

# The China–Taiwan Weekly Update



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Note: ISW will pause publication of the China-Taiwan Weekly Update during Thanksgiving week. Publication will resume according to the normal schedule following the Thanksgiving holiday.

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## **Key Takeaways**

- **ROC President Lai Ching-te may plan to transit through Hawaii and possibly Guam during a trip to Taiwan’s South Pacific allies in late November or early December.**
- **The PRC released the captain of a Taiwanese fishing vessel whom it had detained since July following a visit by Taiwanese officials from Penghu County.**
- **Xi’s and Biden’s agreement not to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into nuclear weapons control systems signals Beijing’s willingness to implement guardrails in areas that it has previously been noncommittal about cooperating in.**
- **The PRC debuted its J-35A stealth fighter at Airshow China 2024. The fighter is the PRC’s second stealth plane and reportedly greatly expands China’s power projection capability into the Pacific.**
- **Xi’s and Biden’s agreement not to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into nuclear weapons control systems signals Beijing’s willingness to discuss AI safety despite previously withholding nuclear talks to punish the US for supporting Taiwan.**
- **The PRC did not interfere with a Philippine resupply mission to the *Sierra Madre* in Second Thomas Shoal. It is continuing to abide by a provisional agreement it reached with the Philippines in July 2024 despite continuing tensions over the two countries’ territorial disputes.**

- **The PRC warned the United States and the Philippines against increasing regional tensions following the signing of a US-Philippines intelligence sharing agreement.**
- **Anonymous European Union diplomats said that the EU has “conclusive” and “credible” evidence that a factory in the PRC’s Xinjiang region is producing and exporting drones for Russia.**

## Cross-Strait Relations

### *Taiwan*

**Reuters reported, citing anonymous sources, that ROC President Lai Ching-te plans to transit through Hawaii and possibly Guam during a trip to Taiwan’s South Pacific allies in late November or early December.**<sup>[1]</sup> The Taiwanese government did not confirm the report. Such a trip would be Lai’s first visit to the United States as president and would mirror former ROC President Tsai Ing-wen’s 2017 South Pacific trip, which also transited Hawaii and Guam.<sup>[2]</sup> The South Pacific states of Tuvalu, Palau, and the Marshall Islands are among the 12 countries that maintain formal relations with the ROC rather than with the PRC. Guam and Hawaii are both home to major US military bases that are likely to play a role in any US defense of Taiwan. The headquarters of the US Indo-Pacific Command are also in Hawaii. PRC MFA spokesperson Lin Jian stated that such transits violate the One China principle and will not stop the “inevitable trend” of China’s reunification. He urged the United States not to allow Lai’s transit.<sup>[3]</sup>

Tsai Ing-wen will embark on a trip to Canada to give a speech at the Halifax International Security Forum from November 22-24.<sup>[4]</sup> The annual summit, organized by Washington-based institution HFX, brings together leaders in government, defense, academia, and business. The trip would mark Tsai’s second trip abroad since leaving office on May 20, following a trip to Europe last month where she met with politicians and dignitaries in the Czech Republic, France, and Belgium. Tsai received the John McCain Prize for Leadership in Public Service at the 2020 iteration of the summit, honoring her efforts to safeguard Taiwan’s democracy and resist PRC aggression. Lin Jian responded to news of her trip by urging Canada to adhere to the One China principle and warning countries with formal ties to the PRC against hosting Taiwanese “separatists.”<sup>[5]</sup>

Beijing perceives meetings between high-ranking American and Taiwanese officials as steps toward formal Taiwanese independence and threats to PRC claims over the island. It started the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1995 when the ROC’s then-president Lee Teng-hui visited his alma mater, Cornell University, in New York. Following then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in 2022 and Tsai’s meeting with her successor, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, in Los Angeles in 2023, the PRC held extensive military drills around Taiwan, including the first Joint Sword-series exercise in 2023. It has reacted less strongly to “stopover” transits than to formal public visits, however. The PRC has greatly increased its military and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan to deter further international engagement and assert PRC sovereignty claims since Tsai took office in 2016, and even more since Lai

took

office

in

2024.[6]

