DETAILED REPORTS

Tracking the People's Liberation Army (PLA): 22nd - 29th August, 2026

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EXECUTIVE BRIEF & KEY FINDINGS

Dear Reader, Thank you for reading this week's newsletter. Apologies for the delay. Was caught with a bad spell and some unavoidable commitments. Starting from week ending 05 Sep 2026, China's space activities will be covered as a separate newsletter by Lieutenant Colonel Garima Joshi, VSM (Retd). A fluent-Mandarin speaker, she has in-depth knowledge of China's History and Culture. For her outstanding contribution during Operation Snow Leopard, she was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal on Republic Day 2021. You would have received the first edition by email. ICYMI, the newsletter is available under China's Space Activities. I do understand there is a mismatch in the timely publication of both series. Hope to resolve it soon. Bear with me in the interim. The week ending 29 Aug 2026 was a happening one with 25th round of Talks between Special Representatives of India and China. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress passed the revised National Defense Law and removed four delegates from National People's Congress. Along with the removal of former WTC Commander Zhao Zongqi from CPPCC, this suggests that there is an intra-Party struggle in which the PLA is being removed from Chinese politics. The PLA Rocket Force conducted its selection of Brigade Commanders and Political Commissars with dozens qualifying out of the nearly 100 candidates. Read on.

Neighbourhood

25th Round of Talks between Special Representatives of India and China Held

The 25th round of talks between Special Representatives of India and China was held at Beijing on 25 Aug 2026. India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Mr Doval subsequently called on Vice President Han Zheng. Major outcome of the talks was commit to negotiations on a framework for settlement of the boundary question and to advance discussions on Early and Substantial Harvest of boundary delimitation. Both sides also agreed to additional two meeting points for holding the General Level Mechanism/ Senior Highest Military Commander meeting (SHMC)*. In addition, both sides have agreed to two additional military hotlines in the Eastern and Middle Sectors. (National People's Congress. 28 Aug 2026. (十四届全国人大常委会第二十四次会议在京闭幕) MEA India. 28 Aug 2026. Eight Points of Outcomes and Consensus for the 25th round of Talks between Special Representatives of India and China on the Boundary Question)

*India and China currently have General Level Mechanism/ Senior Highest Level Military Commander meeting at Chushul/Moldo in Ladakh. The mechanism helps as an additional step to resolve issues at military level rather than escalating issues to the political/diplomatic levels.

Taiwan Straits

A total of 5 sorties were flown during the week including two fighter and three helicopter sorties. One of the helicopter sorties crossed the median line. PLAN vessels and official PRC ships continued to operate around Taiwan. (Data Source: https://x.com/MoNDefense?s=20)

Japan

One PLA Y-9 ELINT aircraft was observed flying over East China Sea on 25 Aug 2026. (Source: https://x.com/JapanJointStaff?s=20)

Domestic Politics

24th Meeting of 14th National People's Congress Standing Committee

The 24th Meeting of the NPCSC was held from 25 to 28 Aug 2026. Major issues were the passing of the revision of National Defense Mobilization Law and the formal removal of Zhang Youxia and Liu Zhenli from the Central Military Commission. In addition to Zhang Youxia and Liu Zhenli, Zhong Shaojun and Ju Qiansheng were removed as delegates to 14th National People's Congress. (PLA Daily. 29 Aug 2026. Page 2. 24th Meeting of Standing Committee of 14th National People's Congress concludes in Beijing (十四届全国人大常委会第二十四次会议在京闭幕). Announcement No 19 of Standing Committee of National People's Congress()

The formal removal of Zhang Youxia and Liu Zhenli suggests that disciplinary proceedings have been completed and they have been sentenced. The total number of delegates to 14th National Peoples Congress has reduced to 2,847 from 2977 delegates at its inception.

Revision of National Defense Mobilisation Law

The National Defense Mobilisation Law (国防动员法) was passed in February 2010. Full Law is available here. The revised law will come into effect from 01 Oct 2026. The explanation by NPC highlights that the 2010 Law did not meet current requirements, especially the organisational and leadership structure for mobilisations and the distribution of responsibilities between military and civilian authorities. The revised law comprises 14 chapters and 82 articles and synergises with other laws such as National Reservists Law. (PLA Daily. 29 Aug 2026. Page 4. National Defense Mobilization Law of the People's Republic of China (中华人民共和国国防动员法) National People's Congress. 28 Aug 2026. Decree No 83 of the President of PRC(中华人民共和国主席令-第八十三号))

Major changes are the incorporation of leadership of CPC Xi Jinping Thought on Strengthening the Military and adherence to Overall National Security Outlook (Article 3). It calls for the adoption of advanced technologies in national defence mobilisation and development in emerging fields (Article 8). Threat to developmental interests has now been included in the list of areas which can trigger national mobilisation. (Article 13). National Defence Mobilisation has been placed under the Central Committee instead of State Council and CMC (Article 17). It shifts from subsidies to policy support for R&D and manufacturing of specific items and stockpiling of strategic material (Articles 30 and 41). Units involved in cyber security have been included in the list of units to undertake national defense service (Article 61).

