

Japan

Reconfigure Izumo

Huge Japan warship offers clue to 'military ambitions'

ABOARD THE JS IZUMO, July 3, (AP): One of Japan's largest warships, the helicopter carrier Izumo, offers a glimpse of where its military is headed: For the first time, troops from a newly formed amphibious brigade of Japan's army participated in an extended naval deployment.

The Izumo left Subic, a former US naval base in the Philippines, at the end of a two-month deployment in the Indo-Pacific region at a time of prolonged tensions involving China's sweeping territorial claims in and around the South China Sea. The carrier, along with the destroyers Murasame and Akebono, just finished a series of drills with the United States and other countries.

Island nation Japan's ability to project military power beyond its borders is severely constrained by the commitment to pacifism and rejection of use of military force in conflict enshrined in its post-World War II constitution, though in 2015 it was reinterpreted to allow the use of force in defending itself and its allies.

Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe** has made amending the constitution to allow the military greater leeway one of his lifetime goals. President Donald Trump has sought to help that cause, calling repeatedly for Japan to do more to defend itself under its alliance with the US.

In May, Japan conducted its first quadrilateral exercise with France, the US and Australia in the Bay of Bengal. France deployed its flagship nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the FS Charles de Gaulle, while the United States sent a missile destroyer, the William P. Lawrence. Other drills have included Canada, India, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and the Philippines.

Japan is preparing to reconfigure the Izumo to accommodate US stealth fighters, including F-35Bs, after announcing it would purchase 42 of its own. The aircraft are designed to operate with short takeoffs and vertical landings, such as on carriers.

The purchase underscores Japan's growing role in its post-war alliance with the US.

"In order to incorporate what was not originally in the design, or something new that had not even been thought of, I think this would require research into many areas, otherwise it wouldn't go well," said Capt. Katsuyoshi Motoyama, the Izumo's commanding officer.

Coordination

Yasukazu Tanaka of the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, similar to the US Marines, said the recent exercises were meant to deepen coordination between them and ground troops to facilitate use of the carrier for transporting troops to front lines in the future.

Since the Izumo can accommodate both air and sea transport, "there are great possibilities for us to conduct amphibious operations," he said, though he and all others involved emphasized that the ground and marine troops conducted no joint exercises.

Ground troops are still exploring how best to operate on longer missions, where regulations limit use of live-fire weapons on board. Troops practiced emergency first aid response and trained on the flight deck and in the aircraft carrier hangar deck, at times using guns made of rubber in battle scenarios.

China has been expanding its military presence to press home its determination to defend its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea in the face of challenges by the US and its allies, unnerving many in the region.

The Defense Ministry says Japan's air force scrambled fighter jets 999 times in 2018, the second highest number since it began defending its airspace in 1958. Of that number, 64% were responses to Chinese aircraft.

The US Navy and others have angered Beijing by repeatedly sailing their ships close to Chinese-occupied islands to assert what they say is the right to freedom of navigation. Beijing also has installed advanced weapons systems at several disputed locations, including seven islands it built by piling sand and concrete on top of coral atolls.

Some of those sites are now equipped with airstrips, radar and missile stations, expanding China's ability to monitor and potentially control activity by other militaries in the region.

So far, encounters have been peaceful, but all sides are concerned about the potential for miscalculations that could spark conflict.

During its five-day voyage from Brunei to the Philippines, Izumo skirted near the so-called "nine-dash line" marking China's territorial claims while conducting its last few exercises with navies from Brunei and the Philippines.



Abe



In this June 26, 2019 photo, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) destroyers JS Murasame (DD-101) (front), and JS Akebono (DD-108) participate in a drill off the coast of Brunei. One of Japan's largest warships, the helicopter carrier Izumo, is returning home from Subic port in the Philippines along with two destroyers following a powerful show of Tokyo's determination to expand its military presence and counter China's forays into strategic waters. (AP)



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right), shakes hands with a member of the delegation of Nepal's Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali (second from right), as they arrive for a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on July 3. (AP)

Asia

**Japan issues evacuation order:** Japan ordered more than one million people on the southernmost island of Kyushu to take shelter in evacuation centres and other safe areas on Wednesday as heavy rains triggered small landslides and threatened to cause widespread flooding.

