

The China–Taiwan Weekly Update



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The China–Taiwan Weekly Update is a joint product from the Institute for the Study of War and the American Enterprise Institute. The update supports the ISW–AEI Coalition Defense of Taiwan project, which assesses Chinese campaigns against Taiwan, examines alternative strategies for the United States and its allies to deter the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) aggression, and—if necessary—defeat the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The update focuses on the Chinese Communist Party’s paths to controlling Taiwan and cross–Taiwan Strait developments.

Key Takeaways

- **The PRC attempted to prevent legislators from at least six countries from attending an international parliamentary forum that works to counter the CCP’s actions to subvert the international order and democratic principles.**
- **The PRC and ROC made progress in resolving the handling of the February 14 capsizing incident. The deal is unlikely to result in the PRC decreasing coercive actions against Kinmen.**
- **The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused the United States and Japan of inciting a “new Cold War” and exaggerating the threat from the PRC following a US-Japan 2+2 dialogue on July 28.**
- **US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi met on the sidelines of the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum on July 27. Wang called on ASEAN to resist US- and NATO-led “external interference” in the region.**
- **The CCG claimed to monitor a Philippine resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal. The Philippines confirmed that the CCG was present but disputed that it inspected the Philippines ships.**

Taiwan

The PRC attempted to prevent legislators from at least six countries from attending an international parliamentary forum that works to counter the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) actions to subvert the international order and democratic principles. The Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) was established in 2020 by a group of legislators from the Five Eyes, Germany, Japan, Norway, and Sweden to form a coordinated response between democracies to challenges that the PRC's expanding global influence poses to the free, open, and rules-based international order.[1] IPAC holds an annual summit, which Taiwan hosted this year. IPAC members at this year's summit in Taiwan launched the 2758 Initiative, which pledges to advocate for resolutions in members' home parliaments that counter the PRC's efforts to suppress Taiwan's status and representation in the international community.[2] The 2758 Initiative also serves as a joint statement that addresses the PRC's distortion of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758, which established the PRC as the sole representative of China in the UN in 1971, replacing Taiwan. The initiative highlights that the PRC misrepresents UNGA 2758 as an international legal decision against Taiwan's participation in international organizations.

Eight member legislators from Bolivia, Bosnia, Colombia, North Macedonia, Slovakia, and an unspecified Asian country claimed that PRC diplomatic officials contacted them before they traveled to Taipei and in some cases attempted to prevent them from attending.[3] Some lawmakers received inquiries about their plans to attend while others received requests for meetings that would interfere with their travel plans. One PRC diplomat contacted the head of the Bosnian Naša Stranka party to prevent lawmaker Sanela Klarić from attending the IPAC summit.[4] These actions are part of the PRC's efforts to diplomatically isolate Taiwan, degrade Taiwan's legitimacy on the world stage, and facilitate unification with Taiwan without resistance from the international community.

PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian responded to the reports of interference by condemning IPAC for "maliciously hyping up issues and spring rumors about China." [5] Lin urged the attending parliamentarians to "abandon their ideological prejudices" and expressed the PRC's opposition to interference in its internal affairs by conducting official exchanges with Taiwan.

IPAC has been the target of PRC subversion in the past. The United States indicted six PRC nationals affiliated with a Ministry of State Security (MSS)-backed cyber threat actor Advanced Persistent Threat 31 (APT31) for malign hacking activities that included inundating IPAC members from European Parliament and the UK with emails that transmitted data back to the PRC when opened.[6] The PRC has also sanctioned some members of IPAC.[7]

2024 marks was first year that Taiwan was able to formally join the organization, as a legislature's representation requires two co-chairs from "ideologically diverse political parties." Taiwan joined with co-chairs from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the smaller Taiwan People's Party (TPP). No legislators from the Kuomintang (KMT), the main opposition party, have sought membership. IPAC welcomed members from six other new countries this year, bringing the total membership to 250 lawmakers from 40 parliaments.[8]

