under the pretext of defending the rules-based international order and opposing “maritime coercion”, the Biden administration had further consolidated the joint declaration and policy coordination with allies and regional partners. The South China Sea is a crucial topic of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). During the QUAD meeting, the then US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, Indian Prime Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong not only criticized China’s “militarization of disputed features”, but also reached the new initiative of a dialogue focused on maritime law to “uphold the rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific”. Similar statements were made regarding the South China Sea in bilateral and multilateral consultations relating to US-Japan-South Korea, US-Japan and US-Japan-Australia. On June 2, the defense ministers of the US, Japan and South Korea issued a joint statement condemning China’s “illegal maritime claims” in the South China Sea and opposing unilateral actions to change the regional status quo.

On July 28, Antony Blinken, Austin, Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Defense Secretary Kihara gathered on the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee (2+2) in Tokyo, confirming that the US Forces Japan would set up the “Joint Force Headquarters” to coordinate with Japan’s establishment of a permanent organization for unified command of the Ground, Maritime and Air Self-Defense Forces (SDFs) next year, the “Joint Operations Command”. Also, the two countries would address “the greatest strategic challenge” from China through

further cooperation in the security sector such as defense equipment^①. On November 17, the US, Japan and Australia had a trilateral defense ministers' meeting in Darwin, Australia. They launched a trilateral defense consultation to enhance security cooperation and agreed to step further on air defense including joint training and missile info-sharing.^②

3. Strengthen Regional Maritime Domain Awareness

In 2024, together with other South China Sea claimants and regional allies, the US vigorously strengthened its maritime operations and maritime domain awareness (MDA) capabilities in the region.

First, developing situational awareness equipment and strengthening the deployment of forward platforms. For one thing, drills were taken as chances to enhance the deployment of forward situational awareness equipment. In May, during Balikatan 2024, combined littoral reconnaissance teams (LRTs) of US and Philippine Marines went to Mavulis (about 140 kilometers away from Taiwan) and the neighboring islands of Itbayat and Batan to establish a temporary maritime domain awareness network.

In Resolute Dragon 24, with the assistance of the Japan SDF, the US Marine Corps deployed an AN/TPS-80 radar system on Yonaguni, the westernmost of the Ryukyu Islands for the first time. Offering real-time situational awareness information in all directions, the radar was mainly

^① “Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee (“2+2”)”, U.S. Department of Defense, July 28, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3852169/joint-statement-of-the-security-consultative-committee-22/>

^② “Australia-Japan-US Trilateral Defense Ministers Meeting November 2024 Joint Statement”, Nov 17, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3967118/australia-japan-united-states-trilateral-defense-ministers-meeting-november-202/>

used for detecting and tracking missiles, rockets, shells, fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters and UAVs. In September, USAF convened over 30 MQ-9 squadrons for Reaper Smoke 2024 in Florida, testing their abilities to perform simulated missions over the South China Sea.^① Targeting Mischief Reef as a simulation, the decision-making and combat readiness in potential real conflicts were mainly examined to improve the skills of UAV pilots and sensor operators in executing precision strike and reconnaissance tasks in disputed areas.

For the other, pertinence situational awareness equipment has been either deployed or provided to other littoral states in the South China Sea. To strengthen intelligence activities in the region, the US began laying out MQ-9As in the Philippines. The aircraft took part in surveillance and monitoring activities to support intelligence exchange between the two countries. USAF stated in March (now withdrawn) that MQ-9A had successfully secured vital logistical support for permanent deployment at Cesar Basa Air Base in the Philippines, underlining 5 missions over the South China Sea to support surveillance and monitoring of Second Thomas Shoal.^② On November 19, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced that the US has provided an undisclosed number of MANTAS T-12 Unmanned Surface Vessels to the Philippine Navy, which can carry advanced sensors and monitoring systems to detect mines, conduct surveillance, perform search and rescue as well as participating in electronic warfare and swarm operations. Aaron-Matthew Lariosa, a defense journalist based in Washington, acknowledged the importance of

^① MQ-9 Reapers Gathered In Florida, Simulated Fighting Over South China Sea, The War Zone, September 13, 2024, <https://www.twz.com/air/mq-9-reapers-gathered-in-florida-simulated-fighting-over-south-china-sea>

^② U.S. Marine MQ-9A Reapers Now Deployed to the Philippines, USNI News, June 3, 2024, <https://news.usni.org/2024/06/03/u-s-marine-mq-9a-reapers-now-deployed-to-the-philippines>

the maritime domain awareness mission to the Philippine forces in the West Philippine Sea on monitoring PLA.^① In December, the US Embassy in Vietnam announced a \$12.5 million aid package to help Vietnam enhance its maritime law enforcement capabilities and crush illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The aid contained support for Vietnamese maritime law enforcement agencies, donations of small vessels, and funding for the construction of training facilities.

Second, a US-led MDA network was developed through bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements. In May, the US, Japan and South Korean coast guards agreed to scale up the operations and include other partners. The agreement emphasized the significance of protecting marine resources, fighting IUU fishing and strengthening search and rescue efforts. In the same month, the US and the Philippines issued a joint statement on space dialogue, announcing strengthened cooperation in utilizing space for MDA and space domain awareness (SDA). The US Department of State also announced its consideration of the Philippines as a possible location for the next US Geological Survey (USGS) Landsat ground station. The two countries also explored further cooperation in using space for maritime domain awareness.

