

China Sentry

Weekly Debrief: January 15, 2024

Covers the period between January 8 - 14, 2024

Contents

U.S. Government Updates	1
Blinken discusses human rights, Taiwan Strait with Chinese official . . .	1
US delegation heads to Taiwan after voters defy China	2
US, Chinese officials discuss law enforcement issues including fentanyl	2
Congressional Updates	2
Department of Defense Updates	3
US and Chinese military officials meet in Washington	3
Now that DoD picked first set of Replicator capabilities, next step is ‘acceleration pathways’	3
US Air Force logistics officer talks basing, drones in the Pacific	3
Navy leader visits Indo-Pacific, underscores vital region and partnerships	4
US Navy aims for a hypersonic ship-killing edge	4
Navy accepting Landing Ship Medium proposals for FY25 contract award	5
US Army carves out its role in space	5
Newly Released Reports	5
	5

U.S. Government Updates

Blinken discusses human rights, Taiwan Strait with Chinese official

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday raised concerns over China’s human rights issues in a meeting with senior Chinese official Liu Jianchao in Washington, the State Department said, adding they also discussed "maintaining

peace and stability" in the Taiwan Strait.¹ They reaffirmed the importance of continuing to implement the progress made on key issues in the Summit between President Biden and President Xi in Woodside, California, in November 2023, particularly counter-narcotics cooperation and military-to-military communications.²

US delegation heads to Taiwan after voters defy China

Taiwan on Saturday elected Lai Ching-te president, giving his Democratic Progressive party an unprecedented third term in office. A high-level US delegation of former top officials will arrive in Taipei later on Sunday, putting to the test China's restraint in its response to its democratic neighbour's presidential election.³

US, Chinese officials discuss law enforcement issues including fentanyl

Senior U.S. and Chinese officials, in a virtual meeting on Wednesday, discussed cooperating on law enforcement issues including the illicit flow of synthetic drugs such as fentanyl, the U.S. Department Of Homeland Security said. U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Chinese Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong participated in the meeting, along with other senior officials, the department said in a statement.⁴

Congressional Updates

In Congressional sessions, Representatives [Nicole Malliotakis \[R-NY\]](#) and [Russ Fulcher \[R-ID\]](#) spoke on the issue of fentanyl coming across the border, whose precursors are largely sourced from China. Rep [Ron Estes \[R-KS\]](#) spoke on R&D spending decreasing while at the same time China's is increasing.

¹<https://www.reuters.com/world/blincken-raises-human-rights-issues-meeting-with-senior-chinese-official-2024-01-13/> *Reuters*

²<https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-meeting-with-prc-minister-of-the-international-liaison-department-of-the-ccp-central-committee-liu/> *Dept of State*

³<https://www.ft.com/content/1c56b7a8-16f5-4339-8381-206de5b25670> *Financial Times*

⁴<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/us-chinese-officials-discuss-law-enforcement-issues-including-fentanyl> *Reuters*

Department of Defense Updates

US and Chinese military officials meet in Washington

Dr. Michael Chase, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia, met with People's Republic of China (PRC) Major General Song Yanchao, Deputy Director of the Central Military Commission Office for International Military Cooperation, at the Pentagon for the 17th U.S.-PRC Defense Policy Coordination Talks from January 8-9, 2024. The two sides also discussed regional and global security issues. Dr. Chase underscored the importance of respect for high seas freedom of navigation guaranteed under international law in light of repeated PRC harassment against lawfully operating Philippine vessels in the South China Sea.⁵ The Chinese side emphasized that China will not make any concession or compromise on the Taiwan question and demanded that the US side abide by the one-China principle, honor relevant commitments, stop arming Taiwan, and not support Taiwan independence. The Chinese side urged the US side to reduce military presence and provocation in the South China Sea and stop supporting provocative actions by certain country.⁶

Now that DoD picked first set of Replicator capabilities, next step is 'acceleration pathways'

The Pentagon is advancing its Replicator initiative, focusing on developing "acceleration pathways" for specific systems identified by Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks. These systems, chosen based on operational criteria, aim to address the military mass advantage currently held by China. The initiative, led by the Defense Innovation Unit, seeks to field thousands of attritable autonomous systems across multiple domains, emphasizing the strategic need for "precise mass" in modern warfare. This approach reflects lessons from the conflict in Ukraine and aligns with the National Defense Strategy. The Pentagon will also brief lawmakers on these capabilities and funding strategies.⁷