**The PRC released the captain of a Taiwanese fishing vessel whom it had detained since July following a visit by Taiwanese officials from Penghu County.** The PRC detained the Penghu-registered Taiwanese fishing boat Da Jin Man 88 on July 2 for illegally fishing in PRC waters northeast of Kinmen during a PRC fishing moratorium. The CCG escorted the boat to the port of Quanzhou and detained its crew there for over a month. The incident was the first time the PRC had detained a Taiwanese vessel in 17 years.[7] The PRC released four of the boat’s crew members on August 13 but continued to hold the boat’s captain, surnamed Hong, and the boat itself.[8] The PRC released the boat and Captain Hong on November 15 following a visit by former Deputy Speaker of Penghu County Chen Shuang-chuan to Quanzhou the day before. Chen is also Chairman of the Penghu Cross-Strait Exchange Association. Chen arranged to pay 210,000 Chinese yuan (about \$29,000 USD) in fines on behalf of Hong to secure his release.[9] Chen and other Penghu officials previously met with PRC Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) Director Song Tao on October 24 to negotiate for Hong’s release. The TAO readout framed the visit as being entirely about resuming PRC tourism to Penghu, however, even though that was only a secondary objective of the trip.[10]

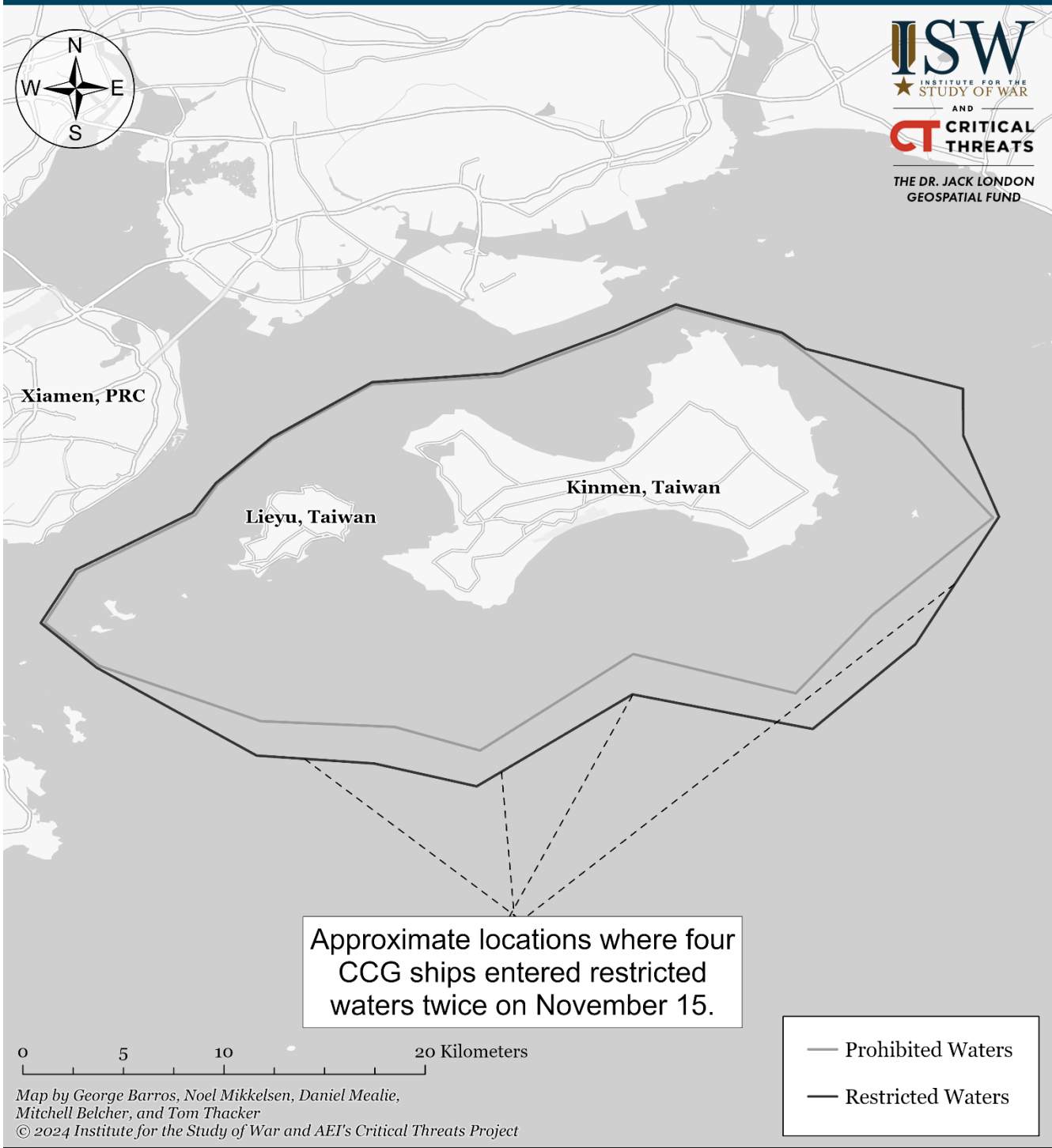
The PRC conducts direct negotiations with KMT party officials and local politicians such as Chen Shuang-chuan to legitimize the KMT as negotiating partners on behalf of Taiwan. The PRC released the Da Jin Man 88’s other crew members, as well as another fisherman, following negotiations with Kinmen officials of the KMT.[11] Conducting fruitful negotiations with KMT officials while refusing to publicly meet with DPP officials enables the PRC to help the DPP’s political opponents and reinforces the CCP’s message that acceptance of the 1992 Consensus, which the KMT accepts and the DPP rejects, is the requisite basis for cross-Strait relations. 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 PRC’s four-month detention of Hong may be intended to deter illegal Taiwanese fishing in PRC waters as the PRC strengthens its “law enforcement” against Taiwanese nationals. Illegal fishing in the area is common, but PRC authorities usually warn and drive away offenders rather than detaining them. The PRC may also have used its detention of Hong, his crew, and a Kinmen-based soldier named Hu detained earlier in the year to give it leverage in negotiations with Taiwan at the time. The two sides resumed stalled negotiations about the February 14 capsizing incident, in which two PRC fishermen died while fleeing a Taiwanese Coast Guard boat in Kinmen’s prohibited waters, weeks after the PRC detained the Da Jin Man 88. Local PRC authorities released both Hu and the crew of the Da Jin Man 88 soon after Taiwan agreed to return the boat and bodies of the deceased fishermen.[12] It is unclear what the PRC got in return for releasing Hong, if anything, however, other than payment of his fines. Chen said that Hong’s detention period was so long because unspecified “legal issues” had to be resolved before he could be released.[13]