The PRC and ROC made progress in resolving the handling of the February 14 capsizing incident. The deal is unlikely to result in the PRC decreasing coercive actions against

Kinmen. A PRC fishing boat capsized in Taiwanese waters near Kinmen while fleeing from a legal Taiwan Coast Guard pursuit, resulting in the death of two PRC fishermen. Kinmen is a group of Taiwan-controlled islands with a large military garrison roughly 3 kilometers from the coast of the PRC.[9] The PRC pledged after the incident to strengthen law enforcement activities around Kinmen and has since conducted repeated violations of Kinmen's maritime boundaries to normalize the presence of Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) ships. The PRC's violations have become more frequent over time and have expanded to include other maritime agency-affiliated vessels and even naval ships.[10]

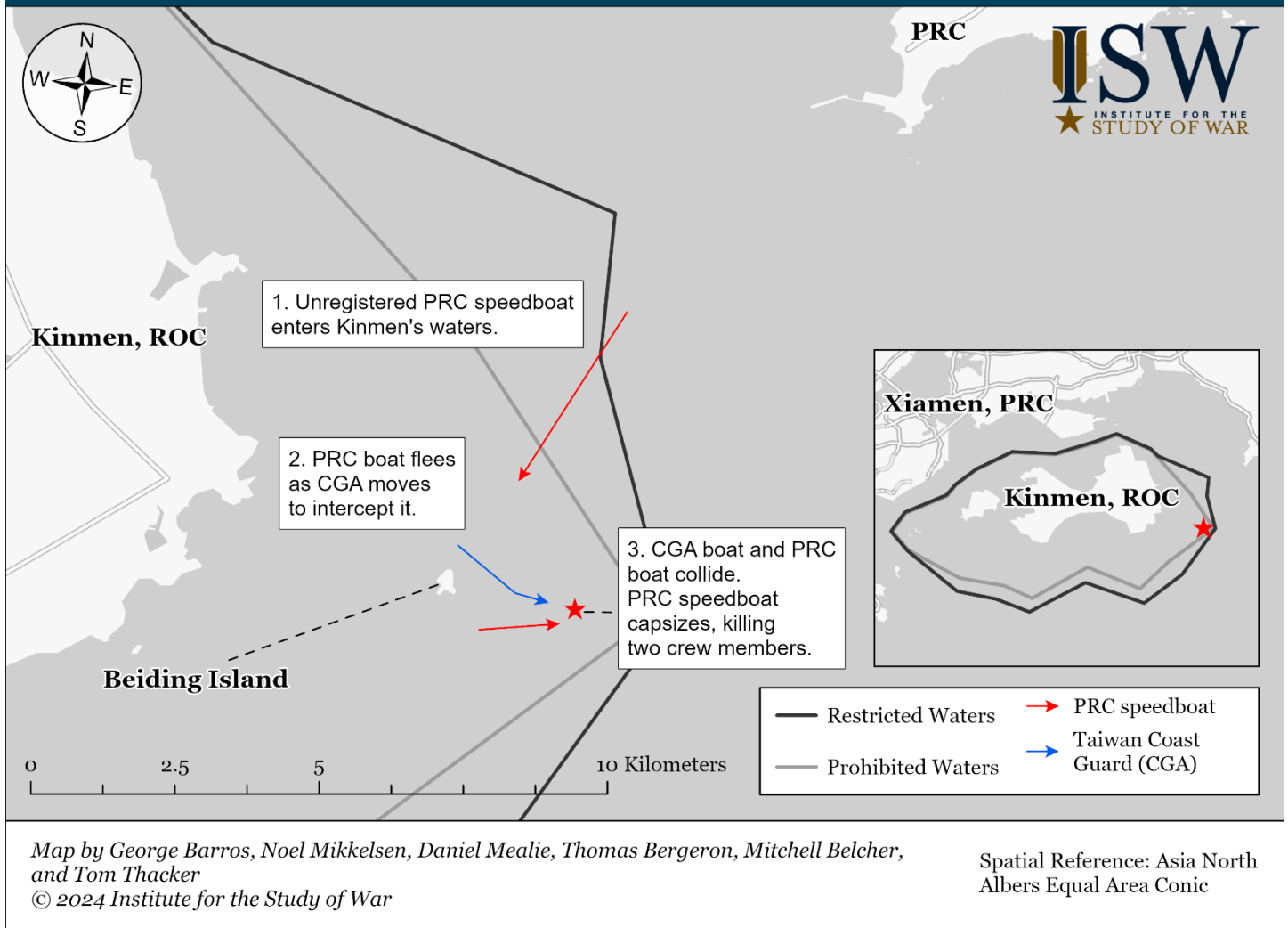
The ROC agreed to return the bodies of the deceased and pay restitution to their families. The details of the accident will be handed over to a third party for investigation. CGA Deputy Director-General Hsieh Ching-chin stated that the details of the deal were not public out of respect for the victims' families.[11]

