DETAILED REPORTS

Tracking the People's Liberation Army (PLA): 04th - 10th October, 2026

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EXECUTIVE BRIEF & KEY FINDINGS

Dear Reader,Thank you for reading this week's newsletter. Major developments during the week were North Korea's testing of a ballistic missile and South Korea's testing of a hypersonic glide vehicle.The PLA Daily carried a number of articles to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Long March, including old battlefields, personalities and anecdotes. One such article carried on 09 Oct 2026 was on Qian Zhuangfei, who infiltrated the Kuomintang, supplied valuable information to the Communists and laid down his life for the communist cause at the age of 39.Amongst technical developments is the increasing usage of AI, unmanned equipment and VR/AR to enhance the quality of training and operational preparedness. An article on Shandong's coastal defence covers military-civil integration in ensuring security in this sensitive North Eastern province.Japan's militarisation continued to receive attention in Chinese media. The coverage this week was on Japan's recent draft initiative to fund academia and research for development of AI and drones.Read on.

Neighbourhood

North Korea conducts Missile Test

On 03 Oct 2026, Japan's MoD announced that North Korea had **fired a ballistic missile** from its East Coast into the Sea of Japan. The missile flew to an altitude of about 90 kilometres and covered a distance of about 680 kms and fell outside Japan's EEZ. Korean Central News Agency claimed that it had **tested an intermediate range hypersonic missile** and had hit the target at 43°36' 28.04" East latitude and 138°00' 47.02" North longitude at a distance of 1,000 kms. The test was conducted to train missile launcher crews and to build a power nuclear deterrence. (Japan MoD. 12 Oct 2026. Deputy Minister of Defense Press Conference (防衛副大臣臨時記者会見). KCNA. 04 Oct 2026. Strategic Missile Launching Drill Conducted in Eastern Region of DPRK)

The variation between the distance reported by Japan and North Korea suggests that the test firing of the missile, was possibly, not a complete success.

South Korea tests Hypersonic Missile

On 08 Oct 2026, South Korea conducted its first test of Hypersonic Glide Vehicle. A Blue House **Press Release** said that the test was intended to test the performance, guidance and controllability of ultra-high temperature heat-resistant materials, and the ability of the missile to fly in an irregular pattern at low altitudes.



(South Korean Hypersonic Glide Vehicle about to hit designated target area. Image Source: Blue House)

Taiwan National Day

Taiwan observed the 115th National Day* on 10 Oct. Delivering his National Day address titled, "**Taiwan's Future: A City upon a Hill, the Salt and Light of the World**" President William Lai Ching-te called for Taiwan to become a "city upon a hill". Highlighting Chinese constant endeavours to alter the status quo across the Taiwan Straits, he stressed that Taiwan's determination to withstand Chinese expansion was not for its own survival alone, but also whether the international community believed in the rule of law. He said that Taiwan will continue with defence reforms and 'whole of society' defence resilience preparations as well as strategic technologies and will not give up its freedom.

*It was on 10 Oct 1911 the *Wuchang Uprising* occurred, which led to the overthrow of Qing Dynasty. Republic of China (Taiwan) observes it as Double Tenth Day.

Taiwan Straits

PLA did not fly any sorties during the first two days of the week. It compensated for it with 52 sorties in the remaining five days of the week of which 22 crossed the Median Line. One fighter entered the Northern ADIZ while seven Support aircraft & UAVs crossed South Western ADIZ. In addition, 5 to 8 PLAN ships and 2 to 9 Coast Guard ships operated around Taiwan on a daily basis during the week. (Source: https://x.com/MoNDefense?s=20)

East China Sea

A PLA TB-001 recce/attack UAV flew from **parallel to Okinawa - Kuni-nami Islands, Nagasaki Prefecture** in East China Sea on 09 Oct 2026 and returned to Chinese mainland. (Source: https://x.com/jointstaffpa?s=20)

International Outlook

The International Outlook column of PLA Daily focused on UK's Nuclear Deterrence plans and Japan's Defence Development.

