

# The China–Taiwan Weekly Update



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*ISW will pause production of the China-Taiwan Weekly Update over the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. Weekly updates will resume the week of January 6-10, 2025.*

## Key Takeaways

- **The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses exchanges with Kuomintang (KMT) leaders to legitimize the party while maintaining coercive pressure against President Lai Ching-te’s administration and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This dual approach is likely intended to cause the Taiwanese public to associate the DPP with military escalation and the KMT with peaceful cross-Strait relations. Former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou led a delegation of nearly 1,000 young Taiwanese people to the PRC and met with TAO Director Song Tao in another high-profile instance of CCP-KMT engagement. A PRC national used a modified drone to photograph the United States Vandenberg Space Force Base on November 30. Frequent infiltrations by PRC nationals into US military installations represent likely PRC efforts to spy on US military facilities, especially missile launch sites.**
- **Guam police apprehended seven PRC nationals attempting to enter the island illegally on December 10 and 11 during a US missile interceptor test off the island.**
- **The European Union (EU) sanctioned six PRC-based companies and one PRC citizen on December 16 for supporting Russia’s war in Ukraine.**

## Cross-Strait Relations

### *Taiwan*

**The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses exchanges with Kuomintang (KMT) leaders to legitimize the party while maintaining coercive pressure against President Lai Ching-te’s administration and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This dual approach is likely intended to cause the Taiwanese public to associate the DPP with military escalation**

**and the KMT with peaceful cross-strait relations.** The PRC staged unannounced large-scale exercises around Taiwan from December 9-11, shortly after Taiwan President Lai Ching-te of the DPP transited through the United States. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND) said the exercise was the PRC's largest maritime operation since the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. PRC officials participated in the Shanghai-Taipei Twin City Forum in Taipei the following week, on December 17. Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) granted conditional approval for the forum to take place but threatened to cancel the event if the PRC continued its threatening military exercises against Taiwan.[1] The KMT, which favors closer cooperation and engagement with the PRC, advocated for holding the event despite the PRC's aggression toward Taiwan amid the military exercises.

The MAC blocked Shanghai Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) Director Jin Mei from entering Taiwan to participate in the forum, however. The MAC stated that the Shanghai TAO refused to communicate with the DPP government regarding Jin's travel to Taiwan.[2] The MAC cited the PRC's military intimidation and recent threats toward Taiwan, such as a list of legal guidelines that threaten severe punishment for Taiwanese "separatists," which the PRC released in June.[3] The MAC also denied entry to PRC media personnel due to national security concerns and stated that all PRC media outlets are propaganda units of the CCP.[4] The KMT criticized President Lai Ching-te's administration for limiting the PRC delegation and framed it as an obstruction of the freedom of press.[5]

The CCP severed official contact with the DPP in 2016 for its alleged "separatist" policies and interacts only with the KMT, on the basis of the KMT's recognition of the 1992 Consensus. The 1992 Consensus is an alleged verbal agreement between representatives of the CCP and KMT that there is only one China and Taiwan is part of China, though the two sides disagree over which government rightfully represents "China." The CCP conducts direct negotiations with KMT figures to legitimize it as the party that can effectively conduct cross-strait relations, in contrast to the DPP.

**The People's Republic of China's (PRC) uncharacteristic restraint in publicizing the military exercises minimized negative public attention that would have damaged its image amid cross-strait exchanges.** The Lai administration's acquiescence to allow the Twin City Forum to proceed benefits the PRC, which masqueraded a friendly disposition to the Taiwanese public without reducing pressure on the DPP. The PRC did not officially announce or name the military exercises, unlike past drills that aimed to publicly warn the DPP government against policies that support Taiwan's sovereignty. The deployment began after ROC President Lai Ching-te returned from a tour to visit Taiwan's Pacific Island allies, which included stopovers in Hawaii and Guam. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Ministry of National Defense (MOD) spokespersons did not directly answer whether the PRC was conducting military exercises when asked.[6] TAO Spokesperson Zhu Fenglian stated on December 11 that the PRC must punish "provocations" such as Lai's transit through the United States in response to a reporter's question about the military exercises, but did not directly mention them.[7] The PRC's unusual silence during the exercises insulates it from wider domestic and international scrutiny, which hinders the DPP's credibility in justifying restrictions. Canceling the event would have exposed the Lai administration to greater criticism by the KMT for being closed off. The PRC's restraint in discussing the exercises thus likely reflects in part the importance to Beijing of increasing KMT-led cross-strait engagement.