Taiwan has a stake in negotiations, including several ROC nationals detained in the PRC. The Chairman of the MAC Chiu Chui-cheng stated that the SEF is lobbying the PRC for the immediate release of the Taiwanese fishing boat and its two Taiwanese crew members after the PRC detained them for fishing in PRC waters on July 2.[12] The PRC has also kept an ROC soldier from Kinmen in detainment since March after his boat ran out of fuel and drifted into PRC waters.

Representatives from the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Coast Guard Administration (CGA), and Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) led Taiwan's negotiating party. The Deputy Director of the Quanzhou Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau Affairs Office Li Zhaohui led the PRC side. PRC readouts referred to Li only as a member of the Red Cross Society, however, as the PRC halted official contact with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government in Taiwan in 2016. The PRC alleges that the DPP is a separatist party.

The resolution to the capsizing dispute is unlikely to result in a de-escalation of the PRC's erosion of ROC sovereignty around Kinmen. The PRC's activities around Kinmen foreshadow efforts to gradually wrest control of Taiwan's sea and air space. The capsizing incident triggered the PRC's aggression around Kinmen, but its coercive actions are part of a broader campaign to exert pressure on Taiwan after the election of President Lai Ching-te. Since Lai's election, the PRC has conducted large-scale military exercises that encircled Taiwan, near all-time high Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) incursions, and announced legal guidelines that threaten severe punishment for Taiwanese "separatists."