**Four Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) ships entered restricted waters around Taiwan's Kinmen islands in two separate incursions on November 15th.** Kinmen is a Taiwanese island group located just three kilometers (1.9 miles) from the PRC's coast, a distance that has decreased in recent years due to a new PRC land reclamation project for an airport north of the island.<sup>[14]</sup> The Kinmen Archipelago's restricted waters extend between 1.5 and 10 kilometers from its shores.<sup>[15]</sup> The CCG ships simultaneously entered Kinmen's southern restricted waters at four different points at 8:50 a.m. and left at 11:00 a.m. The same four CCG ships returned to Kinmen's restricted waters at 2:45 p.m. the same day and left at 5:00 p.m.<sup>[16]</sup> These two incidents mark the 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> times CCG ships intruded into Kinmen's restricted waters this year. Taiwan does not claim territorial waters or a contiguous zone around Kinmen due to its proximity to the PRC but does maintain analogous "prohibited" and "restricted" maritime zones around Kinmen, where it claims exclusive rights to carry out law enforcement. The PRC claims Taiwan and all its associated waters to be PRC territory and denies the existence of any restricted or prohibited waters around Taiwanese islands.

The PRC began regular CCG patrols around Kinmen and frequent incursions into Kinmen's waters since February 2024 in response to the February 14 capsizing incident. The patrols are intended to assert PRC law enforcement control around Kinmen and likely to punish Taiwan for the election victory of President Lai Ching-te in January. Beijing considers Lai to be a dangerous separatist. The PRC has incrementally changed its incursion strategy, especially since Lai's inauguration in May. The patrols shifted from fixed routes and formations to dispersed, less predictable maneuvers that simultaneously enter Kinmen's waters from multiple directions.<sup>[17]</sup> These tactics serve to establish a new status quo, desensitize Taiwan to the threat to Kinmen, and strain Taiwan's resources as it must be prepared to mobilize at any time. Normalizing these patrols increases the likelihood that Taiwan will be caught unprepared if an apparently routine incursion turns into a full blockade that isolates Kinmen and other outlying islands. It is noteworthy that these incursions are regularly occurring at locations at which the PRC would likely need to station ships to enforce a blockade.