The September Quad Leaders' Summit stressed the Indo-Pacific partnership for maritime domain awareness (IPMDA) and maritime training. There was a new regional maritime initiative for training in the Indo-Pacific (MAITRI) to enable the 4 countries' partners in the region to maximize the use of IPMDA-provided tools and other QUAD initiatives to monitor and protect their waters, enforce their laws and prevent illegal activities. The first MAITRI seminar is scheduled to be held in India in

^① US gives Philippines 'force multiplier' drones to counter Beijing in South China Sea, South China Morning Post, November 21, 2024, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3287530/us-gives-philippines-force-multiplier-drones-counter-beijing-south-china-sea>

2025. QUAD partners planned to integrate new technologies and data into IPMDA in the coming year, utilizing optoelectronic data and advanced analysis software to enhance their MDA capabilities. In addition, the US Coast Guard, Japan Coast Guard, Australian Border Force and Indian Coast Guard proposed to launch QUAD-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission in 2025 to enhance interoperability and maritime security, expecting to carry out further missions in the Indo-Pacific region for years to come.

In November, a US Department of Defense spokesperson claimed the establishment of the Maritime Security (MARSEC) Consortium by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs (IPSA). It was mentioned that the consortium would invest over 95 million dollars annually in low-cost commercial solutions to enhance MDA, logistics and support and maritime defense in Southeast Asia.

Throughout the years, to restrain opponents and maintain regional power advantages, the US continued to help other South China Sea claimants and regional allies improve their maritime capabilities and awareness range by sharing data and information with countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

V. Exercises and Drills for Enhancing Combat Readiness

According to incomplete statistics, in 2024, the US military had 110 large-scale exercises and drills (with thousands of small-and medium-scale ones) in the South China Sea and surrounding areas (east to the Philippine Sea and south to Australia). The 110 exercises comprised 5 unilateral as well as 105 bilateral and multilateral exercises, involving various services of the U.S. military, including the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Army, Space Force and Coast Guard. Meanwhile, it kept roping in allies and partner countries for bilateral or multilateral military exercises in the region, including ASEAN countries as well as external countries such as Japan, the UK, Australia, India, France, Canada and Germany. Japan ranked first in participation with 68 times, followed by Australia with 28. As more participants got involved in the exercises with countries both inside and outside the region, the scale of multilateral annual large-scale exercises and the participation of allies and partners were greatly increased.

1. Expanding Multilateral Exercise Alliance

The year 2024 had witnessed further enhancement in the allies' participation in US military exercises in the Western Pacific. For example, in April, Japan and Australia joined for the first time in the Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MMCA) in the South China Sea. Apart from traditional US core Asia-Pacific allies such as the UK and Canada, other US allies also significantly strengthened their joint exercises and drills in the South China Sea and surrounding areas.

In June, The Italian Navy dispatched ITS *Cavour* (C550) to the Western Pacific, participating in RIMPAC 2024 near Hawaii and Pacific Dragon 2024 in Guam.

In May, the German Navy sent a fleet of ships, including *Baden-Württemberg* (F222) and the *Frankfurt am Main* (A1412), for the 2024 Indo-Pacific deployment, taking part in RIMPAC 2024 near Hawaii and Noble Raven 24-3 near Okinawa.

These two warships transited the Taiwan Strait from north to south on September 13 to 14 after finishing the task, activating AIS and hyping in the whole course.



Figure 15: Track of German Navy Fleet Transiting the Taiwan Strait, Sep. 13-14, 2024

The Dutch Navy dispatched HNLMS *Tromp* in March and conducted bilateral exercises with USS *Mobile* (LCS-26) and USNS *Wally Schirra* (T-AKE-8) in the South China Sea in May. HNLMS *Tromp* also participated in RIMPAC 2024, Pacific Dragon 2024 and Pacific Archer 24 around Hawaii. On May 31, it transited the Taiwan Strait from south to north.

The French Navy's frigate FS *Bretagne* (D655) had a 7-month deployment in the Indo-Pacific region from April to October. It appeared in Balikatan 2024, Valiant Shield 2024 and RIMPAC 2024.

2. Unprecedented Scale of Some Exercises

In 2024, large-scale exercises conducted by the US in the Western Pacific region were further expanded. The US military not only demonstrated its military presence and combat capabilities in the region, but also strengthened its joint operational capabilities with allies. Additionally, through the application of new technologies and equipment, the US military attempts to further enhance its military deterrence.

Balikatan 2024 from April to May was known as the largest in history with over 16,700 soldiers, including 11,000 from the US Marine Corps, Army, Navy and Air Force, about 5,000 Filipino (despite personnel from the Philippine Coast Guard and other government agencies like the Philippine National Police), about 150 Australian military personnel and about 100 French Navy personnel.

Besides, at least 11 naval vessels from countries such as the Philippines and the US and 6 ships from the Philippine Coast Guard pitched in the exercise. **This was the first time the Philippine Coast Guard had joined Balikatan.** Also, Balikatan 2024 covered the islands of Luzon and Palawan in the Philippines. According to the US military, focusing on the South China Sea and Luzon Strait, it was the **first time that the exercise took place in the South China Sea outside of Philippine territorial waters.**

In June, organized by the US Indo-Pacific Command, Valiant Shield 2024 commenced across land, sea and airspace in Hawaii, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, as well as Japan and Palau. **The exercise**

brought together 6 major US military services: the Navy, Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Space Force. While previous iterations involved only the U.S. military, the 2024 one, for the first time, invited troops from Japan, France and other countries.

From October to November, the US and Japan held Keen Sword 25, the **largest joint military exercise between the two in the sea, airspace and bases around Japan.** The Japan SDFs sent 33,000 personnel, 30 vessels, and 250 aircraft, and the US military set out about 12,000 personnel, 10 vessels and 120 aircraft. Australia and Canada also sent troops for exercises on some subjects.