PRC Speedboat Capsizing Incident on February 14, 2024

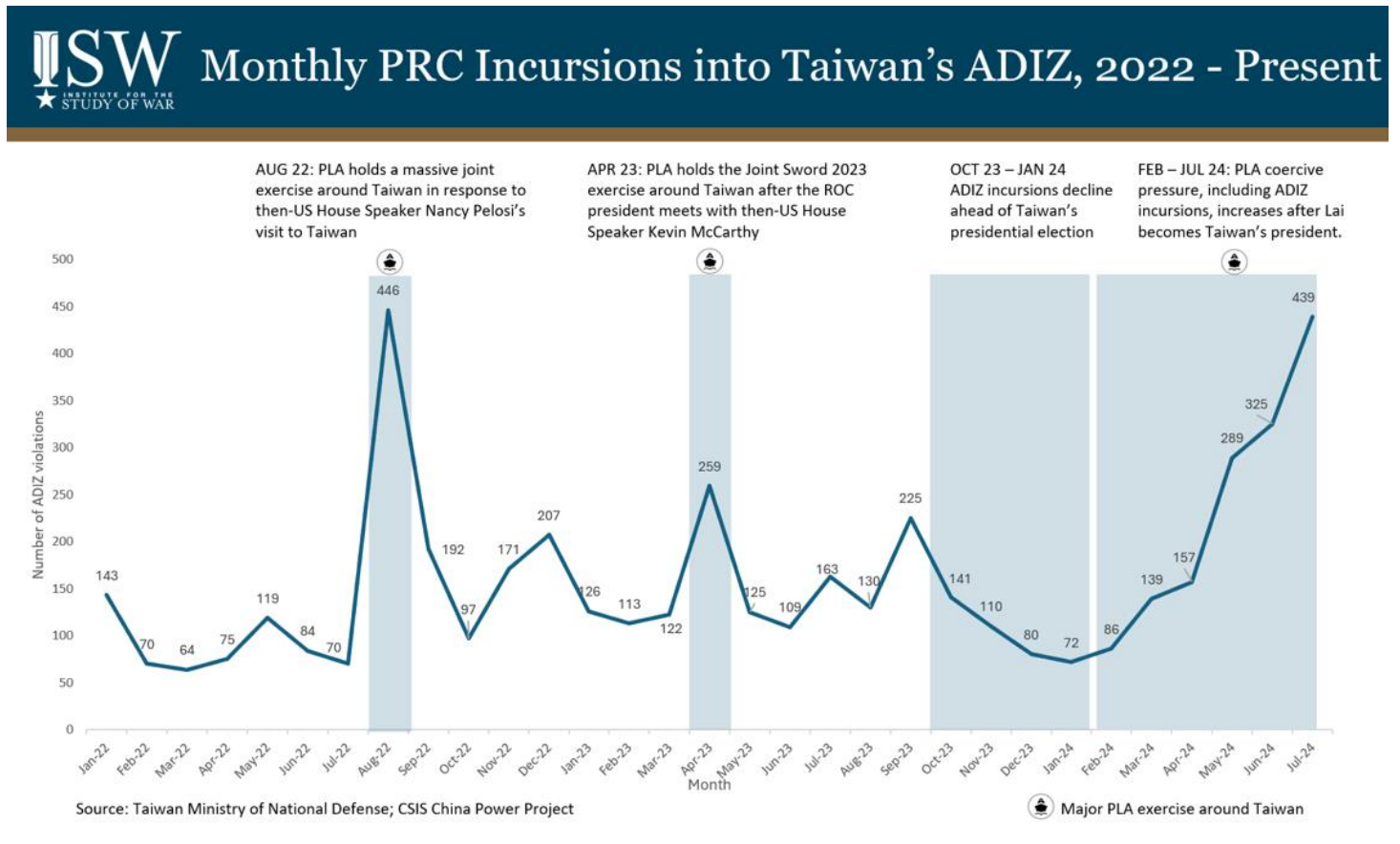


The PRC conducted at least 439 military incursions into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone in July 2024, surpassing all previous months except August 2022. PLA aircraft entered Taiwan's ADIZ every day of July except the four days of July 24-27, when Typhoon Gaemi disrupted military operations.[13] 280 of the incursions (roughly 64 percent) occurred during the first two weeks of the month. The ADIZ incursion numbers, which are reported by Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense, do not include activities around outlying islands such as Kinmen and Matsu.

July is the third consecutive month of significantly higher and rising numbers of ADIZ incursions and is part of a trend of increased ADIZ violations after Lai Ching-te took office as president of Taiwan on May 20.[14] The PRC considers Lai a dangerous separatist. The heightened number of incursions

reflects an intensified PRC pressure campaign against Taiwan under the new administration. The high frequency of incursions drains Taiwan’s resources, exhausts military personnel, and degrades Taiwan’s threat awareness. Taiwan does not scramble aircraft in response to all PRC ADIZ incursions, but it does put military personnel on standby to respond quickly if needed.

August 2022 is the only month in which the PRC conducted more ADIZ incursions. Most of the 446 incursions at that time were part of massive military exercises in response to then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan.



China

US federal prosecutors charged three people in two separate cases for operating as unregistered PRC agents to harass Chinese dissidents and fugitives in the United States.