# Chinese Coast Guard Violations of Kinmen's Restricted Waters (November 15)



## *China*

**US President Joe Biden met with CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping on November 16 at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Lima, Peru. This was Biden’s third meeting with Xi since becoming president. Xi’s rhetoric toward Biden was generally placatory while continuing to warn the United States not to escalate tensions.**

Xi signaled the PRC’s preparation for the US presidential transition and said that the PRC is ready to work with the Trump administration.[18] Xi warned the United States, however, not to challenge what he described as Beijing’s four “red lines:” Taiwan, democracy and human rights, the PRC’s “path and system,” and the PRC’s right to development.[19] Xi expressed the PRC’s resolve to continue asserting its “sovereignty, rights, and interests” in the South China Sea and stated that the United States should not instigate or get involved in bilateral disputes over contested land features. Xi reiterated that the PRC maintains a “fair position” on Russia’s war in Ukraine and portrayed the PRC as a mediator in the conflict, which ignores the PRC’s political and economic support to Russia. Xi also denied claims that the PRC was the perpetrator of cyberattacks, in an apparent reference to an ongoing investigation by US authorities into a PRC state-sponsored cyber operation that compromised several major US telecommunications companies.[20]

Biden expressed the United States’ opposition to “unilateral changes to the status quo” in the Taiwan Strait and called for an end to the PRC’s destabilizing military activity around Taiwan, according to the US readout.[21] Biden also addressed other key issues in the bilateral relationship, including the United States’ disapproval of the PRC’s continued support for Russia’s defense industrial base and US commitment to maintaining stability and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. [22]

**Xi and Biden agreed not to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into nuclear weapons control systems, signaling Beijing’s willingness to implement guardrails in issues about which it has previously been noncommittal.** Xi and Biden agreed during their meeting at APEC that the United States and PRC would maintain human control — as opposed to AI control — over their nuclear arsenals.[23] US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan emphasized that the conversation aligned with Biden’s and Xi’s agreement to “work on AI safety and risk together” following last year’s Woodside Summit.[24] Sullivan stated that he did not foresee an “imminent risk” that either power would “hand over the control of nuclear weapons to artificial intelligence” but that the discussion took place as a long-term stabilization measure.[25]

The PRC’s acceptance of the US proposal marks a shift from the PRC’s earlier reluctance to accept limits on its application of AI. US National Security Council Senior Director for Technology and National Security Tarun Chhabra stated in June that the PRC was not in agreement with the US policy that AI should not be involved with nuclear weapons launch systems, following bilateral AI risk and safety talks in Geneva in May.[26] The PRC also refrained from signing an international agreement on the use of AI in the military during the Responsible AI in the Military Domain (REAIM) summit in Seoul on

The agreement signals rare cooperation from the PRC in two critical areas of competition with the US, AI and nuclear weapons, in both of which the PRC has been disinclined to accept limits that might inhibit the PRC from gaining an edge. The PRC suspended nuclear arms control discussions with the US in July, citing the United States' arms sales to Taiwan as the primary reason.[28] The PRC has long-maintained disinterest in engaging with the US over limitations on nuclear policy, however, according to Sullivan.[29] The PRC's unwillingness to sequester issues regarding strategic stability from the rest of the bilateral relationship calls into question the PRC's commitment to adhere to such agreements should tensions escalate.

The PRC has aimed to portray itself as a responsible nuclear power, deflect criticism of its nuclear arsenal expansion by emphasizing its no-first-use policy, and cast the United States as the destabilizing power in the bilateral relationship.[30] Xi's agreement to limit the influence of AI over the PRC's nuclear arsenal is consistent with the PRC's intent to portray itself as a responsible nuclear power.