**Former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou led a delegation of nearly 1,000 Taiwanese young people to the PRC and met with TAO Director Song Tao in another high-profile instance of CCP-KMT engagement.** Ma is leading the delegation to the PRC provinces of Heilongjiang and Sichuan from December 18-26 to promote people-to-people exchanges between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The trip began a day after the Taipei-Shanghai Twin City Forum and just over a week after an educational exchange that Ma's foundation organized to bring PRC visitors to Taiwan.[8] Ma met with Song Tao on December 18 at the Cross-Strait Youth Ice and Snow Festival in Harbin, Heilongjiang. Song said that "compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are all Chinese" and should "put the country's future and national interests first, adhere to the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus, resolutely oppose 'Taiwan independence' secession and foreign

interference, actively promote cross-strait exchanges and cooperation,” “work together to promote the development of cross-strait relations,” and maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Ma said that people on both sides of the strait “belong to the same Chinese nation” and agreed that they should adhere to the 1992 Consensus, oppose Taiwanese independence, expand exchanges, and promote peaceful cross-strait development.[9] It is unclear whether the meeting led to any agreements, as Ma is no longer an official of the ROC or the KMT.

This trip to the PRC was Ma’s third trip to the PRC in two years. The PRC TAO announced the trip on December 11, days after Taiwan’s MAC threatened to ban the Ma Ying-jeou Foundation from hosting cross-strait exchanges for six months to five years. An unspecified government source said the foundation may have illegally permitted political campaigning for “one China” during the exchange, when a PRC student on the trip called Taiwan’s national baseball team the “Taipei, China team.”[10]

The PRC’s repeated hosting of Ma helps to maintain his image as an important figure in cross-Strait relations, as well as within the KMT and ROC politics, and to amplify PRC-aligned messaging within Taiwan. Ma’s faction within the KMT is strongly in favor of cross-strait exchanges and integration but may be losing influence somewhat as the KMT seeks to increase its appeal to younger voters. The CCP has an interest in maintaining Ma’s influence because the model of cross-strait relations he promotes, rooted in the 1992 Consensus, is closely aligned with the PRC’s preferred model. The TAO has explicitly referenced the period of Ma’s presidency from 2008-2016 as the ideal state of cross-strait relations that Taiwan should emulate if it wants peace.[11] Ma’s concept of “one China” refers to the ROC and not the PRC, however.

Ma’s visits to the PRC have added significance because they all occurred during periods of high cross-strait tensions and included meetings with high-level PRC officials. Ma traveled to the PRC in March 2023 for the stated purpose of ancestor worship and met with TAO Director Song Tao while he was there. That trip coincided with then-president Tsai Ing-wen’s transit through the United States, where she met then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.[12] Ma met CCP Secretary-General Xi Jinping in April of the following year while leading Taiwanese students on a cultural and historical exchange trip in the PRC. The trip occurred a month before Lai’s presidential inauguration.[13] Ma’s current trip and meeting with Song came soon after President Lai transited through the United States. The PRC responded to all three aforementioned events – the Tsai and Lai transits and Lai’s inauguration – with major military exercises around Taiwan.

Cooperative actions between KMT leaders and the CCP are significant despite the fact that the KMT is not being the ruling party in Taiwan. The DPP has been in control of the executive branch since 2016, but lost its control of the legislature in the 2024 election.[14] The KMT is therefore in a stronger political position than it has been in years. The current Legislative Yuan has no majority party, but the 2024 election resulted in the KMT becoming the largest party in the legislature, with 52 seats to the DPP’s 51.[15] The KMT’s electoral victories in 2024 suggest that it is gaining support with the Taiwanese populace. The CCP may hope that rewarding the KMT with high-profile cross-strait engagements may further raise its popularity and weaken the DPP’s ability to effectively respond to CCP coercion in the future.