Some parts of southern Kyushu have received over 1,000 mm (39.4 inches) of rain since Friday, about as much as usually falls in the whole month of July, broadcaster NHK said.

Forecasters expect as much as 300 mm more rainfall in some areas by Thursday evening. (RTRS)

**S. Korea sacks commander:** South Korea said on Wednesday it sacked an army commander and rebuked other senior officers after a North Korean fishing boat piloted by defectors went undetected in South Korean waters for more than two days last month.

The incident has raised concerns about potential lapses in South Korea's security during fragile talks to end a technical state of war with North Korea since the 1950-53 Korean War.

The small wooden boat spent more than two days in waters south of the Northern Limit Line, which separates areas controlled by the two Koreas, before docking at the port of Samcheok.

Hong Kong

8 arrested for posting personal data on police

China lashes back over UK remarks

BEIJING, July 3, (AP): China's foreign ministry lashed back Wednesday at remarks by Britain's foreign secretary on the causes of recent anti-government protests in Hong Kong, saying the territory's former colonial master had no right to weigh in on the city's affairs.

Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said Wednesday that Jeremy Hunt appeared to be "basking in the faded glory of British colonialism and obsessed with lecturing others."

Hunt said Hong Kong authorities should not use an outbreak of vandalism in the legislative chambers by protesters Monday night as a "pretext for repression." He said the authorities need to "understand the root causes of what happened, which is a deep-seated concern by people in Hong Kong that their basic freedoms are under attack."

Geng said Britain restricted Hong Kong's democracy prior to the 1997 handover to Chinese rule and had no authority to discuss matters in the territory, despite the existence of a 1984 agreement that Hong Kong would retain its Western-style economic, legal and political system for 50 years. Hong Kong was under Britain's rule for 155 years, during which it was run by a series of governors appointed by the British crown.

"The UK considers itself as a guardian which is nothing but a delusion," Geng told reporters at a daily briefing on Wednesday. "It is just shameful to say that Hong Kong's freedoms are negotiated for them by the British side," Geng said.

Support

China's central government has voiced strong support for Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam and the city's police force in dealing with the recent protests, which have highlighted doubts about the validity of its "one country, two systems" formula for governing the semi-autonomous Chinese region.

The protests, which roughly coincided with celebrations of the 22nd anniversary of Hong Kong's handover from British to Chinese rule, were originally sparked by a government attempt to change extradition laws to allow suspects to be sent to China for trial. Lam has shelved the bills but not agreed to scrap them altogether as opponents insist. Many are also calling for Lam's resignation, a demand she has refused to address.

The extradition legislation has heightened fears of eroding freedoms in Hong Kong and given fresh momentum to

Hong Kong's pro-democracy opposition movement, awakening broader concerns that China is chipping away at the rights it guaranteed to Hong Kong for 50 years. Two marches in June drew more than 1 million people, according to organizer estimates, marking the biggest outpouring of anti-government sentiment in years.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong police have arrested eight people for posting personal data about police officers on the internet as massive protests against the government and police were held in recent weeks.

Officers and their family members have been threatened since their addresses and official ID card numbers were published. Superintendent Mohammed Swalikh of the Cyber Security bureau said in announcing the arrests Wednesday.

He did not say whether police believe the disclosures were related to the protests. Six men and two women were arrested.

Protests against a legislative proposal expanded to target the police as well after officers used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse crowds blocking major city streets on June 12. Dozens were injured in the clashes, both protesters and police.

The ship's arrival on June 15 was spotted by closed-circuit television cameras, but authorities failed to identify the vessel as North Korean, said Choi Byung-hwan, vice minister of the Office for Government Policy Coordination.

"Our analysis found that there was a failure in our security operation," Defence Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo told reporters in the capital Seoul. (RTRS)



Jeong



Imelda

**244 fall ill at Imelda party:** More than 240 people were brought to hospitals in the Philippine capital Wednesday with suspected food poisoning in an event celebrating the 90th birthday of former first lady **Imelda Marcos**.

Bryant Wong, a disaster-response officer, said dozens of ambulances transported at least 244 people who either vomited or grew dizzy hours after eating a breakfast of chicken stew with egg and rice and drinking water in a sports center in suburban Pasig city. (AP)

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