**The PRC debuted its J-35A stealth fighter at Airshow China 2024. The fighter is the PRC's second stealth plane and reportedly greatly expands China's power projection into the Pacific.** The J-35 is a mid-size twin-engine plane intended to be a multirole fighter. There is very little information publicly available about the newly debuted fighter, but many observable features such as the aircraft shape and wing closely resemble Lockheed Martin's F-35 fighter, and this may not be a coincidence, since PRC-based hackers stole data on the F-35 project in 2007 and 2008.[31] The J-35 prototype, FC-31 V2, has smaller dimensions than the other PLA stealth fighter, the J-20, with a length of 17.3 meters, a wingspan of 11.5 meters, and a height of 4.8 meters.[32] The J-35 has two known variants, a carrier-based variant and a land-based variant; the version that made its public debut at Airshow China 2024 is the land-based J-35A.[33] The carrier-based variant has been developed to operate from the PLA's *Fujian* aircraft carrier, which has yet to enter service, and other Type-003 carriers the PRC may build in the future. Photographs have shown the carrier-based J-35 to have foldable wings and a launch bar for catapult-assisted takeoff (CATOBAR).[34] The J-20 stealth jet cannot be operated from aircraft carriers, so the J-35 will thus give the PRC the ability to operate stealth combat aircraft far from its shores. The J-35 has a significantly shorter combat range than the J-20, at 750 miles and 1200 miles respectively, but this limited range is partially offset by its ability to operate from an aircraft carrier.[35] Weaponry can be mounted externally on the wings of a J-35, very likely significantly increasing its radar cross-section, or in the internal weapons bay.

The J-35 is designed to be a multirole fighter jet with strong stealth capabilities, but there are some design and logistical challenges that limit the effectiveness of the plane. The J-35 has less observable control surface than the J-20, and this may indicate less maneuverability. The J-35 may have difficulties masking its heat signature due to the double engine design—the F-22 tried to solve this issue with a specially designed trapezoidal engine nozzle, but the J-35 uses a rounded shape with serrated nozzles for heat dispersion.[36]

There are significant limitations to the PRC's technological development in spite of its espionage and intellectual property theft. For example, the PRC's jet engine technology is outdated compared to

Western military jets. The FC-31, the prototype of the J-35, is equipped with WS-13 engines, and the J-35 is supposed to be upgraded to WS-19 engines that are currently still in development.[37] The WS-13 Engines are based on Russian RD-33 engines with a major repair interval of roughly 810 hours and service lifespan of 2200 hours, and these intervals are significantly smaller than many Western engines.[38] The PRC has historically relied on Russian military technology and has made efforts to domestically develop its jet engines, but supply chain issues, reliability and quality control problems, and technological limitations have and will continue to hamper its ability to do so.[39] The PRC has strong manufacturing capabilities, however, and is successfully producing J-20s at scale using pulsating production lines, a capability that will likely expedite J-35 production as well.[40]

The J-35 is one of many new military advancements showcased at Airshow China 2024. The PLA also debuted an upgraded Z-20 helicopter, the Z-20J, designed to provide an effective anti-submarine platform for the Navy, and a variant of the J-15 fighter jet, the J-15T.[41] The airshow also showcased the Jiu Tian reconnaissance and attack drone and the HQ-19 anti-ballistic-missile system.[42] The J-35 and the J-15T are both likely to be fielded on the *Fujian* aircraft carrier, and the CATOBAR system to launch and land fighter jets allows these aircraft to take off with heavier loads than are possible using the ski jumps on the *Liaoning* and *Shandong*.

## Southeast Asia

### *Philippines*

**The PRC conducted military exercises and a law enforcement patrol near the Scarborough Shoal, reinforcing its territorial claims amid its dispute over new Filipino maritime territory laws.** On November 13 the PLA Southern Theater Command held naval and air combat drills and a joint patrol near Scarborough Shoal.[43] This is the second PLA joint air and maritime patrol around Scarborough Shoal in four months. On November 14 the China Coast Guard (CCG) carried out a “law enforcement patrol” near Scarborough Shoal.[44] These exercises follow the November 10 announcement by the PRC’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) that demarcated the coordinates of the PRC’s territorial sea baseline claims around Scarborough Shoal. The PRC MFA stated that its claims are in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).[45] The PRC’s invocation of international law likely aims to provide legitimacy to their “law enforcement” actions near disputed territory in the South China Sea.