US federal prosecutors alleged on July 29 that Wang Shujun, a naturalized US citizen and academic who emigrated from the PRC in 1994, pretended to be a pro-democracy advocate against the PRC government while spying on Chinese dissidents in New York. Wang was arrested in March 2022 and pleaded not guilty to four charges that include acting as an unregistered foreign agent and lying to US authorities. The prosecutors said that Wang targeted Uyghur and Tibetan activists, Hong Kong democracy activists, and advocates of Taiwan independence from 2005 to 2022 at the direction of the Ministry of State Security (MSS). Wang’s defense lawyer said Wang communicated with the MSS agents

to win their support for democratic movements, not to work for the MSS.[15] The US Department of Justice also accused PRC nationals and Los Angeles residents John Chen and Lin Feng of acting as unregistered agents of the PRC and bribing an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) agent in a plot to target practitioners of Falun Gong, a spiritual practice banned in the PRC. Chen and Feng pleaded guilty on July 25.[16]

The PRC has been using agents in New York and other cities around the world to spy on overseas Chinese and extend the reach of the PRC's law enforcement. The US Department of Justice charged two Chinese nationals in April 2023 for setting up an illegal overseas police station in New York on behalf of the Fuzhou branch of the PRC's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) in 2022.[17] A former NYPD officer was convicted in June 2023 for working as a PRC agent to intimidate a PRC fugitive in New York into returning home to face charges.[18] The 2022 report by the Spanish human rights group Safeguard Defenders found that local branches of the MPS had set up at least 102 overseas police stations in at least 53 countries to harass, threaten, intimidate, and force targets to return to the PRC to face charges.[19]

Northeast

Asia

Japan

The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused the United States and Japan of inciting a “new Cold War” and exaggerating the threat from the PRC following a US-Japan 2+2 dialogue on July 28. US Secretary of State Blinken, US Secretary of Defense Austin, Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Kamikawa, and Japanese Minister of Defense Kihara met in Tokyo for the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC) on July 28. Following the 2+2 meeting a joint statement was released reiterating their shared stances on Indo-Pacific security issues.[20] This statement made clear that the PRC's recent actions in the East China Sea and South China Sea were contributing to regional instability, and decried PRC attempts to alter the status quo and “reshape the international order for its own benefit.”

Subsequent US Department of Defense (DOD) press releases also built upon the April 10 official visit of Japanese Prime Minister Kishida to the United States and earlier statements on upgrading the US-Japan alliance.[21] These alliance upgrades include facilitating greater US and Japan force interoperability as part of the establishment of the Japanese Self Defense Forces Joint Operations Command (JJOC), increasing the production of key military technology, and expanding bilateral cooperative efforts to include other partners and allies in and beyond the Indo-Pacific region.

PRC MFA spokesperson Lin Jian responded to the US-Japan Joint Statement in a press conference on July 29.[22] Lin denounced the US-Japan joint statement, seeing it as an attack on PRC foreign policy and an exaggeration of regional tensions and the “threat” posed by the PRC. Lin reiterated that the PRC is a force for peace in the Indo-Pacific region, and instead blamed the US and Japan for inciting a “new Cold War” and undermining regional peace and stability.

North Korea

The United States Department of Treasury announced sanctions on July 24 targeting five Chinese companies and six Chinese nationals accused of supporting North Korean ballistic missile programs. The US Department of Treasury stated that these individuals and companies participate in a large overseas network of missile component suppliers to North Korea.[23] The US has identified Chinese national Shi Qianpei as organizing efforts to transfer restricted missile technology to North Korea.[24]

South Korean Defense Minister Shin Wok-sik stated the day after the United States announced its sanctions that North Korea is in the final stages of developing a tactical nuclear weapon. It is unclear whether the ballistic missile program procurement targeted by the sanctions is connected to North Korea's nuclear program. Short-range ballistic missiles can be used to deliver tactical nuclear warheads.[25] While tactical nuclear weapons have a lower yield, the South Korean Ministry of Defense stated that this tactical nuclear weapon has the range to strike US bases in Japan.[26]