In December, the US, Japan and Australia hosted Yama Sakura 87 at Camp Asaka and Kengun in Japan, with over 7,000 military personnel from the 3 countries participating. It was the largest in history, **with the US Marine Corps fully participating for the first time.** The Australian military progressed in participation for two consecutive years after its observer's experience in 2022. Other forces such as the Philippines, the UK, Canada, Singapore, France and India also attended as observers, **recording India's first participation.** The U.S. Marine Expeditionary Force III also took part, with exercises designed to be more combat-oriented than in previous years. The focus lay on amphibious operations, assuming offshore defense and cross-domain operations, including space and cyber defense.

3. Increasingly Targeted Exercise Subjects

In 2024, based on great power competition and purported enemy (China), US military exercises in the Western Pacific region were more targeted, simulating complex combat environments and setting

contrapuntally content to enhance the military deterrence and combat capabilities in the region.

During Balikatan 2024, the US military dispatched an AC-130J gunship, to shoot at and sink a simulated Chinese fishing boat near Lubang, Philippines. The US Marine Corps conducted live-fire exercises with HIMARS in Campong Ulay, Palawan Island, the Philippines, facing the South China Sea. The exercise site was about 200 kilometers away from Second Thomas Shoal. The US, Philippines and Australia proceeded with assault exercises on Batan Island between the Philippines and Taiwan; The US and the Philippines conducted live fire and anti-amphibious operation exercises along the coast of Laoag, Ilocos Norte Province in the northwestern part of Luzon Island, located 408 kilometers from the southernmost part of Taiwan; The US, the Philippines and Australia carried out a “sinking exercise” near the coast of Ilocos Norte Province, sinking the retired BRP Lake Caliraya as the target. This supply ship was originally a civilian oil tanker manufactured in China and owned by a Philippine company. As the only Philippine naval asset made in China, it served as an enemy warship. The deterrence conveyed via the exercise subjects was obvious, pointing to China by all means.

In Keen Sword 25, the USAF proposed Agile Combat Employment (ACE) to distribute combat power across multiple strongholds. There was training on SDF and US military delivery at ports of Tomakomai and Kushiro in Hokkaido, and JMSDF refueling at Port of Ishigaki in Okinawa.

Meanwhile, Kumamoto Airport and Nagasaki Airport witnessed fighter takeoff and landing exercises for the first time (the latter was also designated for “special purpose” for the first time), enhancing the flexibility of the exercise and verifying that civilian airports could quickly

turn into military bases under states of emergency. Besides, the US military and Japan SDFs also used Osprey transport aircraft for evacuation and casualty transportation training at Yonaguni in Okinawa Prefecture. This was also the first time that the JGSDF's Osprey flew to Okinawa Island and Yonaguni (110 kilometers away from Taiwan). The practicality and pertinence were self-evident.

VI. Summary and Prospect

In 2024, US military activities in the South China Sea showed varying levels of increases. The frequency of bomber operations and the number of operational days for ocean surveillance/survey vessels doubled compared to 2023. Exercises and joint operations with allies continued to grow rapidly. Close-in reconnaissance to China by large land-based aircraft maintained previous frequencies, while CSG and submarine activities increased slightly. However, there also existed a “vacuum” for ARGs, with no full-unit deployments in the South China Sea, and the frequency of Declaratory Operations like some FONOPs noticeably declined.

We believe that while the US military has made every effort to strengthen its presence and activities in the South China Sea, it has hit its peacetime peak due to an “increment bottleneck” in platform quantity and distractions such as the Red Sea crisis. Moving forward, the focus will likely shift to optimizing existing resources and improving operational efficiency.

Currently, the Trump administration is attempting a global strategic retrenchment. Nonetheless, this would not influence the consensus within strategic-circles that the Indo-Pacific region remains the top priority and that China is the greatest strategic rival. Subjectively, despite differing motivations, the White House, the Pentagon and establishment strategists will continue pushing for an enhanced military presence and activity in the South China Sea and surrounding areas. Objectively, the trend of limited growth in US operations in the region is unlikely to change. Even if the Red Sea crisis is resolved or the Russia-Ukraine war ends, the additional forces the US could redeploy to the Indo-Pacific would be

minimal, as 60% to 70% of its deployable naval and air forces are already in the Western Pacific. Though increments are possible, they will be very limited. As a result, expanding the deployment of unmanned platforms or autonomous weapons may become the primary approach for the US military to address its “quantity anxiety” in the South China Sea and surrounding areas.

Appendix

Main U.S. Military Exercises in the South China Sea and Neighboring Areas in 2024

NO.	NAME	DATE	LOCATION	PARTICIPANT	FORCE	SUBJECT
1	Maritime Cooperative Activity	1.03-04	South China Sea	U.S., Philippines	US: USS Carl Vinson, USS Princeton, USS Kidd and USS Sterrett Philippines: BRP Gregorio del Pilar, BRP Ramon Alcaraz, BRP Davao del Sur and AW-159	Passing exercises, communication checks, cross-deck exercises, joint patrols, Officer of the Watch (OW) maneuvers, and fixed-wing flight operations.
2	Sea Dragon 2024	1.09-24	Guam	U.S., Australia, Japan, India, South Korea	US: P-8A Australia: 2*P-8A and 51 personnel Japan: P-1 India: P-8I South Korea: P-3CK	Anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare, search-and-rescue operations, air defence, and inter-navy communications and coordination
3	Trilateral Exercise	1.15-17	East China Sea	U.S., Japan, South Korea	US: USS Carl Vinson, USS Princeton, USS Kidd, USS Sterrett Japan: JS Hyūga, JS Kongō South Korea: ROKS Sejong the Great, ROKS Wang Geon	Joint sailing, advanced maritime communication operations, maritime interdiction operations training, air combat drills, staff exchanges and integration
4	Bilateral Exercise	1.17-19	East China Sea to South of Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: USS Carl Vinson, USS Princeton, USS Kidd and USS Sterrett Japan: JS Hyūga, JS Kongō	LINKEX, etc.
5	Bilateral Exercise	1.17-19	Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: about 10*F-35A Japan: 27*F-15, 1*E-767, 2*E-2C, 2*KC-46A	Tactical training
6	Bilateral Exercise	1.18	Sea of Japan	U.S., Japan	US: 2*B-1 Japan: 4*F-15	Tactical training
7	Bilateral Exercise	1.24	South of Shikoku	U.S., Japan	US: 2*B-1B Japan: 2*F-15	Tactical training

