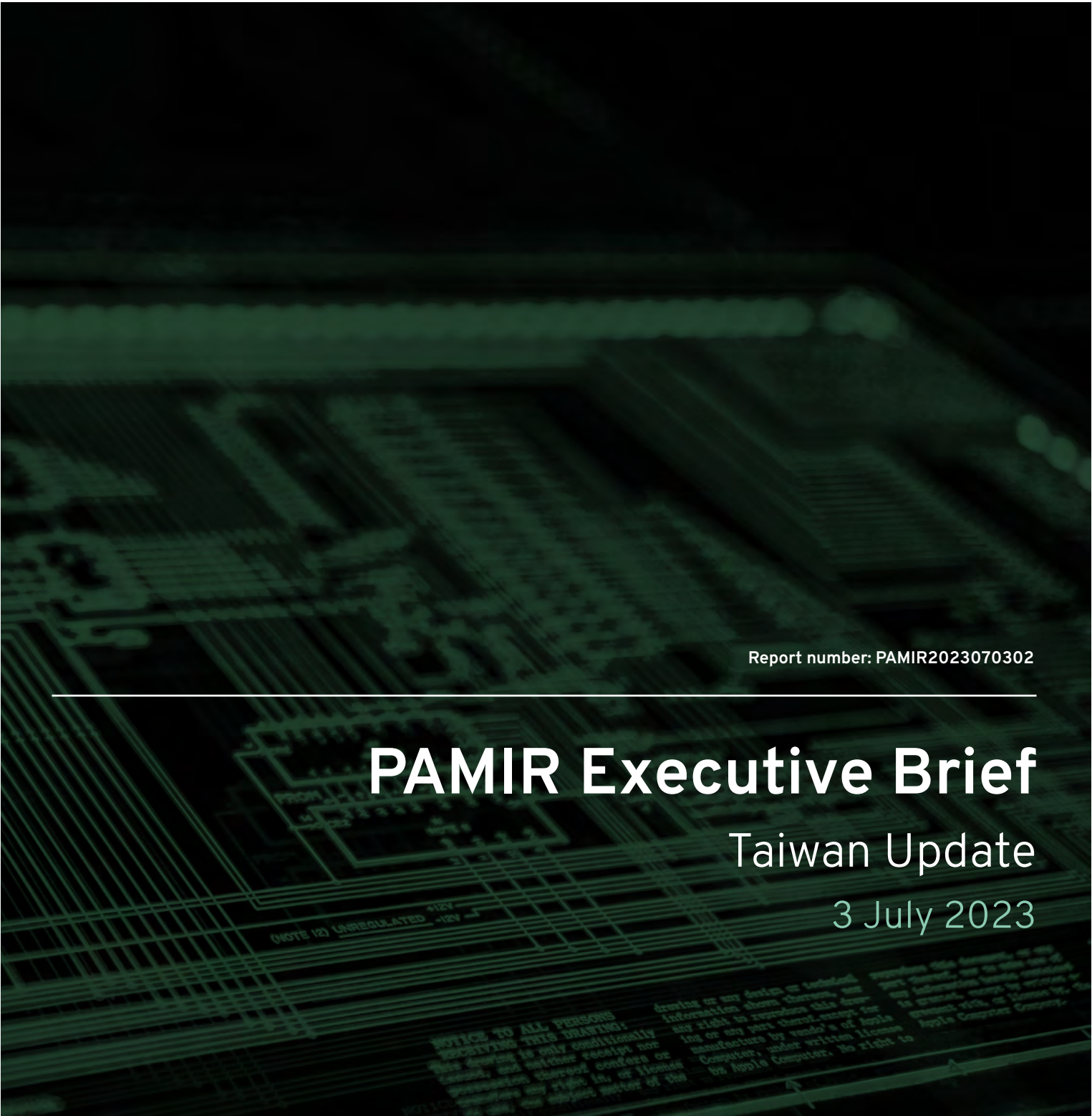




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PAMIR Executive Brief

Taiwan Update

3 July 2023

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“On 11 June, Ko told a forum in Taipei, if he becomes Taiwan’s president, he will use Taiwan’s cyberwarfare capability against one mainland major infrastructure mechanism every year to demonstrate Taiwan’s strength. The first attack will be on the mainland’s high-speed rail control system. The attack would be during one of the mainland’s busiest travel seasons, on 1 October, China’s National Day.”