This announcement by the PRC MFA also followed the signing of the Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act and Philippine Maritime Zones Act by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr on November 8.[46] The Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act established a system allowing foreign vessels and aircraft to exercise the right of passage through Philippine waters. The Philippine Maritime Zones Act defined the Philippines’ internal waters, archipelagic waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf. The Philippines’ territorial definitions include the disputed Spratly Islands and Scarborough Shoal, claims that the PRC criticized as the illegal incorporation of PRC territory. The Philippine government stated that these two laws are intended to align Philippine domestic law with international law according to UNCLOS and the South China Sea Arbitration ruling of 2016. The ruling determined that the PRC’s expansive South China Sea territorial claims were inconsistent with international law and rejected all PRC territorial or maritime claims determined to be part of the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf.[47] The PRC protested



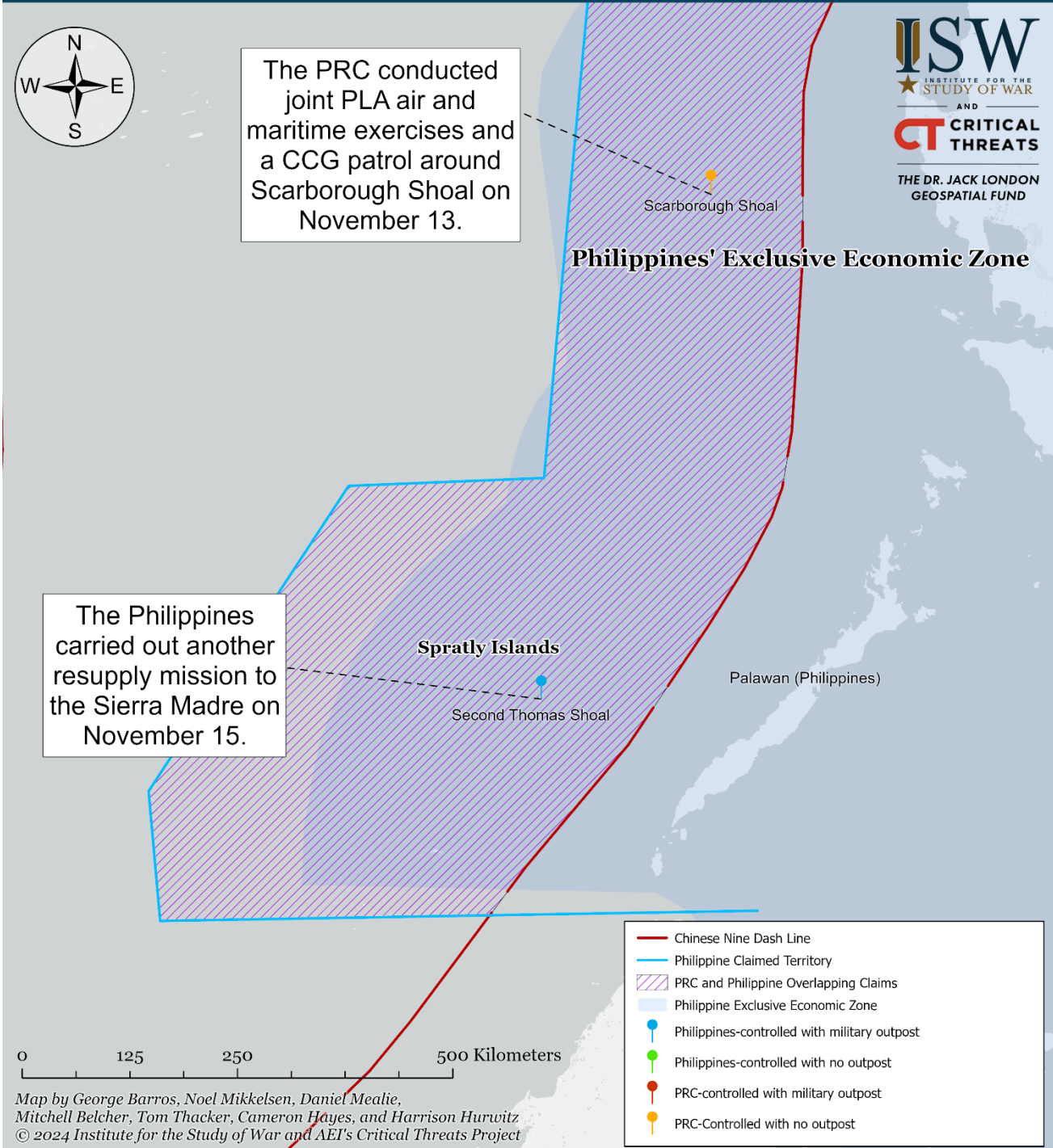
the Philippines' "unilateral actions" and stated that the PRC will continue to defend its territorial rights by all means necessary.