8	Bilateral Exercise	1.24-25	East of Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: P-8A Japan: P-3C	LINKEX, anti-submarine warfare exercise, etc.
9	Multi-Large Deck Event	1.31	South of Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: USS Carl Vinson, USS Theodore Roosevelt, USS Lake Erie, USS Princeton, USS Daniel Inouye, USS Dewey, USS John Finn, USS Halsey, USS Rafael Peralta, USS Sterett, USS William P. Lawrence Japan: JS Ise	Cross Deck, LINKEX, etc.
10	Keen Edge 24	2.01-08	Indo-Pacific	U.S., Japan, Australia	US Space Forces Indo-Pacific, the Japan Self Defense Forces, Australian Defense Force	Command post exercise
11	Bilateral Exercise	2.01-10	Japan	U.S., Japan	US: EODT, UUV operator etc. Japan: Surface Units (FFM(1),MST (1), MSO (3), MSC (8)) and 1*MCH-101	Mine Laying, Mine Sweeping, Mine Hunting and EOD
12	Cope North 24	2.05-23	Guam	U.S., Australia, Canada, France, South Korea, Japan	US: About 1,700 soldiers from the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps 700 soldiers from Australia, Canada, France, South Korea and Japan	Multiple joint exercises including aviation medical escort training, personnel and cargo air transportation and drop, formation airdrop exercise, etc.
13	Trilateral Exercise	2.07-08	South China Sea	U.S., Japan, Australia	US: USS John Finn, USS Gabrielle Giffords Australia: HMAS Warramunga Japan: JS Sazanami	Tactical Maneuvering Exercise, LINKEX, etc.
14	Maritime Cooperative Activity	2.09	South China Sea	U.S., Philippines	US: USS Gabrielle Giffords, MH-60S Philippines: BRP Gregorio del Pilar, AW109	P+H4assing exercise, communication exercise, photo exercise, division tactics, and officer of the watch maneuvers, etc.

15	Bilateral Exercise	2.14-15	South China Sea	U.S., Japan	US: USS John Finn Japan: JS Sazanami, JS Shimakaze	LINKEX, etc.
16	Resilient Shield 2024	2.16-22	Japan	U.S., Japan	Japan: JS Atago, JS Myoko	Ballistic missile defense simulation exercise
17	Joint Patrol	2.19	South China Sea	U.S., Philippines	Philippines: 3*FA-50 US: B-52H	Joint patrol
18	Milan 2024 Exercise	2.19-27	Bay of Bengal	U.S., India and more than 50 other countries	US: USS Halsey Japan: JS Sazanami Australia: HMAS Warramunga India: INS Vikrant, INS Vikramaditya	Include a harbor phase followed by a sea phase where ships will focus on high-end tactical training, maneuvering drills, air-defense exercises, submarine familiarization, multinational replenishment-at-sea, communications drills, gunnery exercises, and joint warfighting scenarios
19	Iron Fist 24	2.25-3.17	Japan	U.S., Japan	Japan: 2nd Amphibious Rapid Deployment Regiment, Landing Ship Division 1 and the tank landing ship JS Kunisaki, US: USS America, USS Green Bay, Combat Logistics Battalion 31, Battalion Landing Team 1/1, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, U.S. Navy Amphibious Squadron 11	Advanced marksmanship, amphibious reconnaissance, fire and maneuver assaults, bilateral logistics and medical support, and fire support operations, such as mortars, artillery and close-air support.

20	Cobra Gold 2024 exercise	2.27-3.08	Thailand	U.S., Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia	US: USS Somerset and 15th MEU	Combined joint all-domain operation (CJADO), Troops staged near-simultaneous amphibious and air assault drills, defeating a simulated blockade; conducted air and maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR); rehearsed combined fires; and incorporated tactical communications from joint forces.
21	Bilateral Exercise	3.01-06	Sumou-nada(West of Kyushu)	U.S., Japan	US: 2*MSO Japan: JS Hirado, JS Takashima	Mine Warfare (Mine Laying, Mine Sweeping, Mine Hunting)
22	Bilateral Exercise	3.05	Japan	U.S., Japan	US: MH-60R Japan: SH-60L	Anti-submarine warfare exercise
23	Bilateral Exercise	3.07-16	West of Kyusyu, East China Sea to around Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: USS America, USS Green Bay, USS Warrior, LCAC, MH-60S Japan: JS Kunisaki, JS Etajima, LCAC	Cross deck, Lead through exercise, Boarding exercise, LCAC maintenance exercise, PHOTOEX, etc.
24	Bilateral Exercise	3.13	Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: 8*F-35, 4*F-15, 2*F-16, 2*KC-135, 2*HH-60, 1*KC-130 Japan: 4*F-15	Tactical training
25	Cope Tiger 2024	3.18-28	Thailand	U.S., Thailand, Singapore	In total, 77 assets and more than 2,000 personnel from Singapore, Thailand and the US. The RSAF is participating in the exercise with 27 aircraft, eight ground-based air defence systems and more than 700 personnel.	Large-scale air defence and strike missions