United Kingdom

Guo Xiaobing* highlights **developments in UK's nuclear deterrence** such as Dreadnought class SSBN development programme, planned SSN replacement programme, proposed acquisition of F-35As and "Astraea" A21/Mk7 nuclear warhead. The author argues that these programs along with 2025 Northwood Declaration with France, suggests that nuclear deterrence has been elevated to the core of UK's national security framework. He suggests that this is due to multiple strategic considerations such as perceived Russian threat, uncertainty of US security commitments and boosting UK's economy. The author argues that there are practical constraints such as US restrictions due to core components being sourced from US, high fiscal burden and Russian counter measures, and that the efficacy of UK's nuclear expansion plan remains to be seen. (PLA Daily. 08 Oct 2026. Page 12. UK Continues to development its Nuclear Forces (英国持续推进核力量建设))

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Japan

The article written by Xiang Haoyu* focuses on a draft **Japanese initiative to invigorate defense development** which was reported by **Sankei** on 05 Oct 2026. The author correlates with other inputs such as the proposed funding of ¥ 70

to 80 trillion for defense development over the next five years and ¥ 9 trillion for acquiring stand off capabilities. The initiative will primarily focus development of drone and AI capabilities. This is proposed to be achieved by the US model of enabling academia and research institutions and integrating military industrial complex with the larger economy. The author argues that Japan's right wing parties have breached its Pacifist Constitution and are steering it towards 'a new form of militarisation' and calls on the international community to be vigilant and curb the reckless activities of Japan's militarisation. (PLA Daily. 08 Oct 2026. Page 12. Draft of Japan's "Defense Force Development Plan" Reveals Ambitions(日本《防卫力量整备计划》草案暴露野心))

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Combat Theory

AI-driven development of Reconnaissance UAVs

Zhang Xiaoxue and Chen Zhihua highlight that unmanned, intelligent aircraft have evolved from supplementary reconnaissance tools to critical assets for battlefield surveillance and **have emerged as a priority area for development globally.** They argue that this is due to three factors. First is technological innovations in terms of AI-enabled autonomy, communications, and sensor fusion are enhancing the efficiency of reconnaissance UAVs. Second is the evolution towards miniaturisation and integration of sensors which enable multi-domain surveillance, increasing endurance and improved survivability. Third, by providing integrated visual, electronic and positional data with joint command platforms, they break down silos and enable intelligence sharing across domains and coordinate firing. The authors foresee that reconnaissance UAVs will continue to evolve towards greater autonomy, swarming capabilities, and all-domain reach. (PLA Daily. 07 Oct 2026. Page 3. AI empowers development of Reconnaissance UAVs (人工智能赋能无人侦察机发展))

Operations

Joint Civil-Military Coastal Defence

A PLA Daily article **military-civil integration in Coastal Defence** in Shandong Province. The article highlights the joint law enforcement by military and civil agencies and the establishment of a network-based coastal defence monitoring system. The system leverages the national *xueliang* Project (雪亮工程) and ensures comprehensive video surveillance at all sensitive locations, including remote areas. The prefectural joint command centre at Weihai integrates multiple inputs, including satellite navigation, radar, and meteorological data, provides real-time status update of all vessels, and alerts all agencies in case of abnormality. At vital areas, military personnel stand along with local police. (PLA Daily. 07 Oct 2026. Page 2. Military-Civilian Efforts to Ensure Safety(军地联手护平安))

Upgradation of Information Networks

A PLA Daily article highlights the **upgradation of Information networks** in the Tibetan Plateau towards AI Cloud Computing, with centralised monitoring of all information circuits and automated rerouting of circuits, in case of failure. The unit is now focused on improving the quality of information support by providing customised solutions for operational requirements such as exercises and remote deployments, and upgrading technical skills of personnel. Another area of upgradation is providing data support to commanders such as navigation data, coordinates of assault groups and status of aerial fire units. As elsewhere, the greater challenge was the change in mindsets of personnel as

highlighted by two cases. In one instance, while individual components of the unit did well they failed as a system during a validation exercise. In the second instance, a network operator detected a fault and asked the individual units to diagnose the issue and rectify it despite having the capability to identify the fault and guide the supported unit to rectify it. The article adds that these issues have been addressed. (PLA Daily. 05 Oct 2026. Page 1. Paving the way and building bridges in AI Cloud Computing (在数智云端"铺路架桥"))

As the PLA moves towards System of Systems warfare, IT networks along with AI will become the framework around which the PLA will fight. The Information Support Force thus becomes the 'key enabler' and defenders of PLA's cyberspace. While the ISF is upgrading technology and technical skills of personnel, it is also assisting supported units in upgradation and training of personnel.