Executive Summary

- Russian warships operated near Taiwan in a sign that Moscow would be prepared to take China's side in a cross-Strait conflict.
- Taiwan will briefly shut down its main international airport in July as part of a military exercise to simulate repelling a mainland airborne attack.

US-Taiwan Relations

Laura Rosenberger, the new chair of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), the de facto US Embassy, recently met with each of Taiwan's 2024 presidential candidates from the top three political parties. Rosenberger was a former member of President Biden's National Security Council with close ties to Secretary of State Blinken. She was appointed to the position in March. Kharis Templeman, a Hoover Institution researcher specializing in Taiwan, said Rosenberger's appointment, in place of a career diplomat, is a "signal, both publicly and within the US government, that the White House is deeply invested in the US-Taiwan relationship and actively working to shape its direction over the next few months."

Taiwan media, citing those who attended Rosenberger's meetings, reported she emphasized US neutrality. She tried to gauge the candidates' policies towards the mainland since, whoever wins, his policy will likely influence US-China relations for years to come.

- Lai Ching-te, Taiwan's Vice President and candidate for the ruling DPP, has advocated for Taiwan independence throughout his political career. However, it remains to be seen how far he would go if elected.
- Hou Yu-ih, mayor of New Taipei and candidate for the pro-unification KMT, has been low-key on his mainland policy. He reportedly told Rosenberger that he would resume some Taiwan-mainland exchanges on issues such as education cooperation and joint crimefighting. He stressed his commitment to the US partnership to jointly promote regional peace, as well as the importance of having defense capabilities for the purpose of deterrence.



In the first five months of 2023, six US Congressional delegations visited Taiwan. In comparison, the last visit to China by a US Congressional delegation was in November 2018.



- Ko Wen-je, Chairman of Taiwan People's Party (TPP) and former mayor of Taipei, previously advocated that people across the Taiwan Strait are "one family" and believed both sides should respect each other's political systems; however, after announcing his candidacy, his mainland policy has become more ambiguous. On 11 June, Ko told a forum in Taipei, if he becomes Taiwan's president, he will use Taiwan's cyberwarfare capability against one mainland major infrastructure mechanism every year to demonstrate Taiwan's strength. The first attack will be on the mainland's high-speed rail control system. The attack would be during one of the mainland's busiest travel seasons, on 1 October, China's National Day. The second attack would be the mainland's ATM system to create financial chaos. Ko's remarks generated strong pushback from the mainland. On 26 June Ko said he would introduce a new regulation to review any agreements with the mainland and would renegotiate the cargo agreement. Some Taiwanese analysts believe Ko's sudden hostility towards the mainland is designed to attract "protest supporters" from both the DPP and KMT, particularly from the KMT.

On 29 June Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen met a nine-member bipartisan US Congressional delegation led by Mike Rogers, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Tsai told the US lawmakers that "deepening the security cooperation between Taiwan and the US is crucial for maintaining the security of Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region." Rogers reassured Tsai of US commitment to assist Taiwan to defend itself.

“On the evening of 27 June, Taiwan's Defense Ministry detected two Russian frigates sailing north in waters 26 nautical miles off eastern Taiwan, a rare occurrence in recent years. Taiwan's military said it dispatched planes and ships to monitor the ships' movements. Chinese media relayed Taiwan's reporting without comment. Meanwhile, Russia's state news agency said the two ships were engaged in a “long-range sea crossing exercise” that included “a simulated naval battle to repel a missile attack of a simulated enemy from the sea.””



Military Activity

On the evening of 27 June, Taiwan's Defense Ministry detected two Russian frigates sailing north in waters 26 nautical miles off eastern Taiwan, a rare occurrence in recent years. Taiwan's military said it dispatched planes and ships to monitor the ships' movements. Chinese media relayed Taiwan's reporting without comment. Meanwhile, Russia's state news agency said the two ships were engaged in a "long-range sea crossing exercise" that included "a simulated naval battle to repel a missile attack of a simulated enemy from the sea." Last December the Chinese and Russian navies had conducted a joint exercise 180 miles north of Taiwan.