**The United States delivered its first shipment of M1A2T Abrams tanks to Taiwan** on December 16. The Taiwanese military received 38 tanks out of a total of 108 tanks purchased in a 2019 order.[16] The rest of the tanks are scheduled to be delivered in 2025 and 2026.[17]

The new tanks will strengthen coastal defense capabilities and help to further modernize Taiwan’s aging tank fleet.[18] The tanks will also help to expand interoperability with the United States and several partners.[19] The Abrams tanks’ defense capabilities will be particularly effective against China’s emerging Type 05 amphibious fighting vehicles because of their upgraded armor capacities and speed, especially when compared to Taiwan’s aging M60A3 and CM11 tanks.[20] The United States has, in contrast, delivered 31 Abrams tanks to Ukraine since Russia’s invasion in 2022.[21]

The PRC MFA responded to the delivery by denying that Taiwan had its own Ministry of National Defense and urging the United States to abide to the one-China principle, which states that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and the PRC is the sole legitimate government of that China. The United States does not recognize the one-China principle but instead maintains a “one-China policy” of maintaining diplomatic relations only with the PRC and not with Taiwan. MFA Spokesperson Lin Jian highlighted the US-PRC 1982 Joint Communiqué during the normalization of relations, which the PRC claims precludes the US from selling arms to Taiwan. The US and PRC did not settle the question of arms sales to Taiwan in the course of negotiations regarding the normalization of relations, and the United States’ policy dictates that its arm sales to Taiwan depend on the PRC’s commitment to a peaceful resolution of its differences with Taiwan.[22] The PRC’s response is consistent with its past condemnations of US weapon shipments to Taiwan, such as the approval of a \$2 billion weapons agreement in late October.[23] Such statements aim to delegitimize both the ROC government and US support for the ROC.

### *China*

**A PRC national used a modified drone to photograph the United States’ Vandenberg Space Force Base on November 30.[24] Frequent infiltrations by PRC nationals into US military installations represent likely PRC efforts to spy on US military facilities, especially missile launch sites.** The Department of Justice (DOJ) announced on December 11 that US authorities arrested PRC national Zhou Yinpiao on federal charges after he flew a modified drone over Vandenberg Space Force Base in California and took pictures of the base from above.[25] The base’s security personnel detected the drone flying nearly a mile overhead and apprehended Zhou, who was piloting the drone from a nearby park.[26] US authorities found the drone on Zhou’s person and later discovered the photographs of the military base from an aerial viewpoint on the drone. US authorities arrested Zhou at San Francisco International Airport on December 11 before he boarded a flight to the PRC.[27] The DOJ stated that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is investigating the case.

The criminal complaint affidavit by the Central District Court of California stated that Zhou told a contact on PRC-based messaging app WeChat that he “hacked” the drone so that it could fly higher than its intended range, which he told investigators he achieved by using software that he purchased online.[28] Zhou sent the unnamed person photographs that he took with the drone.[29] The affidavit stated that Zhou told investigators that he previously “got into trouble” for flying an unrestricted drone in the People’s Square in Shanghai, which the PRC designated as a restricted zone.[30]

Frequent attempts by PRC nationals to gain access to US military bases indicate the PRC’s possible interest in gathering intelligence related the United States’ missile launch capabilities. The Wall Street Journal cited unnamed US officials who stated in September 2023 that PRC nationals had accessed US military bases and other sensitive sites up to “100 times in recent years,” including PRC nationals who crossed into a US missile range in New Mexico and scuba divers swimming near a US government rocket-launch site in Florida.[31] Vandenberg Space Force Base frequently launches military and commercial spacecraft, including Starlink satellites.[32] The National Reconnaissance Office, SpaceX and the Space Force launched a Falcon 9 rocket containing satellites bound for orbit on the same day that the base detected Zhou’s drone flying overhead.[33]

**Guam police apprehended seven PRC nationals attempting to enter the island illegally on December 10 and 11 during a US missile interceptor test off the island.** The PRC nationals arrived by the same boat from Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, which have a 90-day visa-exemption policy.[34] The Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency stated in a press release that one of the three detainees arrested on December 10 had a standing warrant for her arrest and was found illegally entering the vicinity of a US military installation.[35] Police also discovered four other detainees on Tanguisson Beach and near a US military installation on December 11.[36] The press release noted that it did not discover