Southeast

Asia

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi met on the sidelines of the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum on July 27. Wang called on ASEAN to resist US- and NATO-led “external interference” in the region. A US readout said Blinken and Wang had “open and productive discussions on key bilateral, regional, and global issues” at the event in Laos. The readout said Blinken acknowledged recent steps by the PRC to advance counternarcotics cooperation and to enhance military-to-military communication. He raised concerns about the PRC’s “destabilizing actions” in the South China Sea, including at Second Thomas Shoal, the PRC support for Russia’s defense industrial base, and North Korea’s “provocative actions.”[27] An unspecified senior US State Department official said Blinken also expressed concern about the PRC’s “provocative actions” around Taiwan, including a simulated blockade of Taiwan during the Joint Sword-2024A exercise after Lai Ching-te’s presidential inauguration in May.[28] A PRC readout said Wang criticized the United States for intensifying its “containment and suppression of China” and called on the United States to “return to a rational and pragmatic policy toward China.” Wang claimed the United States persists in a “wrong perception of China” that “reflects China with its own hegemonic logic.” He claimed the PRC does not seek hegemony or power and is the “major country with the best record in the world on peace and security issues.” Wang also called on the United States to stop “fanning the flames” of the PRC-Philippines disputes and to stop “smearing” the PRC and “abusing unilateral sanctions” on the issue of the war in Ukraine.[29]

Wang Yi attended the ASEAN Regional Forum’s Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and a series of other regional forums on the same day and urged ASEAN states to reject “external interference.” Wang said the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy “exacerbates the security dilemma and runs counter to the vision of long-term peace and prosperity in the region” and that “NATO’s intervention in the Asia-Pacific region is bound to trigger confrontation and intensify tensions. All parties must be highly vigilant and resolutely oppose it.” He urged continued dialogue and consultation and stressed that “external interference cannot solve problems.”[30] Wang also stressed on several occasions that the “Taiwan

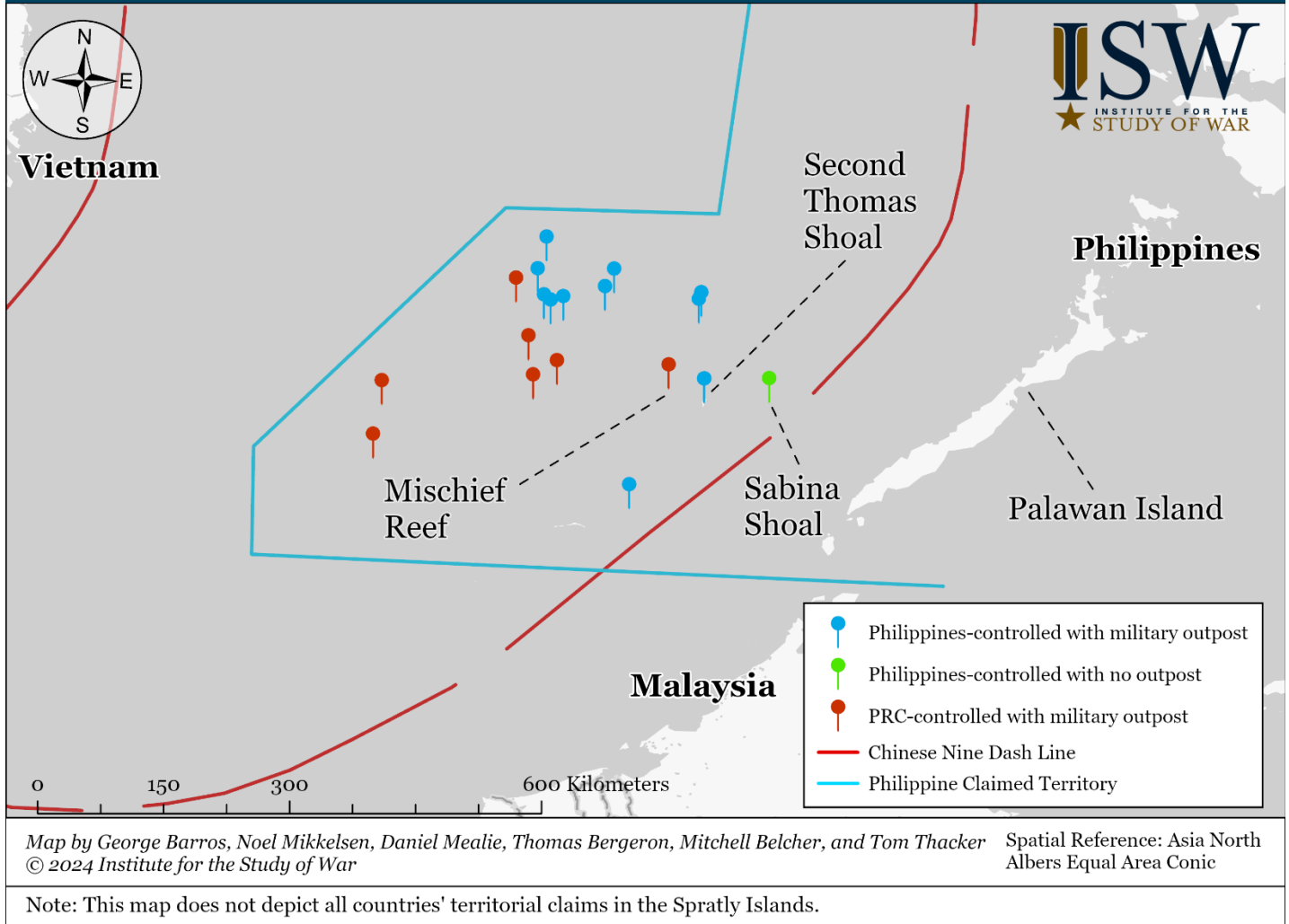
issue” is a matter of China’s internal affairs and that external forces have no right to intervene. He highlighted the temporary agreement between the PRC and the Philippines to allow the delivery of “humanitarian supplies” to Philippine personnel on Second Thomas Shoal and called on the Philippines to stop “going back on its words” and “causing unnecessary trouble.”[31]