Removal of Zhao Zongqi from National Committee of CPPCC

Former WTC Commander Zhao Zongqi was removed from his appointment as Deputy Director of Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of Central People's Political Consultative Conference(CPPCC) at the 18th meeting of the 14th National Committee of CPPCC held from 25 and 26 Aug 2026. Post-retirement, he was Deputy Director of Foreign Affairs Committee of National Peoples Congress and was part of Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of 14th National Committee of CPPCC since March 2023. (CPPCC. 27 Aug 2026. 18th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the 14th National Committee of CPPCC Concludes; Wang Huning presides and delivers Speech(全国政协十四届常委会第十八次会议闭幕 王沪宁主持并讲话))

In the normal course, Zhao Zongqi's removal wouldn't have meant much. However, when seen from the perspective of removal of PLA personnel from various institutions such as Central Committee of CPC, National People's Congress and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, it indicates an intra-Party struggle, ahead of 21st Party Congress.

Anti-Corruption Campaign

The PLA's procurement website issued a notice inviting suppliers, evaluation experts, tendering agencies, bid representatives and military personnel involved in procurement projects of PLA Rocket Force, to provide information related to procurement by units of PLA Rocket Force, by 30 Nov 2026. The scope of information relates to the complete tendering process as well as all types of items procured by PLA Rocket Force including rations and medical supplies. (Military Procurement Network(军队采购网) 24 Aug 2026. Public Notice on Soliciting Information about Irregularities in Rocket Force Procurement(关于征集火箭军部队违规采购问题的公告)

Ideological and Political Education

Political Rectification in PLAAF

A set of four articles cover an unidentified PLAAF radar brigade in Xinjiang. The first article covers various scenarios such as a Deputy Company Commander who made seven iterations of his plan to make it realistic after his intial well crafted operational deployment plan was rejected as it was not based on empircal data. Another scenario highlights a Company Commander whose risk averseness led to 'enemy' aircraft breaching the engagement zone. The last scenario highlights the case of a battalion, whose integration of legacy equipment facilitated creation of a multi-layered air-defence network and helped launched a counter offensive. The second article highlights how certain commanders in the past had prioritised procedures leading to disjointed comman chains and the current commanders and political commissars are leading by example. An interview with the Director of Political Work Department of the brigade identified only as Lü, highlights that ever since the beginning of political rectifcation, commanders must ingrain deeply their loyalty to the Party's command, ensure they understand both tacticial and political requirements and be pioneers and lead. (PLA Daily. Page 5. 24 Aug 2026. A Shift in Work Style Behind an Exercise Plan (一份演练方案背后的作风之变). The flag flies where the commander stands ("指挥员站在哪，旗帜就在哪"). Setting an example for effective command (立起指挥打仗的好样子))

Combat Theory

Understanding the Underlying Mechanism of Joint Operations Command and Control

Li Aibin calls for a deeper understanding of the laws, drivers and operational logic governing interconnections, interactions and mutual constraints among command echelons within a joint command system, as well as relations between command activities, operational missions and combat actions. Calling Mission Guidance as the start point, he highlights that it provides guidance at strategic and operational levels, ensures synergy between various elements and guides orientation of command operations. He further calls Information Dominance as the driving force for joint operations command with strategic level commands creating a strategic picture and and disseminating precise instructions to operational level commands while operational level commands integrate them with battlefield situation and progress reported by lower echelons. Lower level commands provide real time feedback, thus ensuring 'decision - issue - feedback -correction' cycle. He finally calls for process iteration and using combat effectiveness as effective benchmark to wards understanding Joint Operations Command and Control. (PLA Daily. 25 Aug 2026. Page 7. Grasping the Underlying Mechanisms of Joint Operation Command and Control (把握联合作战指挥运行深层机理))

