

Taiwan launches massive Han Kuang war games

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Taiwan began its annual Han Kuang military exercises yesterday, the largest held on the island in preparation for war with mainland China. Portrayed in the media as a defensive measure, these drills are in fact part of ongoing war preparations led by the US which is seeking to subjugate and eliminate China as a major economic competitor.

Taiwan, formally known as the Republic of China, holds the Han Kuang exercises in two separate stages: The first took place from April 11 to 24, involving tabletop war games and computer simulations. The second part currently taking place and running through August 14 involves live-fire exercises and other military drills.

Held since 1984, this year's Han Kuang involves the mobilization of active-duty troops alongside approximately 20,000 reservists. According to the Defense Ministry, the drills will test soldiers' combat readiness across all branches of the military, rapid deployment, anti-amphibious landing operations and prolonged warfare drills. The exercises will involve fighter jet dispersals and emergency deployment of naval vessels. Taipei will also test moving weapons production lines and converting civilian factories for military use.

Taking place alongside the current war exercises is the mass mobilization of civilians throughout the island as part of the Urban Resilience All-Out Defense Mobilization Exercises, first conducted last year. According to the *Focus Taiwan*, a government source last month stated that the drills will coordinate responses among different administrative regions.

The purpose of the civilian drills is to prepare the public for protracted warfare, not unlike what has taken place in Ukraine. Giving a glimpse of what is being prepared, National Taiwan University political science associate professor Chen Shih-min stated in the *Taipei*

Times, "Public morale cannot be so fragile that people would want to surrender after just two or three days without electricity and water."

The Han Kuang drills are also being presented as a counter to Beijing's so-called "grey zone" tactics, in which China conducts coast guard patrols and exercises in waters around Taiwan. This is meant to give the impression that Beijing is unilaterally destabilizing the region, with Washington and Taipei hypocritically denouncing these actions as preparations for an invasion.

Major General Lu Wen-yuan, head of the Joint Operations Division, claimed at a press briefing, "Chinese forces use routine annual joint military exercises as cover for large-scale landing training, concealing plans to attack Taiwan while completing final assault preparations."

Yet the US and its allies conduct precisely these same types of activities in order to challenge the "One China" policy, which states Taiwan is a part of China. Formally, the US and nearly every other country adheres to this policy and maintains diplomatic relations solely with Beijing.

Under the phony pretext of "freedom of navigation," Washington deploys naval vessels through the Taiwan Strait while encouraging independence sentiment in Taiwanese ruling circles. Massive military exercises are routinely held on China's doorstep including countries like South Korea, Japan and the Philippines.

At the end of last month, the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), Washington's de facto embassy on the island, highlighted coordination between the US and Taiwanese coast guards, a rare move meant to further question the "One China" policy. The AIT stated, "The United States ?appreciates Taiwan's partnership in maritime security and safety, and supports Taiwan's

meaningful contributions on global issues including maritime law enforcement exchange and international cooperation.”

Historically, Taiwan has been a part of China, which incorporated the island into its territory in the 17th century as the Qing dynasty solidified power following the end of the Ming dynasty. For two hundred years, Taiwan was part of China until it was annexed and brutally colonized by Japan in 1895 following the First Sino-Japanese War.

After World War II, US imperialism utilized the “One China” policy for its own benefit, first using it to isolate Beijing after the Chinese Revolution while recognizing Taipei for years as the sole legitimate government of China. Washington then formally switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing in 1979 in order to drive a wedge deeper between Beijing and the Soviet Union, while opening up the Chinese working class to exploitation by big business.

No longer politically useful, Washington has all but dispensed with the “One China” policy. Washington’s goal is to goad Beijing into attacking Taiwan, much as it did with Russia in Ukraine. Beijing is acutely aware that if Taiwan were to declare independence, it would set a precedence for dividing up Chinese territory while providing US imperialism with a base of operations for further attacks on China.

War planning centered in Washington involves turning Taiwan into a “porcupine,” drawing in Chinese forces and bogging them down in a quagmire. The US has publicly acknowledged the presence of some 500 military trainers in Taiwan.

Furthermore, exchanges between the US and Taiwanese militaries have led to the former pushing for stronger inclusion of several strategies that are now being practiced in the Han Kuang drills. According to *Focus Taiwan* in April, a senior Taiwanese defense official stated that under US guidance Taipei will conduct Combined Arms Rehearsal, confirmation briefs, support rehearsals and battle drill or standard operating procedure rehearsals.

What these mean respectively are ensuring units operate in sync on the battlefield; requiring subordinates to inform officers how they plan to carry out missions; coordinating with support services; and confirming troops are familiar with specific procedures.

Furthermore, Washington has pushed for the sale of drones, High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), and other weaponry designed to inflict maximum damage on Chinese forces. Taiwan’s General Lu Wen-yuan stated, “The military will continue to draw on relevant combat experience from the Russia-Ukraine and US-Iran wars and integrate drones into its overall strategic planning based on the requirements of a potential war in the Taiwan Strait.”

Under the first Trump administration, total arms sales to Taiwan reached \$US18.3 billion. Last December, the administration approved an \$US11.4 billion deal to Taiwan, the largest foreign military sales package in history. Trump is now expected to send a \$US14 billion package to Congress for approval, senior Republican lawmaker Michael McCaul said on Tuesday in Taipei. The package is expected to include additional drones, HIMARS and Javelin anti-tank missiles.

Taipei intends to procure some 100,000 drones by 2027 as part of the so-called “Taiwan Dome” or T-Dome proposed by President Lai Ching-te last October. This includes domestic development and production. Taipei has signed separate agreements for the development of drones with both Washington and Japan, with the latter focusing on ensuring supply chains for drone manufacturing.



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