any contraband in the detainees' baggage. The arrests all occurred in northern Guam near Andersen Air Force Base. The US conducted its first Guam-based ballistic missile intercept off the coast of Andersen Air Force Base on December 10.[37] The Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency stated that there were 152 instances of PRC nationals illegally attempting to enter Guam since 2022.[38] The December 10 infiltrations are the latest known instance of suspicious activity by PRC nationals near US missile launch sites. Conducting espionage against US military facilities, especially those with missile launch capabilities, could provide the PRC with potentially valuable intelligence that would benefit it in a conflict with the US. Guam is the closest US territory to the PRC and a significant strategic location for both countries. Guam lies within the second island chain and within the range of PRC DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missiles nicknamed the "Guam Express." [39] The PRC's application of an anti-access aerial denial (A2/AD) strategy to prevent access to Taiwan is dependent on neutralizing threats from the first and second island chains.[40] The US Department of Defense's 2023 Report on the Military and Security Developments Involving the PRC states that Guam military bases are within PRC ballistic and cruise missile range and added that "in the future, PLA LACMs will also likely be deployable on surface platforms like the RENHAI-class guided-missile cruisers. H-6K bomber flights into the Philippine Sea demonstrate the PRC's ability to range Guam with air-launched LACMs." [41] The US Missile Defense Agency said that the December 10 missile interceptor test "marks a pivotal step taken in defense of Guam initiatives and partnerships." [42]

# PRC Illegal Entry into Guam (December 10-11)



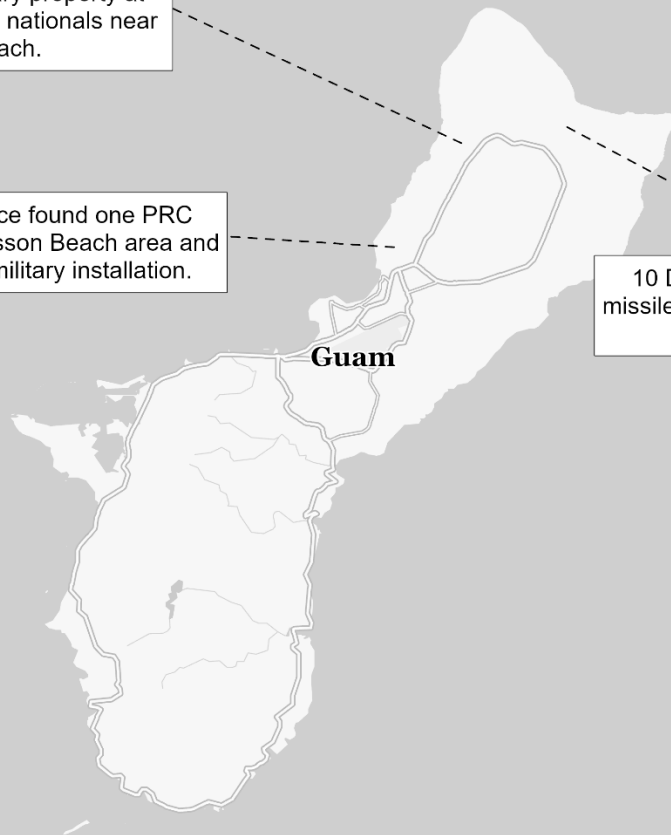
PRC nationals can use the Northern Mariana Islands to access Guam.



10 DEC: Guam police found one PRC national near a military property at Dededo and two PRC nationals near Haputo Beach.

11 DEC: Guam police found one PRC national at the Tanguisson Beach area and three more near a military installation.

10 DEC: The US successfully tested a missile interceptor off the coast of Andersen AFB.



Guam



0 10 20 40 Kilometers

Map by George Barros, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, and Derik Durbin  
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**A UK court accused a PRC businessman close to Prince Andrew on December 12 of being a spy and upheld a decision to bar him from the United Kingdom.** The court stated that Christopher Yang Tengbo developed an “unusual degree of trust” with Prince Andrew, who authorized him to act on the prince’s behalf in business meetings with potential Chinese investors. Yang is listed as a director of five companies including the Hampton Group, a business consultancy he founded in 2005 that describes itself as “a bridge between companies in China and the rest of the world.”[43] The UK’s then-Home Secretary Suella Braverman canceled Yang’s UK residency rights in 2023, believing him to be carrying out “covert and deceptive activity for the CCP” on behalf of the United Front Work Department (UFWD). UK authorities said data they found on Yang’s devices when he was stopped in 2021 included documents that indicated a link with the UFWD and other Beijing-linked groups. They argued that the documents showed Yang’s frequent contacts with “officials connected with the Chinese state, that he had “sometimes deliberately obscured” his links to the CCP, and that he may have “proactively engaged in UFWD objectives” even though he hadn’t received direct orders.[44] A court ruling on December 12 upheld the ban.[45]