Training

Manned-Unmanned Exercise by Mine and EOD Squadron of PLAN

A special section in the PLA Daily covers the **evolution of unmanned, intelligent equipment in demining and EOD disposal**. The squadron received a batch of advanced Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Detection equipment, equipped with detection sensors and precise positioning modules, shortly after its reorganisation. Over the next year, personnel learnt about the equipment and employed it for EOD. In the process, they identified limitations in the detection equipment in uneven terrain. The manufacturer and other research institutions were approached directly who developed a new detection mode which enhanced the accuracy of detection. Subsequently, the squadron explored the utilisation of UUVs, which initially failed. The unit analysed the failure, developed a thorough understanding of the environment and integrated land-sea workflow which was shared with the manufacturer. The increasing volume of data generated and the experience was translated into data and algorithmic modelling. The new intelligent search, detection and disposal system integrates detection, automated identification, and precise disposal exploits UGVs and UUVs, reduces the time for explosive disposal by 70 per cent and removes risk to personnel who remain at a safe distance. (PLA Daily. 09 Oct 2026. Page 5. A Smart Transformation: "Pulling Teeth from a Tiger's Jaw"("虎口拔牙"的智胜转型))

EOD - Explosive Ordnance Disposal

UGV - Unmanned Ground Vehicles

UUV - Unmanned Underwater Vehicles

As elsewhere, three recurrent themes stand out in the PLA's equipment modernisation. First is learning process. Induction of equipment, Personnel with a strong background in fundamentals take the lead in learning, understanding and documenting utilisation of equipment for use by others. Second, is the iterative process. The equipment is exploited to its fullest. In the process, faults/limitations are identified and the manufacturer is approached directly by the unit, who upgrades / iterates the equipment product and gives it back to the unit for testing/exploitation. Third comes the advancement, usually through networking the equipment and employing AI.

EOD Simulator Training System

An unidentified brigade of 71 Group Army was issued with **EOD Simulator Training System** last year. The system integrates VR with physical simulation, features dozens of models of regular explosives and hundreds of disposal protocols. It can randomly generate "bombs" with different designs and trigger mechanisms and incorporate interference factors—such as loose wiring, misleading color-coding, or dual-trigger switches — to ensure that every detail closely

mirrors actual conditions. The system can record the sequence, force, and angle of every wire cut made by the EOD specialist, compare it with the device's logic circuit in real-time and automatically generate an assessment report, and provide accurate After Action Reports. The equipment has tripled the frequency of training as against the earlier frequency of a few times in a quarter, reduced costs by 70%, and improved training standards by more than 40%. (ST Daily. 09 Oct 2026. Page 6. Building Confidence for Victory Amidst "Invisible Gunsmoke"("无形硝烟"中增强决胜底气))

VR- Virtual Reality

Unmanned Equipment carryout Runway Repairs

An unidentified Naval Aviation base of STC carried out an **emergency runway repair exercise** recently. Computer systems generated a 3D model of the state of the runway based on imagery from drones and identified location and extent of damages and coordinates of UXO. Where suitable, remotely operated robodogs used laser to destroy UXO in situ while unmanned equipment transported UXO which could not be destroyed in situ, to safe places for disposal. Once the runway was rendered safe, the repair team carried out emegency repairs based on the model generated by computer systems earlier. (ST Daily. 09 Oct 2026. Page 6. Unmanned Systems Spearhead Runway Emergency Repairs (抢修跑道，无人装备打头阵))

UXO - Unexploded Ordnance

Development of Battlefield Simulation and Wargaming Technology

A ST Daily article covers a **recent two-sided wargaming exercise** conducted on a platform developed by Simulation Engineering Team of NUDT and inducted in 2020. Of interest is the capabilities and the history of development. The system integrates and provides a digital twin of live and virtual multiple system located across land, air, sea, space and electromagnetic spectrum, thus allowing it to be used as an 'Intelligent+" wargaming as well as decision support system. In 2022, the system was used at an exercise conducted by a training base during which multiple level command systems employed different types of geographically dispersed systems in operations across land, air, sea, space and electromagnetic spectrum. The system has since been iterated and has generated vast repository of data over multiple exercises.