**The PRC did not interfere with a Philippine resupply mission to the *Sierra Madre* in Second Thomas Shoal. It is continuing to abide by a provisional agreement it reached with the Philippines in July 2024 despite continuing tensions over the two countries' territorial disputes.**<sup>[48]</sup> The Philippines successfully completed a rotation and resupply mission to the BRP *Sierra Madre*, a grounded warship that acts as a Philippine military outpost in Second Thomas Shoal. The PRC released a statement that the CCG observed this resupply mission and reported that the exercise was completed "with China's approval."<sup>[49]</sup> This marks the third resupply mission since the provisional agreement between the PRC and the Philippines was reached. The PRC claims that it "allows" Philippine resupply missions to Second Thomas Shoal to give the impression that it has legal jurisdiction over the Shoal, though the Philippines rejects this framing.

**The PRC warned the United States and the Philippines against increasing regional tensions following the signing of a US-Philippines intelligence sharing agreement.** On November 18 United States Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Philippine Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA).<sup>[50]</sup> The text of the agreement has not been released by either government, but according to the US Department of Defense (DoD) the GSOMIA is focused on providing a legal framework for increased sharing of information and defense technology between the two states.<sup>[51]</sup> The DoD said the agreement was made after two years of bilateral negotiations and will enhance interoperability between United States and Philippine forces. This signing marked Defense Secretary Austin's fourth visit to Manila, the most of any United States Secretary of Defense, emphasizing Washington's view of the importance of close relations between Manila and Washington.

PRC MFA spokesperson Lin Jian commented on the agreement during a press conference, stating that agreements "must not target third parties or harm the interests of third parties" and warning the two states against undermining regional peace and stability.<sup>[52]</sup> The semi-official state-owned newspaper *Global Times* cited two PRC-based experts who argued that this agreement could result in additional provocative actions from the Philippines.<sup>[53]</sup> The PRC has previously stated its concerns over Philippine and United States military cooperation and its implications for PRC maritime security.<sup>[54]</sup>

# PRC and Philippine Claims in the South China Sea



## Oceania

**Palauan President Surangel Whipps Jr.’s reelection reinforces US naval power projection into the Pacific islands.** Palauan President Surangel Whipps Jr. won reelection in Palau’s November 2024 election.[55] Taiwan President Lai Ching-te congratulated Whipps Jr. on social media, and Whipps made a deliberate layover in Taiwan on November 13 on his way to Azerbaijan for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP29).[56] Palau is one of 12 countries that has diplomatic relations with the ROC rather than the PRC. Whipps has remained extremely vocal in his support for Taiwan’s participation in international bodies, stating that the Taiwanese “deserve to have a voice” at the UN during an interview to Taiwanese media, and also commented on Palau’s efforts to diversify its economy amidst PRC tourism restrictions that Beijing imposed in retribution for Palau’s support of Taiwan.[57]

Whipps also stated that he may ask the United States for a Patriot missile defense system again in light of the recent PLA’s test of an intercontinental ballistic missile in September 2024, which landed in the southern Pacific Ocean. The Palauan Senate previously rejected the proposal in 2023.[58] The US military has been working on a number of large construction projects in Palau, including defense radars in Angaur and Ngaraad state, seaport expansion in Koror, and airstrip expansion of the WWII-era runways on Peleliu.[59] Palau has a Compact of Free Association (COFA) with the United States that grants the US military permission to operate on the island in exchange for economic and military aid.[60] Palau is strategically significant because of its location in the Second Island Chain and because it is the Pacific island closest to the South China Sea that hosts important US military infrastructure. These facts would make it a prime target for the PRC in the event of war in the Pacific, and so the Patriot missile systems would act as deterrence and add a line of defense in the event of an attack.