The PRC MFA called the spy allegations “absurd” without elaborating.[46] Yang denied any wrongdoing, saying that he had never been a CCP member, that contact with the UFWD is inevitable for those doing business in the PRC, and that he was a victim of the “political climate” of rising UK-PRC tensions. He asked the court to disclose his identity to quell speculation. Prince Andrew’s office said that the prince ceased his relationship with Yang after the government advised him to, without specifying when this happened. It said Andrew had only met with Yang through official channels and never discussed sensitive matters with him.[47]

## Southeast Asia

### *Philippines*

**The Philippines ratified its Reciprocal Access Agreement with Japan on December 16 in the latest act of military cooperation between the two states amid increasing pressure from the PRC.**[48] The Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) provides the legal framework and official guidance for defense cooperation between the Philippines and Japan. One of the RAA’s provisions enables the Philippines and Japan to deploy troops within the other state, creating the opportunity for larger-scale military exercises and maritime patrols.[49] Philippine military spokesperson Colonel Francel Margareth Padilla stated that “this agreement provides substantial benefits, particularly in enhancing training opportunities, joint exercises, and interoperability” to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).[50] The AFP has been seeking to improve its military capabilities, particularly in the maritime domain, amid ongoing aggression from the PRC in the South China Sea. Both states have identified aggression in the South China Sea and East China Sea as a key reason for their efforts for greater military cooperation in multilateral dialogues between the Philippines, Japan, and their Indo-Pacific partners and allies.[51] Tensions between the Philippines and the PRC have been on the rise following a spate of PRC coercive actions in disputed maritime territory, most recently when China Coast Guard (CCG) vessels employed water cannons and sideswiped a Philippine Coast Guard Vessel (PCG) near Scarborough Shoal on December 4.[52]

Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Endo Kazuya praised the RAA on December 16 as an important step towards greater cooperation between Indo-Pacific allies.[53] Japan has increasingly sought a greater role in Indo-Pacific security through the establishment of its Official Security Assistance grant program, which will provide \$10.6 million in military aid to the Philippines’ capabilities in the South China Sea and Luzon Strait.[54] Japan’s provision of military assistance and signing of defense agreements with the Philippines indicates the importance of South China Sea security and cooperation with alliance members to its overall defense strategy.

PRC officials have not yet commented on the RAA’s ratification but criticized its initial signing in July 2024 and stated that the bilateral cooperation was “targeted” at third parties.[55] In the PRC media outlet *Global Times*, PRC military experts

criticized the deal as an effort by the United States and Japan to reduce Philippine sovereignty and incite further violence in the South China Sea.[56] The PRC often places the blame for South China Sea tensions on United States interference as a way to suggest that conflict with the PRC over maritime territory is not in the best interest of the Philippines and instead serves the United States' strategic interests.[57]

**The PRC announced that it “allowed” a Philippine resupply mission to the *Sierra Madre* in Second Thomas Shoal. The PRC’s rhetoric likely aims to bolster the credibility of its claims to sovereignty over the territory.** The AFP released a statement confirming that a Philippines civilian vessel successfully carried out a resupply mission to the *BRP Sierra Madre* in the Second Thomas Shoal on December 12.[58] The PRC and the Philippines negotiated a provisional agreement on July 21 to avoid confrontations during the latter’s resupply missions to the *BRP Sierra Madre*, which has resulted in a cessation of PRC harassment up to the present.[59] This marks the fourth resupply mission to the *BRP Sierra Madre* since the signing of the provisional agreement between the PRC and the Philippines.[60] The AFP released a statement confirming that a Philippines civilian vessel successfully carried out a resupply mission to the *BRP Sierra Madre* in the Second Thomas Shoal on December 12.[61] The PRC has harassed Philippine vessels attempting to access Second Thomas Shoal over a dozen times in the past year in an effort to prevent resupply missions to the *BRP Sierra Madre*, often employing violent methods that harm Filipino personnel and damage their ships. The *BRP Sierra Madre* is a grounded warship that has served as an AFP military outpost in the Second Thomas Shoal since 1999. The CCG released a statement saying that the Philippines' resupply mission to the “illegally grounded” *BRP Sierra Madre* was carried out “with China’s permission.”[62] The PRC has previously framed its non-interference as “allowing” the Philippines' resupply missions to occur. This framing aims to give the impression that the PRC has legal jurisdiction over the Second Thomas Shoal, which the Philippines rejects.