Training

Selection of potential PLARF Brigade Commanders and Political Commissars

The PLA Rocket Force organised the Military Competency Certification for Missile Brigade Commanders at Wuhan recently. Nearly 100 command and political officers appeared in the ten stage certification conducted over several days and included application of command skills, articulation of operational workflows, written operation plan, open format defence session and handling contingencies. The written plan for a typical operational scenario involved planning, plotting it on a map, calculations and dealing with special contingencies in eight hours. The calculations included ballistic correction parameters, probability damage calculation, timing sequence for multi-wave strikes etc. Some of the

contingencies included responding to an attack on own positions and planning for sudden mission adjustments. Prof Sun Tiecheng from Rocket Force Command College and Head of Assessment team informed that the capability screening marked a crucial step to translate political rectification and training into actual combat power. Dozens of officers passed the assessment. (PLA Daily. 26 Aug 2026. Page 5. “Sword Formation of a Major Power” Calls for new type Commanders (“大国剑阵”呼唤新型指挥员)). A Missile Offensive-Defensive Battle Unfolds Within a Confined Room(斗室之内，打响导弹攻防战). Focusing on Future Warfare: Designing the Test and Setting the Questions(紧盯未来战争设考场出考题))

Operations

29th Rotation of Troops in Hong Kong

The 29th rotation of troops deployed in Hong Kong was carried out on 24 and 25 Aug 2026. (PLA Daily. 26 Aug 2026. Page 3. PLA Hong Kong Garrison conducts 29th Unit Rotation(驻香港部队组织第29次建制单位轮换))

Under Article 3 of the PRC Law on Garrison of Hong Kong SAR, which was promulgated from 01 July 1997, troops are turned over annually, with the 28th rotation of troops conducted on 22 Aug 2025. Apart from external defence, the garrison can be employed during emergency by the Standing Committtee of the National People’s Congress and to maintain in assisting in social security and disaster relief on approval by the Central Government.

27th Rotation of Troops in Macau

The 27th rotation of PLA troops deployed in Macau was carried out on 27 Aug 2026. (PLA Daily. 28 Aug 2026. Page 3. 27th Rotation of PLA troops in Macao successfully completed (解放军驻澳门部队第27次建制单位轮换工作顺利完成))

Under article 2 of PRC Law on Garrison of Macau SAR, promulgated on 20 Dec 1999, PLA personnel are to be turned over. The law has similar provisions as PRC Law on Garrison of Hong Kong SAR.

Administration

Standard Issue or Personal Procurement?

A PLA Daily article highlights a PLA Rocket Force unit procuring standard commercial items after detailed discussions and surveys. While standard items such as cotton towels remained damp in the high temperature and humidity, and caused skin ailments, individually procured equipment such as high capacity power banks could not survive under exercise conditions and posed a fire hazard. To over come both challenges, the unit Party Committee procured items with detailed specifications, compatibility with existing equipment and durability, to supplement standard kits. (PLA Daily. 26 Aug 2026. Page 8. Collapsible Basins and Quick drying Towels added to Rucksacks (折叠脸盆和速干毛巾进背囊))

Work Ethos

A PLA Daily article highlights improvement in the work culture of 81 Group Army with short, focused meetings and reduced paperwork, leaving brigade commanders and units to focus on operations and training. The revised procedure calls for departments at Group Army to identify essential issues prior to the meeting with one of the departments designated as the lead department, participants keeping the discussions crisp during the meeting and post-meeting, the responsibilities are duly identified with deadlines and results tracked. The work ethos has percolated down to the brigade level, leaving the battalion commanders to focus on training and operational preparedness. (PLA Daily. 23 Aug 2026. Page 1. Streamlined Paperwork and Meetings allow troops to focus on their Mission(机关精文简会 官兵轻装上阵))

HADR

Flashflood at Gyirong Land Port

On 26 Aug 2026, a flashflood hit a Gyirong Land port along the Sino-Nepal border. After an initial foot reconnaisance by Shigatse Detachment of PAP and a reconnaissance by Air Force drone on evening of 26 Aug, more than 500 personnel from the PLA and PAPF and around 1300 personnel from Tibet Autonomous Region were involved in rescue operations. Y-20 to fetch a WTC team to Shigatse on 27 Aug 2026. Premier Li Qiang visited disaster site on 27 Aug 2026 to review the situation. WTC Air Force UAV conduced a reconnaissance mission again on 28 Aug 2026. An adhoc command post has been set up at Gyirong Land Port. (PLA Daily. 27 Aug 2026. Page 1. Prioritizing lives and mobilizing immediately upon orders to minimize casualties to the greatest extent possible.(生命至上闻令而动，最大限度减少伤亡)) 29 Aug 2026. Page 2. Li Qiang oversees emergency rescue and response operations in Gyirong, Tibet. (李强在西藏吉隆指导抢险救援和应急处置工作))