Philippines

The CCG claimed to monitor a Philippine resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal. The Philippines confirmed that the CCG was present but disputed that it inspected the Philippines ships. The Philippine Coast Guard conducted its first resupply mission since the “provisional agreement” with the PRC on July 22. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) vessel MV *Lapu-Lapu* delivered supplies and new troops to the grounded warship BRP *Sierra Madre* on July 27 in the disputed Second Thomas Shoal while PRC forces observed nearby.[32] The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed the CCG conducted an “on-site” inspection of the Philippine vessel and allowed the vessel to complete its mission.[33] Philippine officials denied that they sought the PRC’s permission or that the PRC boarded any Philippine vessels in the supply mission.[34] The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) stated that the PRC “mischaracterized” the South China Sea agreement and requested that the PRC stick to the agreed provisions.[35] Neither side has released the text of the agreement. Video evidence provided by the Philippines Coast Guard confirmed that PRC Coast Guard vessels were present nearby during the resupply mission but did not show PRC personnel boarding the Philippine vessels.[36]

The *Sierra Madre* is a derelict warship that acts as a Philippine military outpost on the Second Thomas Shoal, a submerged reef within the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. The PRC claims nearly all islands and maritime features within the South China Sea, including the Spratly Islands, as part of its “Nine Dash Line” territorial claims. The PRC has deployed coast guard, maritime militia, and naval vessels using a variety of “gray zone” tactics including physically surrounding, ramming, and firing water cannons at Philippine vessels to contest Philippine control over several PRC-claimed features including Second Thomas Shoal. It uses such tactics to gain control of the territories without provoking US intervention or outright war. The PRC claims to “allow” Philippine supply missions to Second Thomas Shoal to give the impression that it has legal jurisdiction over the shoal while pursuing de-escalation and humanitarian aims. The PRC opposes the delivery of any construction materials to reinforce the *Sierra Madre*, however, in hopes that the ship will eventually become incapable of supporting the Philippine presence.