# Events Around the South China Sea (December 4-12)



4 DEC: The China Coast Guard and PLA Navy fire water cannons and sideswipe a Philippine Coast Guard vessel sailing near Scarborough Shoal.

Scarborough Shoal

Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone

Subi Reef

Iroquois Reef

Spratly Islands

Sabina Shoal

Palawan (Philippines)

Second Thomas Shoal

12 DEC: The Philippines carried out a successful resupply mission to the BRP Sierra Madre.

0 125 250 500 Kilometers

Map by George Barros, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Tom Thacker, Harrison Harwitz, and Derik Durbin  
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- Philippines-controlled with military outpost
- Philippines-controlled with no outpost
- PRC-controlled with military outpost
- PRC-Controlled with no outpost
- Chinese Nine Dash Line
- Philippine Claimed Territory

## Europe

## Russia

### **The European Union (EU) sanctioned six PRC-based companies and one PRC citizen on December 16 for supporting Russia's war in Ukraine.**

[63] The European Commission (EC) stated the reasons for the sanctions include the PRC national and two entities' support in facilitating the circumvention of EU sanctions and four entities supplying sensitive drone components and microelectronic components to the Russian military industry that supports its war in Ukraine. The measures are part of the EU's 15th round of sanctions and mark the first instance of EU sanctions against PRC entities for supporting Russia.[64] The specific measures include a travel ban against the individual and freezing the EU-based assets of the six companies.[65] The EU previously blacklisted PRC firms for supporting Russia's military in order to prevent them from purchasing sensitive goods from the EU.[66] The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Lin Jian stated that China is committed to promoting peace talks and considers the "unilateral sanctions" baseless. Lin claims the PRC has never provided weapons to Russia and strictly controls the export of dual-use materials.[67]

The sanctioned individual is a businesswoman named Sophia Li Xiaocui, whom the EU accused of assisting Russian computer numerical control (CNC) machine manufacturer Unimatik. Li facilitated Unimatik's acquisition of goods that are subject to restrictions under the EU's export controls. Li "controls and represents" two other sanctioned firms ARCLM International Trading Co and Shijiazhuang Hanqiang Technology.[68] The EU's Official Journal stated that Li "facilitated [ARCLM International Trading Co and Shijiazhuang Hanqiang Technology's] infringements" that "significantly frustrated existing Union restrictive measures provisions." [69] ARCLM International Trading Co. and Shijiazhuang Hanqiang Technology machinery manufacturers that the EU stated exported "products of European origin to Russian companies in violation of export restrictions." [70]

The EU sanctioned four other companies for supplying components used for drones: Juhang Aviation Technology Shenzhen Co., Redlepus TSK Vektor Industrial (Shenzhen), Xiamen Limbach Aviation Engine Co, and Asia Pacific Links. Juhang Aviation and Redlepus TSK Vektor are both "involved in a procurement and manufacturing network for the Russian military industrial complex." [71] Both Juhang Aviation and Redlepus TSK Vektor have sent export-controlled dual-use components to IEMZ Kupol, a subsidiary of Russian arms company Almaz-Antey, through the Russian intermediary OOO TSK Vektor. The United States sanctioned Juhang and Aviation and Redlepus TSK Vektor in May and October, respectively.[72] The companies' components were used in the Garpiya-3 (G3) drones, which the Russian military uses in Ukraine. Both companies act as intermediaries for Russian companies and Xiamen Limbach, a drone engine producer that the EU sanctioned for selling to IEMZ Kupol.[73] The EU lists Xiamen Limbach as suspected of sharing the L550 drone engine design with drone manufacturers of the Shahed-136 UAV, which the Russian military has used against Ukraine.[74] The EU sanctioned Asia Pacific Links for supplying dual use components. The Official Journal of the EU's sanctions records stated that Asia Pacific Links is the largest supplier of microelectronic components to Russian companies since the Ukrainian invasion.[75] Asia Pacific Links is Russian-owned and is also sanctioned by the US, Switzerland, UK, and Ukraine.[76]