Inducted in 1985, the first generation equipment, Yinhe Simulation I was developed by Prof Huang Kedi and supported simulation and analysis of complex weapon systems like missiles and simulated accurately a new missile system in 1989. The second generation equipment developed by Qiu Xiaogang, used a High Level Architecture and provided 'system of systems' capability across multiple regions and systems. Based on requirement for third generation system issued in 2017, a team under Yin Quanjun, developed the concept of 'AR-VR integration, AI-driven and cross-domain fusion' and demonstrated proof of concept during an exercise in 2020. The system has been implemented since then. (ST Daily. 09 Oct 2026. Page 6. Three Generations Pass the Torch: Simulating Future Battlefields on Screen (三代接力，在屏幕中预演未来战场))

49th Escort Task Force conducts Exercise

The 49th Escort Task Force held an **exercise on counter-terrorism, anti-piracy and rescue of hijacked vessel**, in the Gulf of Aden recently. The situation depicted was of an unidentified small vessel approaching a merchant vessel at high speed. The PLAN ship *Kunming* initiated Level 1 counter terrorism and anti piracy protocols and rushed to the 'incident' area. SOF personnel onboard *Kunming* fired warning shots at the unidentified small vessel. In the next phase, *Kunming* fired its main gun to warn and interdict the hijacked vessel and forced it to a halt. Subsequently, the SOF team

onboard *Kunming* carried out a search of the hijacked vessel and neutralised the 'pirates' and rescued the complete crew. (PLA Daily. 07 Oct 2026. Page 1. Forging Elite Forces in Distant Waters, Faithfully Safeguarding Peace(远海砺精兵 忠诚卫和平)

Parachute Training by SAR Detachment of PLAN

A Navy **Search and Rescue (SAR) detachment carried out parachute training** at sea recently. According to the team leader, the SAR team jumps with 'ram-air' parachutes to the site, initiates emergency response, carries out situation assessment and coordinates with surface vessels and SAR helicopters for rescue operations. Thi procedure enables quick and efficient response under adverse conditions. (PLA Daily. 08 Oct 2026. Page 2. Parachutes bloom across Blue Sky and Sea(伞花绽放碧海长空))

Orbat

Survey Detachments in Brigades

A PLA Daily article suggests that atleast one of the brigades deployed in Tibetan Plateau has a **survey detachment** (测绘兵) which carried survey operations recently. (PLA Daily. 10 Oct 2026. Page 6. Mapping the Land, Charting the Course (踏遍山河绘经纬))

Survey, Mapping and Navigation Unit (测绘导航分队) of Militia

A ST Daily article reveals that a **Survey, Mapping and Navigation Detachment** (测绘导航分队) of Luyang District in Hefei, Anhui was created from local professional survey and mapping resources. The unit recently trained in reconnaissance, mapping, and precision target measurement, to improve its skills for emergency response and combat operations. (ST Daily. 09 Oct 2026. Page 6. Surveying and Mapping Unit sharpens its Skills(测绘分队 专攻精练))

Recruitment

Recruitment in Revolutionary Base Areas

A PLA Daily article reported **targeted recruiting by 16 decorated units** of CTC from revolutionary base areas during recruitment for this year. The article highlights that the units in collaboration with local People's Armed Forces departments, veteran's affairs bureaus, and memorial sites, developed a "three-in-one" model of targeted recruitment, selection of mentors, and revolutionary education and visited the revolutionary base areas to select personnel. The article attributes the recruitment to the natural affinity of people from revolutionary base areas towards these decorated units. (PLA Daily. 07 Oct 2026. Page 1. Sixteen Decorated Battalions and Companies Travel to the Birthplaces of Heroes to Enlist New Recruits (十六个荣誉营连前往英雄故土征接新兵))

While the article attributes the special recruitment towards the revolutionary spirit of people in these areas, it is also a fact that these areas are amongst the least developed areas in China with Xi Jinping calling for special efforts to develop these areas.

Defence Cooperation

Mission Harmony 2026

PLAN's Hospital Ship *Auspicious Ark* conducted its medical mission at the Guinean capital of Conakry from 03 to 10 Oct 2026 and treated more than 4,000 patients. The ship also sent specialised medical and mobile clinic teams to the China-Guinea Friendship Hospital. The Guinean PM Amadou Oury Bah visited the ship, expressed his gratitude and expressed hope for greater cooperation in future. This is the first visit of a PLAN Hospital ship to Guinea. (PLA Daily. 06 Oct 2026. Page 2. Chinese Navy Hospital Ship "Peace Ark" Arrives in Guinea(中国海军"吉祥方舟"号医院船抵达几内亚). China Daily. 10 Oct 2026. Chinese naval hospital ship concludes medical mission in Guinea)

Thank you once again for joining this week. Have a great week ahead. See you again next week.