26	Bilateral Exercise (SWATT 24)	3.18-4.06	From Yokosuka to the East of Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: USS America, USS Dewey, USS Higgins, USS Howard, USS Ralph Johnson, USNS Yukon and Submarine Japan: JS Kongō	(1) Harbor Phase Subject Matter Expert Exchange etc. (2) Sea Phase Tactical exercise (Anti-air warfare exercise, Anti-submarine warfare exercise, Anti-surface gunnery exercise, Electronic warfare exercise, Anti-air missile exercise), Replenishment at sea
27	Exercise Tiger TRIUMPH 2024	3.18-31	near Visakhapatnam and Kakinada, India	U.S., India	US: USS Somerset, USS Halsey, P-8A	Combined operational maneuver, command and control, and joint sustainment operations
28	Bilateral Exercise	3.24	Philippine Sea	U.S., Japan	US: USS America, USS Ralph Johnson and USS Dewey Japan: JS Kongō	Bilateral Exercise
29	Bilateral Exercise	3.25	South of Kanto	U.S., Japan	US: P-8A Japan: P-1	LINKEX, anti-submarine warfare exercise
30	Unilateral Exercise	3.25-28	Japan	U.S., Japan	US: USS McCampbell	Tomahawk Land Attack Missile Training
31	Salaknib 24	4.08-4.17	Philippines	U.S., Philippines	More than 3,900 U.S. and Philippine troops	Field training, live-fire exercises, and subject matter exchanges
32	Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity	4.07	South China Sea	U.S., Japan, Australia, Philippines	US: USS Mobile, P-8A Japan: JS Akebono Australia: HMAS Warramunga, P-8A Philippines: BRP Gregorio del Pilar and BRP Ramon Alcaraz	Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise, Tactical Maneuvering Exercise, LINKEX, etc.
33	Bilateral Exercise	4.8	South China Sea	U.S., Australia	US: USS Mobile Australia: HMAS Warramunga	Bilateral Exercise
34	Multilateral Exercise	4.9	South China Sea	U.S., Australia, France	US: USS Mobile Australia: HMAS Warramunga France: FS Vendemiaire	Multilateral Exercise

35	Cope Thunder 24	4.08-19	Philippines, South China Sea	U.S., Philippines	Over 250 Airmen and 12 aircraft from the U.S. Air Force and over 400 airmen and aircraft from PAF	Bilateral fighter training operation
36	Bilateral Exercise	4.12-13	East China Sea to the South of Shikoku	U.S., Japan	US: USS Theodore Roosevelt, USS Daniel Inouye, USS Russell and 1*P-8A Japan: JS Ariake	Tactical exercise
37	Bilateral Mine Warfare / EOD Exercise	4.15-26	Guam	U.S., Japan	US: EODMU5 Japan: Mine Warfare Force EOD Unit	MCM and EOD training
38	Bilateral Exercise	4.16	East of Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: P-8A Japan: P-3C	LINKEX
39	Bilateral Exercise	4.18-19	Japan	U.S., Japan	US: P-8A Japan: P-3C	LINKEX, anti-submarine warfare exercise, etc.
40	Balikatan 2024	4.22-5.10	Philippines, South China Sea	U.S., Philippines, Australia, France	At least 16,000 troops (11,000 from the U.S. and 5,000 from the Philippines)	Command and Control Exercise (C2X), Field Training Exercise (FTX), and Humanitarian Civic Assistance (HCA)
41	Bilateral Exercise	4.25	Pacific Ocean	U.S., Japan	US: 2*B-52 Japan: 2*F-2	Tactical training
42	Unilateral Exercise	5.02	South China Sea	U.S.	US: USS Howard	Simulated Land Attack Missile Exercise
43	Bilateral Exercise	5.22	South China Sea	U.S., Netherlands	US: USS Mobile, USNS Wally Schirra Netherlands: HNLMS Tromp	Bilateral Exercise
44	JPMRC-X	6.1-10	Philippines	U.S., Philippines	Approximately 1,500 troops assigned to the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division and 196th Infantry Brigade, and the Philippine Army's 5th and 7th Infantry Divisions	\

45	Bersama Warrior 2024	6.1-15	Malaysia	U.S., Malaysia	More than 40 members from the Washington National Guard and Malaysian Armed Forces	\
46	Marine Aviation Support Activity (MASA) 24	6.3-21	Philippines	U.S., Philippines	US: F-35B Philippines: the Philippine Marine Corps (PMC)	Littoral live-fire exercise, forward arming and refueling
47	Valiant Shield 2024	6.7-18	Hawaii, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Japan, Palau	U.S., Japan, France	US: USS Nimitz, USS Ronald Reagan, USS Robert Smalls, USS Higgins, USS Rafael Peralta, USS Blue Ridge Japan: JS Izumo, JS Haguro and 1 Taigei-class submarine France: FS Bretagne	Joint field training exercise, live fire training and sinking exercise
48	Bilateral Exercise	6.14	Philippine Sea	U.S., France	US: USS Blue Ridge France: FS Bretagne	Tactical exercise
49	Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity	6.16	South China Sea	U.S., Japan, Canada, Philippines	US: USS Ralph Johnson, P-8A Japan: JS Kirisame Canada: HMCS Montreal Philippines: BRP Andres Bonifacio	Communication exercise, Maneuver exercise
50	Bilateral Exercise	6.18-20	South China Sea	U.S., Canada	US: USS Ralph Johnson, USNS Wally Schirra Canada: HMCS Montreal	Personnel transfers, flight operations, and a replenishment at sea
51	Noble Raven 24-2	6.21	Guam	U.S., Japan	US: USS Rafael Peralta Japan: JS Izumo	LINKEX, Personnel Exchanges
52	Bilateral Exercise	6.21	Pacific Ocean	U.S., Japan	US: 2*B-1B Japan: 2*F-35A	Tactical training