US Air Force logistics officer talks basing, drones in the Pacific

The U.S. Air Force, moving away from reliance on major military hubs in the Pacific, is working to develop more dispersed operations across the region. Brig. Gen. Mike Zuhlsdorf, involved in this strategic shift, is overseeing efforts to

⁵<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3639762/readout-of-2024-us-prc-defense-policy-coordination-talks/> *Dept of Defense*

⁶http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16279511.html
PLA Daily

⁷<https://breakingdefense.com/2024/01/now-that-dod-picked-first-set-of-replicator-capabilities-next-step-is-acceleration-pathways/> *Breaking Defense*

renovate and rehabilitate existing bases and airfields dating back to World War II, located in strategic areas like Japan, the Philippines, Guam, and Tinian. These efforts include upgrading essential infrastructure, like runways and navigational systems, and enhancing base defenses and communication systems. The Air Force is collaborating with allies and partners, particularly focusing on airfields in the Philippines and Australia, to improve refueling and munitions capabilities for long-range operations.⁸

Navy leader visits Indo-Pacific, underscores vital region and partnerships

Under Secretary of the Navy Erik Raven's visit to Guam and the Indo-Pacific region emphasized the importance of regional security, stability, and the defense of American interests and allies. Raven met with local leaders, including Acting Governor Joshua Tenorio, discussing Guam's vital role in supporting military activities and the need to consider environmental impacts of defense infrastructure. He also engaged with various military leaders and forces, receiving updates on infrastructure, missile defense, and regional operations. Raven's visit underscored the U.S.'s commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, highlighting the strategic significance of Joint Region Marianas and the necessity of strong alliances in the region.⁹

US Navy aims for a hypersonic ship-killing edge

The US Navy is developing a Hypersonic Air Launched Offensive Anti-Surface (HALO) missile, aimed at enhancing long-range anti-ship capabilities. Raytheon has completed technical reviews and fit-checks of the HALO missile prototype, which is designed to operate in contested A2/AD environments and support long-range fire strategies. The missile will likely replace the Harpoon anti-ship missile, with improvements in targeting and stealth capabilities. The article also discusses the Naval Strike Missile's advantages over the Harpoon and the Maritime Strike Tomahawk as a stopgap solution against long-range anti-ship missiles, particularly in the context of potential conflicts with near-peer adversaries like China.¹⁰

⁸<https://www.defensenews.com/news/your-air-force/2024/01/08/us-air-force-logistics-officer-talks-basing-drones-in-the-pacific/> *Defense News*

⁹<https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/3644597/navy-leader-visits-indo-pacific-underscores-vital-region-and-partnerships/> *U.S. Navy*

¹⁰<https://asiatimes.com/2024/01/us-navy-aims-for-a-hypersonic-ship-killing-edge/> *Asia Times*

Navy accepting Landing Ship Medium proposals for FY25 contract award

The U.S. Navy is seeking proposals for its Landing Ship Medium program, which one Marine Corps leader called a top priority for the Navy-Marine amphibious team. The services are “on pace to procure in '25, deliver it in 2029,” Maj. Gen. Marcus Annibale, the director of expeditionary warfare on the chief of naval operations’ staff, said Wednesday at the Surface Navy Association’s annual conference. The LSM is to primarily support Marine littoral regiments serving as a stand-in force. These units are designed to spend significant amounts of time in key locations such as the Philippines or Japan, and have the ability to move between remote locations.¹¹

US Army carves out its role in space

The U.S. Army is defining its role in space, particularly in the context of the Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) and operations in the Pacific theater. The Army is focused on integrating space capabilities into its operations, enhancing its ability to respond to various challenges in the Pacific region. This integration is crucial for the Army’s effectiveness in modern warfare, where space-based assets play a vital role in communication, navigation, and intelligence gathering.¹²

Newly Released Reports

- Instruments of Chinese Military Influence in Iran *U.S. Army*
- Great Power Competition: Implications for Defense—Issues for Congress . . . China and Sub-Saharan Africa *Congressional Research Service*
- China Brief: Volume 24 Issue 1 *Jamestown Foundation*
- Meeting the China Challenge: Key Focus Areas for Intelligence Community *MITRE*
- U.S.-China Competition: Perspectives from South Asia *Observer Research Foundation*

China Sentry’s inclusion of any source does not mean endorsement

¹¹<https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2024/01/10/navy-accepting-landing-ship-medium-proposals-for-fy25-contract-award/> *Defense News*

¹²<https://www.defensenews.com/land/2024/01/09/us-army-carves-out-its-role-in-space/> *Defense News*