Sanctioned Entity	Description	Reason
Sophia Li (Li Xiaocui)	Businesswoman who facilitated Russian computer numerical control (CNC) machine manufacturer Unimatik's evasion of export controls. Li is associated with ARCLM International Trading Co. and Shijiazhuang Hanqiang Technology.	Exported European goods to Russian companies in violation of export controls.
ARCLM International Trading Co.	Hong Kong-based machinery manufacturer.	Exported European goods to Russian companies in violation of export controls.
Shijiazhuang Hanqiang Technology	PRC-based manufacturer for rock wool machinery.	Exported European goods to Russian companies in violation of export controls.
Juhang Aviation Technology Shenzhen Co.	PRC-based company that has exported dual-use items to Russian intermediary OOO TSK Vektor and Russian electronic company LLC Testkomplekt.	Sent export-controlled dual-use components to IEMZ Kupol via OOO TSK Vektor.
Redlepus TSK Vektor Industrial	Russian defense firm acting as an intermediary between Chinese suppliers and IEMZ Kupol, a subsidiary of Russian arms company Almaz-Antey.	Sent export-controlled dual-use components to IEMZ Kupol via OOO TSK Vektor for Russia's Garpiya project.
Xiamen Limbach Aviation Engine Co.	PRC-based subsidiary of Limbach Flugmotoren (Limbach Aero Engines), a PRC-owned company based in Germany.	Sent export-controlled dual-use components to IEMZ Kupol via OOO TSK Vektor for Russia's Garpiya project. Suspected of sharing the L550 drone engine design for Russia's use in the Shahed-136.
Asia Pacific Links	Hong Kong-based and Russian-owned exporter that indirectly provided millions of dollars in parts to Russia's drone program in violation of export controls and sanctions.	Largest supplier of microelectronic components to Russian companies since the invasion of Ukraine.

**CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping advocated for greater cooperation between the PRC and Russia to shape global governance during a meeting with Deputy Chairman of Russia’s Security Council Dmitry Medvedev in Beijing on December 12.**[78] Xi urged greater cooperation between the PRC and Russia in multilateral institutions such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).[79] The PRC and Russia are pursuing the expansion of multilateral organizations that they lead to increase international support for alternative institutions and strengthen their influence over global governance. Xi stated that the PRC has repeatedly emphasized three principles regarding the Ukraine crisis: “no expansion of the battlefield, no escalation of fighting and no provocation by any party.” [80] The PRC MFA readout described Russia’s positive reception of the “Friends of Peace” initiative, a PRC and Brazil-led forum that has the stated purpose of expanding dialogue and giving Global South countries a voice to advance a “political settlement of the Ukraine issue.”[81] Medvedev stated in an interview with Russian state media on December 12 that Russia is ready to negotiate “only if Ukraine understands the realities that have developed... on the ground,” and that Xi “set out the Chinese version of the possibility of a settlement.”[82] Russia’s terms call for Ukraine to surrender nearly 20% of its territory and its millions of occupants under Russian occupation.[83] The PRC’s lack of reproach for Russian aggression accommodates Russia’s uncompromising demands on Ukrainian sovereignty.

### Middle East

**The PRC called for counterterrorism cooperation against the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) amid Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) calls for jihad against the PRC in Syria.** PRC Embassy to the United States spokesperson Liu Pengyu stated on December 13 that the PRC is prepared to work with international actors to “firmly strike down on” ETIM.[84] TIP is a militant group that is affiliated and allied with Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS), which overthrew Bashar al-Assad’s regime and seized the capital of Damascus on December 7. TIP Emir Sheikh Abdul Haq al-Turkestani reportedly stated that “With the permission of God, his power and strength, the Chinese infidels will soon taste the same torment that the infidels in the Levant tasted.”[85] TIP released a video featuring footage of armed fighters and overlaid with anti-PRC messaging calling upon a “mujahid” to “liberate [Uyghurs] from the Chinese oppressors” and “save them from the merciless oppression of the Chinese [government].”[86]

Some observers, including the United Nations, have described ETIM and TIP as the same group.[87] Others frame TIP as ETIM’s “successor” or differ on the extent to which ETIM and TIP are connected.[88] The extent to which TIP might hold power in the new Syrian government under HTS remains unclear, but the TIP has been active in Syria for several years. Liu’s statement is consistent with past PRC actions against ETIM and Uyghur separatism more broadly. The PRC attributed over 200 attacks to ETIM as early as 2010 and blamed ETIM and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) for a 2021 suicide attack against PRC citizens in Pakistan.[89] The PRC cites the threat of Uyghur militancy and counterterrorism efforts as the impetus for policy toward Uyghurs in Xinjiang, which the US Department of State stated in 2021 constituted genocide.[90] The United States classified ETIM as a terrorist organization in 2002 but removed this designation in 2020, citing a lack of evidence of the group’s existence.[91] Liu denounced the United States’ removal of the designation in his December 13 statement and accused the United States of having “politicized and weaponized” a counterterrorism issue.[92]