53	Freedom Edge	6.27-29	\	U.S., Japan, South Korea	US: USS Theodore Roosevelt, USS Halsey, USS Daniel Inouye, P-8, F/A-18, E-2D and MH-60. Japan: JS Ise, JS Atago and P-1 , South Korea: ROKS Seoae Ryu Seong-ryong, ROKS Gang Gam-chan, P-3, Lynx helicopter and KF-16	Ballistic missile defense, air defense, anti-submarine warfare, search and rescue, maritime interception, and defensive network training.
54	Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET)	7.1-26	Indonesia	U.S., Indonesia	Members of the Indonesian Navy's elite Komando Pasukan Katak (KOPASKA) and a U.S. Naval Special Warfare (NSW) unit	Maritime tactics, close-quarters combat, sniper shooting, tactical combat casualty care, casualty evacuation procedures, and mission planning
55	Live-fire and rapid airfield damage repair (RADR) exercise	7.8-12	Japan	U.S., Japan	U.S. 18th Civil Engineer Group and JASDF the Western Air Civil Engineer group	Live-fire and rapid airfield damage repair (RADR) exercise
56	Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEE)	7.9-11	Vietnam	U.S., Vietnam	US: USCGC Waesche, U.S. Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) Operators, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Technicians (Tech) Vietnam: Armed Forces members	Discussions around search and rescue (SAR) operations, IUU fishing (IUU), rules for accidental encounters at sea, explosive ordnance disposal, as well as women, peace and safety (WPS) Trainings about tactics, best practices and methods to improve rescue operations.
57	Bilateral Exercise	7.12	Indian Ocean	U.S., India	US: USS Theodore Roosevelt, USS Daniel Inouye India: INS Visakhapatnam, INS Aditya	Bilateral Exercise

58	Bilateral U.S.-Philippine search and rescue exercise	7.16	South China Sea	U.S., Philippines	US: USCGC Waesche Philippines: BRP Melchora Aquino	Search and rescue (SAR) training, personnel transfer evolutions, and bilateral sailing.
59	CARAT Thailand 2024	7.18-26	Gulf of Thailand	U.S., Thailand, Philippines	US: USS Gabrielle Giffords, MH-60S Thailand: HTMS Taksin, HTMS Bhumibol Adulyadej , HTMS Chakri Naruebet Singapore: RSS Valiant	Anti-submarine warfare, air defense exercises, surface action group coordination, VBSS, mine countermeasures, and search and rescue training events
60	Trilateral Exercise PEGASE	7.19	Philippine Sea	U.S., Japan, France	US: E/A 18-G , P-8A Japan: F-2 France: French Rafale and French Airbus A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT)	Formation flying, practice targeting, and train air-to-air refueling on the French MRTT
61	Ships Qualification Training (SQT)	7.22-23	West of Kyushu	U.S., Japan	US: Military Sealift Command's (MSC) commercial charter oiler MT Badlands Trader Japan: JS Hamana	Simulated consolidated cargo replenishment at sea (CONSOL)
62	Silver Flag exercise	7.22-26	Guam	U.S., Australia, Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia	US: The 554th Rapid Engineering Deployable Heavy Operations Repair Squadron	Expeditionary airfield damage repairs
63	Resolute Dragon 24	7.28-8.7	Japan	U.S., Japan	Approximately 3,000 U.S. Marines and Sailors from III MEF will train alongside their counterparts from the Western Army, various units from the Japan Self-Defense Force, and the U.S. Joint Force	The deployment of a TPS-80 radar to Yonaguni, bilateral low altitude training with U.S. and Japanese V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, and force-on-force and live-fire training in multiple locations
64	Pacific Dragon 2024	7.29-8.3	Hawaii	U.S., Japan, South Korea, Australia, Italy, Netherlands	US: USS Kidd, USS Shiloh, P-8A, USS Carl M. Levin Australia: HMAS Sydney, E-7A Italy: ITS Raimondo	Ballistic missile defense exercise

					Montecuccoli Japan: JS Ariake South Korea: ROKS Yulgok Yi I Netherlands: HNLMS Tromp	
65	Pacific Partnership 2024-2	7.30-8.14	Philippines	U.S., Philippines	US: USNS City of Bismarck	Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief mission
66	Maritime Cooperative Activity	7.31	South China Sea	U.S., Philippines	US: USS Mobile Philippines: BRP Ramon Alcaraz	Training on routine bilateral surface operations and communications
67	RIMPAC 2024	6.27-8.1	Hawaii	U.S., Japan, Australia, Canada, Brunei, Chile, France, German, India, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, South Korea, Singapore, Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Israel, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, U.K.	US: USS Carl Vinson CSG, USS Fitzgerald, USS Gridley, USS Somerset Japan: JS Haguro Australia: HMAS Sydney Canada: HMCS Vancouver, MV Asterix etc.	Amphibious attack exercise, disaster relief exercise, sinking exercise, etc.

68	Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity	8.7-8	South China Sea	U.S., Australia, Canada, Philippines	US: USS Lake Erie Canada: HMCS Montreal Philippines: BRP Ramon Alcaraz, BRP Jose Rizal Australia: P-8A	Sea and air exercises
69	Multi-Large Deck Event	8.9	Indo-Pacific	U.S., Italy	US: USS Lincoln, USS Spruance, USS Frank E. Petersen Jr., MH-60S, MH-60R, F/A-18E&F Super, E/A-18G, F-35C and E-2D Italy: ITS Cavour, ITS Alpino, F-35B	Maritime communication operations, air combat operations and cross deck flight operations
70	Super Garuda Shield 2024	8.12-13	Indonesia	U.S., Indonesia, Australia, Canada, France, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, U.K., New Zealand	Approximately 5,500 combined national forces, approximately 2,500 of which are U.S. service members.	Airborne operations, amphibious operations, and operability information exchanges.
71	Bilateral Exercise	8.13	Philippine Sea	U.S., France	US: USS Dewey France: FS Bretagne	Formation navigation, joint communication and simulated refueling at sea
72	Bilateral Exercise	8.16	Philippine Sea	U.S., Japan	US: USS Blue Ridge Japan: JS Ariake	LINKEX, etc.
73	Bilateral Exercise	8.18-21	Philippine Sea	U.S., Italy	US: USS Dewey Italy: ITS Cavour, ITS Alpino	Fixed-wing air defense training, joint anti-submarine exercise and subject matter expert exchange
74	Pacific Angel 2024-3	8.19-31	Vietnam	U.S., Australia, Chile, Japan, U.K., Vietnam	\	Engineering, medical activities and subject matter expert exchange