- Also on 27 June, Russia's Foreign Ministry said the Russian and Chinese militaries had held a round of consultation on global missile defense cooperation.

On 28 June Taiwan media reported that Taoyuan International Airport, Taiwan's largest, will shut down for an hour on 26 July to simulate repelling PLA paratroopers landing at the airport. This will be the first time such an exercise is being conducted at Taiwan's key air traffic hub. The exercise will be part of the annual Han Kuang military exercise.

On 27 June Taiwan's Defense Ministry reiterated to the media that Taiwan would strike Chinese aircraft and warships if they entered its 12 nautical-mile territorial airspace and waters. The statement was in response to a question about the Ministry's report that 19 PLA planes had flown close to Taiwan's airspace on 23-24 June.

Earlier on 6 March, in a parliamentary hearing, Taiwan's Defense Minister stated that the military would open fire if the PLA entered Taiwan's territorial waters or airspace. China continued its military operations around Taiwan during the second half of June. The most intense operation was on 22 June when 29 sorties of PLA aircraft and 10 ships operated near Taiwan. On 21 June China's aircraft carrier Shandong transited the Taiwan Strait.

On 21 June the US Coast Guard cutter Stratton sailed through the Taiwan Strait, one day after US Secretary of State Blinken's visit to Beijing. The US 7th Fleet said in a statement that the transit was "routine and through waters where high-sea freedoms of navigation and overflight apply in accordance with international law." China's Coast Guard criticized Stratton's transit as a "public hype."

“On 20 June China announced resumption of imports of sugar apples from Taiwan after banning the import for three years. According to China’s Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), the lifting of the ban was negotiated by a KMT delegation. Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) reacted to the mainland’s announcement as “a united front” effort to divide Taiwan.”

Economic Links

On 28 June China’s Taiwan Affairs Office confirmed that Taiwan authorities had denied the mainland’s request to resume pre-Covid civil aviation links to Wuhan, Ningbo, and Zhengzhou on the mainland. TAO said the request was in response to increased demand from Taiwanese in the mainland.

Currently 11 mainland cities are connected with Taiwan. During the week of 18-24 June, 82,636 people traveled by air across the Taiwan Strait.

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Pamir judges that China’s lack of official comment or support for Russia’s apparent anti-US naval activity near Taiwan suggests Beijing was trying to avoid highlighting parallels with Russia’s precipitating incursions and subsequent war in Ukraine.

Strategic outcomes

Pamir Position

Pamir judges that China’s lack of official comment or support for Russia’s apparent anti-US naval activity near Taiwan suggests Beijing was trying to avoid highlighting parallels with Russia’s precipitating incursions and subsequent war in Ukraine.

LEVEL OF CONCERN



Business Impact

Pamir observes that the semblance of Russian complicity to engage on behalf of China in the Taiwan Strait could signal close China-Russia coordination in shaping perceptions of geopolitical stakes in the Taiwan Strait.

Business Opportunity

Pamir recommends ongoing monitoring of China-Russia coordinated actions in the Taiwan Strait that could potentially broaden the scope for maritime, supply chain and logistics disruption in the region.



Strategic outcomes

Level of Concern indicators - what they mean

- 1 - indicates no change to the status quo
- 2 - indicates escalating tensions
- 3 - indicates aggressive escalation
- 4 - indicates high probability of impending crisis event
- 5 - indicates a full-scale crisis or conflict situation.

How we calculate them

- Frequency of references to subject in Chinese-language official government statements, credible press reporting, and social media
- Frequency of references to subject in English-language official government statements, credible press reporting, and social media from the US, EU, UK, Australia, Japan, etc.
- Consistency of historical, current, and emerging trendlines related to the subject
- Aberrations in official Chinese-language policy formulations
- Strategic shifts in official Chinese government and military signaling through diplomatic, information, military, and economic actions and behavior

Analytic Methodology: internal monitoring with quantitative and qualitative analysis of Chinese media and propaganda; comparative trend analysis, intelligence tradecraft; other proprietary methods.

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