The PRC has relied on the Assad regime to monitor and curtail ETIM’s activities in Syria. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) stated in 2016 that it was aware of ETIM activity in Syria and that it would maintain transnational efforts to address ETIM’s movements in the Middle East and Central Asia.[93] The MFA expressed a similar interest in transnational cooperation against ETIM in 2017 following reports of ETIM militants crossing from Turkey into Syria.[94] The Associated Press reported in 2017 that the PRC and Syria were engaged in intelligence cooperation to support counterterrorism efforts against Uyghur militants.[95] AP pointed out that the PRC was one of Syria’s major economic backers at the time and had helped protect it against international sanctions.[96] CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping met with Assad in 2023 and

upgraded relations between the PRC and Syria to a strategic partnership.[97] The meeting highlighted the two leaders' focus on counterterrorism cooperation.

The overthrow of the Assad regime and installation of Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) in December 2024 represents a loss of the longstanding counterterrorism cooperation aimed at ETIM. The PRC has pushed for stability in Syria following the rebel takeover of Damascus; PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman called for a "political solution" in a regular press conference on December 9, which is consistent with the PRC's disinclination to take sides in intrastate conflict.[98] The PRC will likely continue to publicly advocate for stability, refrain from supporting potential contributors to the spread of ETIM influence, and shape its new Syria policy around the containment of ETIM and TIP.

## Iran

**US sanctions on Iranian oil tankers have disrupted Iranian crude exports to the PRC.** The US Department of Treasury imposed sanctions on October 11 and December 2 targeting Iran's "shadow fleet" of tankers used to export Iranian petroleum. Most of the ships in this "shadow fleet" are registered under different countries and frequently change their names and the country of registration to avoid detection.[99] Bloomberg reported that the new US sanctions have disrupted shipments of Iranian oil to the PRC, which purchases around 92% of Iran's crude oil exports at discounted prices.[100] Bloomberg cited energy market intelligence firm Vortexa, Ltd., which stated that Iran did not deliver some of its oil exports to the PRC in November because PRC buyers require cargo to be delivered on non-sanctioned ships. Vortexa stated that there is a slowdown in Iranian vessels calling at ports in Shandong Province.[101] The sanctions will likely reduce the amount of Iranian oil that the PRC buys and increase the cost of its energy procurement. The PRC imports over 70% of its crude oil, most of it from Russia and Saudi Arabia.[102] Vortexa estimated that the PRC imported an average 1.05 million barrels per day of Iranian oil in the first 10 months of 2023. The PRC usually relabels these imports as originating from Malaysia or a Middle Eastern country to obscure their origin, however.[103] a

## Latin America

**Vice Chairman of top PRC decision-making body Central Military Commission (CMC) He Weidong met with Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel days after the PRC denied reports of signals intelligence (SIGINT) facilities in Cuba.** The two leaders met in Havana on December 11 and affirmed strong bilateral ties. The PRC Ministry of Defense reported that "the two sides will firmly support each other on issues involving each other's core interests" and that they would "promote the relationship between the two militaries to a new level." He Weidong also visited former Cuban President Raúl Modesto Castro Ruz and Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces Minister Álvaro López Miera during his trip.[104] The meeting between He and Díaz-Canel aligns with past PRC efforts to maintain a strong PRC-Cuba relationship. PRC President Xi Jinping met with Cuba's president in both 2022 and 2023 and affirmed strong ties between the two countries.

He's Cuba trip follows the republication of a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report listing four possible PRC SIGINT facilities in Cuba on December 6. The PRC Embassy in Cuba called these reports "fake news" with "no factual basis" in a December 8 statement.[105] The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs echoed this statement on December 11 and responded to a reporters' question about the report with criticisms of US policy in Latin America and the Caribbean.[106] The US has stated its intent to take action against possible PRC spying efforts in Cuba. US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Vice Chair and Secretary of State nominee Marco Rubio released a joint statement with Intelligence Committee Chair Mark R. Warner expressing concern over PRC-Cuba intelligence collaboration in 2023.[107] US Department of Defense spokesman Pat Ryder stated that the US is aware of PRC presence in Cuba and "will continue to keep working to disrupt [it]" when CSIS released its original report of the SIGINT facilities. [108]



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