75	The 23rd annual Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) exercise	8.10-8.23	Singapore	U.S., Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Canada, Fiji, France, German, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Palau, Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, U.K., Vietnam	The participants of the US Navy included staff from COMLOG WESTPAC, as well as personnel from the US 7th Fleet and Pacific Fleet	Maritime security (MARSEC) seminar, sensing seminar, visiting, boarding, search and seizure (VBSS) exercise, information sharing exercise
76	Pitch Black 2024	7.12-8.2	RAAF Bases Darwin, Tindal, and Amberley in Australia	U.S., Australia, Singapore, Italy, Indonesia, India, Japan, U.K., France, German, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Spain, Brunei, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Canada	Over 4,400 personnel and 140 aircraft from 20 nations.	\
77	Pacific Vanguard 2024	From 8.24	Guam	U.S., Canada, Japan, South Korea	US: USS Dewey Canada: HMCS Vancouver Japan: JS Ariake South Korea: ROKS Chungmugong Yi Sun-sin	Maritime operations, anti-submarine operations, air combat and advanced mobility exercises.

78	Multilateral Exercise	9.8-11	South China Sea	U.S., Italy, Australia	US: USS Dewey Canada: HMCS Vancouver Japan: JS Ariake South Korea: ROKS Chungmugong Yi Sun-sin US: USS Russell Australia: P-8A Italy: ITS Cavour, ITS Alpino, ITS Raimondo Montecuccoli	Fixed-wing air defense and joint anti-submarine warfare exercises were conducted, and subject matter expert exchange, command and control, tactical and anti-surface combat interoperability skills were developed among participating vessels.
79	Bilateral Exercise	9.10	Pacific Ocean	U.S., Japan	US: 1*B-1, KC-135 Japan: 4*F-35A	Tactical training
80	Bilateral Exercise	9.12-15	Japan	U.S., Japan	US: USS America, MH-60S Japan: JS Shimokita, LCAC	Cross Deck, Search and Rescue Exercise
81	Bilateral Exercise	9.22-9.25	East of Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: USS Boxer Japan: JS Kongō	Surface Warfare Exercise, LINKEX etc.
82	Noble Raven 24-4	9.23-28	Timor Sea	U.S., Australia, Japan	US: USS Dewey Australia: HMAS Stuart Japan: JS Ariake	Anti-Surface Warfare, Anti-Submarine Warfare, LINKEX, Cross Deck etc.
83	Bilateral Exercise	9.25	Okinawa	U.S., Japan	US: 8*F-22, 4*F-16, 3*KC-135, 4*F/A-18, 1*HH-60, 12*F-35B Japan: 4*F-15	Tactical training
84	Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity	9.28	South China Sea	U.S., Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines	US: USS Howard Australia: HMAS Sydney, P-8A Japan: JS Sazanami New Zealand: HMNZS Aotearoa Philippines: BRP Antonio Luna, BRP Emilio Jacinto	Multilateral surface operations, deck landings, hoisting, and search and rescue.

85	KAKADU 2024	9.9-19	Darwin, Australia	U.S., Australia and 30 other countries	US: USS Dewey Australia: HMAS Stuart, HMAS Warramunga	Harbor phase for planning, simulation, and international culture exchange before moving into a sea phase where the ships and aircraft will divide into several multinational task groups to practice various scenarios, culminating in a task group free play.
86	Southern Beach Exercise	9.17-20	Okinawa	U.S.	F-22A Raptors assigned to the 27th Fighter Squadron and 199th Fighters Squadrons, F-16CM Fighting Falcons assigned to the 179th Fighter Squadron, KC-135 Stratotankers assigned to the 909th Air Refueling Squadron, an E-3 Sentry assigned to the 961st Airborne Air Control Squadron, and the 623rd Air Control Squadron	\
87	SAMASAMA 2024	10.7-15	Philippines, South China Sea	U.S., Philippines, Australia, Japan, Canada, France	US: USS Howard, P-8A, Marine Rotational Force - Southeast Asia (MRF-SEA) Philippines: BRP Jose Rizal, BRP Waray, BRP Nestor Reinoso Canada: HMCS Vancouver, CH-148 helicopter Japan: JS Ariake, US-2, P-1	Anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, anti-air warfare and maritime domain awareness
88	Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center (JPMRC) Combat Training Center (CTC) rotation	From 10.7	Alaska to Hawaii, Palau	U.S., Malaysia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, Singapore, Maldives,	US: the 2nd Light Brigade Combat Team (2LBCT) will work alongside units from the 11th Airborne Division, 5th Security Force	Engage in collaborative exercises that simulate complex, multi-domain challenges.

	(JRMRC 25-01)			Australia, U.K.	Assistance Brigade, the 3rd Multi-Domain Task Force, selected units from United States Army Special Operations Command	
89	MALABAR 2024	10.8-18	Visakhapatnam, India	U.S., Australia, Japan	US: USS Dewey, P-8A Japan: JS Ariake Australia: HMAS Stuart, P-8A India: INS Delhi	Combined training in the surface, sub-surface, air and information domains.
90	KAMANDAG 8	10.15-25	Philippines	U.S., Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, France, Japan, South Korea, Australia, U.K.	Philippine Marine Corps, U.S. Marine Corps, the French Armed Forces, Royal Thai Marine Corps, and Indonesian Marine Corps; including continued participation from the Australian Defense Force, British Armed Forces, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, and Republic of Korea Marine Corps.	Jungle survival and patrolling; live-fire exercises; competitive sniper shoots; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) training; small boat operations; and visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) operations.
91	Bilateral Exercise	10.20-23	Strait of Malacca	U.S., Australia	US: USS Dewey Australia: HMAS Stuart	Formation sailing exercise, an air defense exercise, maritime communications training, personnel cross-decks and VBSS drills.