Philippine and PRC Presence in the Spratly Islands



The PRC MFA criticized the deployment of US intermediate-range missiles in the Philippines and a \$500 million US military aid package to the Philippines. PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi warned the Philippines during an ASEAN summit in Laos on July 27 that allowing the United States to deploy intermediate-range missiles to Philippine territory would “create tension and confrontation in the region and trigger an arms race,” against the interest of the Filipino people.[37] The United States deployed its intermediate-range Typhon missile system to Luzon in April for annual bilateral exercises. The Philippines announced that the missiles would return to the United States in September, however.[38] Philippine Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo denied the missile deployment would lead to an arms race and said the deployment was purely for defensive purposes.[39] MFA spokesperson Lin Jian claimed on July 30 that the Philippines allowing the deployment of the missiles is a “perverse act of cooperating with extra-regional forces to fuel regional tensions and confrontations,

provoke geopolitical confrontation and arms races.” He urged the withdrawal of the missiles as soon as possible.[40]

Lin also criticized a \$500 million military aid package that the United States announced during the 2+2 ministerial dialogues with the Philippines.[41] Lin said the United States is not a party to the South China Sea issue and has no right to intervene in the maritime issues between the PRC and the Philippines. He warned the Philippines that “wooing countries outside the region to provoke confrontation in the South China Sea” will only undermine regional stability, aggravate tensions, and make the Philippines into a “pawn.”[42]

Russia

The PRC is appealing to the “Global South” to legitimize its position as a mediator of Russia’s war in Ukraine. PRC MFA spokesperson Mao Ning announced a new round of “shuttle diplomacy” by Special Representative for Eurasian Affairs Li Hui on July 28, who will visit Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia to confer with “important members of the Global South” on how to work toward establishing peace talks.[43] Mao claimed that the PRC and Brazil’s six-point “consensus” received widespread support from the international community, referring to a joint document that outlines vague steps toward peace, but fails to meet Ukraine’s base condition of Russia’s withdrawal from occupied territory.[44]

The PRC’s focus on ingratiating itself with non-European countries offers an alternative path to gaining recognition for its role as a conflict mediator despite failing to make headway with Ukraine-aligned countries. PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell at the ASEAN regional forum on July 26. The PRC readout of the meeting claimed that Borrell stated that the EU attaches importance to the PRC-Brazil peace initiative.[45] The EU readout of the meeting negated the PRC’s claim, stating that Borrell asked the PRC to use its influence on Russia to contribute to ending the war, but that “the joint statement with Brazil of May 2024 does not go in that direction.”[46] The PRC made a similar claim after Wang met with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba on July 24.[47]

The PRC did not attend a peace summit in Switzerland on June 15-16 due to Russia’s exclusion from the event.[48] Mao Ning stated that the summit does not meet the PRC’s three conditions for a peace conference, which include “recognition by both Russia and Ukraine, equal participation by all parties, and fair discussion of all peace plans.”[49] Mao stated that the PRC would continue to promote dialogue and lasting peace in “its own way.”

PRC banks have tightened restrictions on payments from Russia in response to Western sanctions. Russian business newspaper *Kommersant* reported on July 29 that around 80 percent of payments in Chinese yuan are being returned to Russia. PRC banks have increased restrictions on trade with Russia since at least December 2023, after the European Union imposed its 12th sanctions package against Russia and the United States authorized secondary sanctions on financial institutions that helped Russia evade sanctions. Three of the PRC’s “Big Four” state banks and many smaller PRC banks began rejecting payments from sanctioned Russian financial institutions since the start of 2024.[50]

The PRC's tightening of restrictions on transactions with Russia shows the effectiveness of Western sanctions even as the PRC faces criticism for its support of Russia's defense industrial base. PRC officials have repeatedly denounced unilateral sanctions as "illegal," but PRC businesses and financial institutions are nonetheless deterred by the potential consequences of violating the sanctions on Russia. The restrictions by PRC banks in response to Western sanctions do entirely block transactions with Russia but can make them more difficult and expensive. *Kommersant* reported that Russian companies are being forced to use "trading houses" as intermediaries, which increases transactional costs by up to 10 percent. Cross-border trade can also make use of small local banks that are not involved in trade with the United States, or use PRC-based subsidiaries of Russian banks such as VTB Bank.[51]

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