Whipps also claimed that PRC research vessels and other boats have operated in Palau’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).[61] The PRC’s foreign ministry has denied the allegations. These types of incursions have historically been used to normalize PRC presence in foreign waters, especially waters where the PRC has territorial claims. The PRC also named two underwater seamounts within Palau’s EEZ with Chinese names earlier in 2024, which may indicate a preparation to assert claims in the area.[62] The PRC does not currently claim any territory in Palau’s EEZ, however. The PRC will most likely redouble efforts following Whipps’ reelection to pressure the island nation to cease its support of Taiwan and military cooperation with the United States.

## Russia

**Anonymous European Union diplomats said the EU has “conclusive” and “credible” evidence that a factory in the PRC’s Xinjiang region is producing and exporting drones for Russia.** An unspecified senior EU official told South China Morning Post on November 15 that intelligence sources have reported the existence of the drone factory in Xinjiang, but that the EU has yet to confirm this information, whether the drones have already been shipped, and how much PRC authorities knew about the operation.[63] EU foreign ministers met on November 18 to discuss the evidence. Several foreign ministers including Germany’s Annalena Baerbock warned that the PRC would face “consequences” if the EU finds that it is providing drone aid to Russia.[64] PRC MFA spokesperson Lin Jian denied the allegations, claiming that Beijing has never provided lethal weapons

to parties to the conflict and has always “strictly controlled military and dual-use drones.” He claimed that the PRC’s “objective and fair” position on the Ukraine war crisis and promotion of peace talks is in “sharp contrast to the practice of some countries that have adopted double standards and fanned the flames in the Ukrainian crisis.”[65]

The US Department of the Treasury sanctioned two private PRC firms in October for their involvement in producing drones for Russia, the first time the United States has accused PRC entities of sending lethal aid to Russia’s war effort in Ukraine. The Treasury statement said that Russia’s Garpiya-series drone was developed by PRC-based experts and produced in the PRC in collaboration with Russian defense firms. It did not mention the location of the factories, however.[66] Reuters previously reported based on European intelligence sources that one of the companies now sanctioned by the United States, Redlepus Vector Industry Shenzhen Co., collaborated with Russian firms and established a joint drone research center in Xinjiang.[67] It appears likely that this joint drone research center is the same as the Xinjiang factory the EU officials mentioned, or related to it.

The PRC MFA told Reuters at the time that it was unaware of a Russia-PRC drone production project and that the PRC had strict export controls on drones. A US National Security Council spokesperson said that the United States had not seen any evidence that the PRC government was aware of the transactions or had any involvement in providing lethal aid to Russia.[68] PRC firms providing lethal assistance to US-sanctioned Russian firms or jointly collaborating with Russia to produce lethal equipment marks a significant departure from the PRC’s cautious approach to supporting Russia and undermines the PRC’s professed neutrality on the war in Ukraine.

### Latin America

**PRC President Xi Jinping’s inauguration of Chancay Port before the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum signals the PRC’s growing investment in Latin America.** Xi’s visit to Peru featured talks with Peruvian President Dina Hercilia Boruarte Segarra, his third meeting with the Peruvian leader in one year.[69] Xi opened his visit by inaugurating Chancay Port and designating it the beginning of a “21<sup>st</sup> century maritime silk road.”[70] PRC shipping company Cosco will exclusively operate the \$3.6 billion deepwater port.[71] The port will reduce shipping time to the PRC by 10 days.[72]

Xi aims to link Peru, and Latin America more broadly, to global Belt and Road Initiative efforts. PRC rhetoric around Chancay and activity in Latin America more broadly aligns with the historical and cultural messaging used in other Belt and Road Initiative projects. PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Lin Jian spoke of the port as instrumental to the “Inca Trail of the New Era” and emphasized the ancientness of Chinese and Peruvian cultures.[73] Lin also emphasized “mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, openness and inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation” with regard to PRC activities in Latin America; this rhetoric closely resembles past PRC messaging around its interactions with the “Global South.”[74]

The PRC has used port infrastructure as a means of advancing its economic, and at times military, security around the world.[75] Some observers have expressed concerns that infrastructure projects like Chancay pose a security threat and entrench the PRC's influence in the region.[76] The PRC has claimed that Chancay Port exists only for commercial purposes; the port could improve the PRC's naval power projection in the region if used militarily, however.[77]

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