92	Keen Sword 25	10.23-11.1	Japan	U.S., Japan, Australia, Canada	<p>US: U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM), U.S. Pacific Fleet (PACFLT), U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific (MARFORPAC), U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ), U.S. 7th Fleet (C7F), III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF), 3rd Marine Division (3d MARDIV), III MEF Information Group (III MIG), 3rd Marine Logistics Group (3rd MLG), 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (1st MAW), U.S. Army Japan (USARJ), U.S. Naval Forces Japan (CNFJ), 5th Air Force (5 AF), 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command (AAMDC); 3rd Multi Domain Task Force (3rd MDTF), 613th Air Operations Center (AOC), 374th Airlift Wing (374 AW), 18th Wing (18 WG), 35th Fighter Wing (35 FW), and 17th Field Artillery Brigade (17th FAB)</p>	<p>Joint live fire training, medical large-scale casualty exercise, facility security force training, and integrated Rapid Airfield Damage Repair (RADR) training.</p>
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93	CARAT Malaysia 2024	10.30-11.6	Malaysia, the Strait of Malacca	U.S., Malaysia	US: USS Dewey, MH-60R helicopter, P-8A Malaysia: KD Terengganu, KD Rencong, AS 550 Fennec Helicopter F/A-18D, AW139	Dive and salvage training, aviation and information sharing, force protection, cyber security, maritime domain awareness, and maritime law and law enforcement.
94	Slingstone 24-4	10.15-25	Guam	U.S.	US: the 734th Air Mobility Squadron	Operational Readiness Exercise
95	Multi-National Mine Warfare Exercise (MNMIWEX) 24	10.12-25	Korea	U.S., South Korea, Japan, U.K., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Philippines, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Thailand, Belgium, Malaysia, Oman, Colombia, United Arab Emirates, Chile, Netherlands	19 nations and approximately 100 personnel	Mine countermeasures (MCM) operations
96	Trilateral aerial exercise	11.3	East China Sea	U.S., Japan, South Korea	US: F-16 Japan: F-2 South Korea: F-15K	Trilateral aerial exercise
97	Keris MAREX 24	11.6-19	Indonesia	U.S., Indonesia	Approximately 200 U.S. Marines from MRF-SEA and 360 personnel from the KORMAR's 10th Marine Infantry Battalion	Marksmanship ranges, indirect fire support with mortars, infantry tactics training, and small unmanned aircraft system utilization
98	Freedom Edge 24-2	11.13	East China Sea	U.S., Japan, South Korea	US: USS Washington, USS Higgins, USS Dewey, P-8, F-35, F-18, KC-135 Japan: JS Haguro, P-3, F-15, F-2, E-767 South Korea: ROKS Seoae Ryu Seong-ryong,	Ballistic Missile Defense, Air Defense, Anti-Submarine Warfare, Anti-Surface Warfare, Maritime Interdiction, and Defensive Cyber trainings

					ROKS Chungmugong Yi Sun-sin, P-3, F-35, F-15	
99	Bilateral Exercise	11.13-15	Japan	U.S., Japan	US: P-8A Japan: P-1	LINKEX, anti-submarine warfare exercise, etc.
100	Airfield damage repair training exercise	11.19-21	Japan	U.S., Japan	US: the 374th Civil Engineer Squadron	Airfield damage repair training exercise
101	CARAT Brunei 2024	11.20-25	Brunei	U.S., Brunei	US: USS Omaha, MH-60R helicopter	Maritime domain awareness, anti-surface warfare, maritime interception operations, helicopter interoperability, underwater blasting and troop protection.
102	Sling Stone Exercise	12.4-10	Guam	U.S., Japan	US: Assets and personnel of the Air Force, Army, Navy and Allied Forces Japan: JS Haguro	Using FEM-02, an Aegis Guam System missile intercept test held Dec. 10, as a tactical training event.
103	Yama Sakura 87	12.7-14	Japan	U.S., Japan, Australia	Around 300 members of the ADF, 1,500 US Army personnel and 5,000 JGSDF	The exercise leveraged new concepts and ideas to enhance the interoperability and combined readiness among the Allied and partnered nations.
104	Warfighter 25-2	Dec.	Japan	U.S., Japan	US Army and Air Force	\
105	Simulated contingency operations training	12.5	Korea	U.S., South Korea	US: The 51st Logistics Readiness Squadron coordinated with 7th Air Force South Korea: Service Corps Pyeontaek Mobilization Station members	Simulated contingency operations training

106	Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity	12.6	South China Sea	U.S., Philippines, Japan	US: P-8A Philippines: BRP Andres Bonifacio, C-90 Japan: JS Samidare	\
107	Dynamic Force Employment exercise	12.9-13	Philippines	U.S., Philippines	US: the 25th Fighter Squadron Philippines: the Philippine Air Force	Dynamic Force Employment exercise
108	Joint training	12.12	Okinawa	U.S.	The U.S. Army's 5th Transportation Company, the Marine Corps	Combat training exercise
109	Operation Christmas Drop 2024	12.18	Guam	U.S., Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia	USAF, Japan Air SDF, South Korean Air Force, Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force	Humanitarian airlift operation
110	Open Water Amphibious Movement	12.10	Okinawa	U.S.	the U.S. Marine Corps 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division	Open Water Amphibious Movement

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