International Cooperation

Chinese and Belarusian troops slithering from a Z-20K Helicopter as part of Joint Airborne Exercise (Image Source: China MND)

Sino-Belarus Joint Exercise Concludes

The Sino-Belarus joint exercise concluded on 24 Aug 2026. The exercise began at PLA Airborne Corps near Wuhan on 12 Aug and focused on counter-terrorism operations in urban terrain. It was conducted in three phases: basic training, joint training and mutual learning. The exercise focused on a number of scenarios such as reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, seize and hold, clear and hold, and coordinated command and joint counter-terrorism operations. A Global Times article identified the helicopter as an airborne variant, Z-20K. The article further identified the Z-20K as the airborne force's primary air assault platform and is capable of carrying a complete squad into air-assault. The Belarusian MoD highlighted the use of ram-air parachutes, and the final exercise in which a terrorist hideout was assaulted and its leader captured. (PLA Daily. 25 Aug 2026. Page 3. China-Belarus Joint Airborne Exercise “Swift Eagle” Concludes (中白“神鹰-2026”空降兵联合训练结束). Belarus MoD. Belarusian-Chinese Joint Swift Eagle – 2026 Tactical Exercise)

Space

Postponement of Launch of Chang'e-7 Lunar Mission

On 23 Aug 2026, the China Manned Space (CMS) Programme announced that the Chang'e-7 lunar mission will not be launched this year. The cryptic message mentioned that based on the principles of safety, reliability and the necessity of ensuring absolute success, the mission did not meet launch conditions and will not launched during the window scheduled for this year. (China Manned Space 23 Aug 2026. Chang'e-7 Mission does not meet Launch Conditions. Cannot proceed during Scheduled Window this Year(嫦娥七号任务不满足发射条件 不能在今年预定窗口实施))

Chang'e-7 was to have landed at the Moon's South pole and detect for ice under its surface. CMS' previous release on 19 Aug 2026 suggested that the Chang'e-7 satellite had been integrated with the Long March-5 rocket and the integrated payload and rocket had been transferred to the launch pad at Wenchang Satellite Centre with the pre-launch checks and propellant loading to be carried out. There are two possibilities. The first possibility is that typhoon Saudel were due to cross China's Eastern coast this week and clash with the launch window. The other possibility is that a Long March 7A rocket launched from Wenchang suffered an anomaly during launch and blew up on 10 Aug 2026. The Long March 5 and 7 were developed together and share certain commonalities. So the launch could have been postponed as a precaution.

Seven Satellites successfully placed in Orbit

A Long March-6C rocket launched from Taiyuan Satellite launch Centre successfully placed seven satellites in their intended orbits. This includes *zhongke weixing* 14 and 15, *lingzhi*-9 , *muduo*-1A and 1B, *jing'an mengxiang*, and *bayi*-04 satellites. *zhongke weixing* satellites carry high-resolution SAR payloads and specialized space-based cloud computing payloads, and will network with other *zhongke weixing* satellites in orbit to conduct trials to build an integrated space-air information platform that combines satellite remote sensing payloads with cloud-based processing capabilities. *lingzhi*-9 is a satellite developed for Thailand. *bayi*-04 is an 18.7-kilogram microsatellite developed by Harbin Institute of Technology and school students for youth aerospace science education and space science practice. Equipped with numerous scientific payloads such as science screen, a high-definition camera, a miniature camera, and a polarization camera, the satellite will equip middle school students to perform space experiments. (ST Daily. 26 Aug 2026. Page 1. Long March-6C successfully launches Seven Satellites in single Mission (长六丙"一箭七星"发射成功) "August 1-04 Satellite" launched with participation of college, middle and primary school students (大中小学生参与完成的"八一04星"升空))

Extravehicular Activity at Tiangong

The Shenzhou-23 crew carried out extravehicular activity on 28 Aug 2026. They carried out maintenance of solar panels and installed space debris protection devices. This is the first EVA by the Shenzhou-23 crew who were launched on 24 May 2026. (PLA Daily. 29 Aug 2026. Page 3. Shenzhou-23 crew successfully completes EVA (神舟二十三号航天员乘组圆满完成出舱活动))

That is all for this week, folks. Have a nice weekend.