



# **China's Activities in East China Sea, Pacific Ocean, and Sea of Japan**

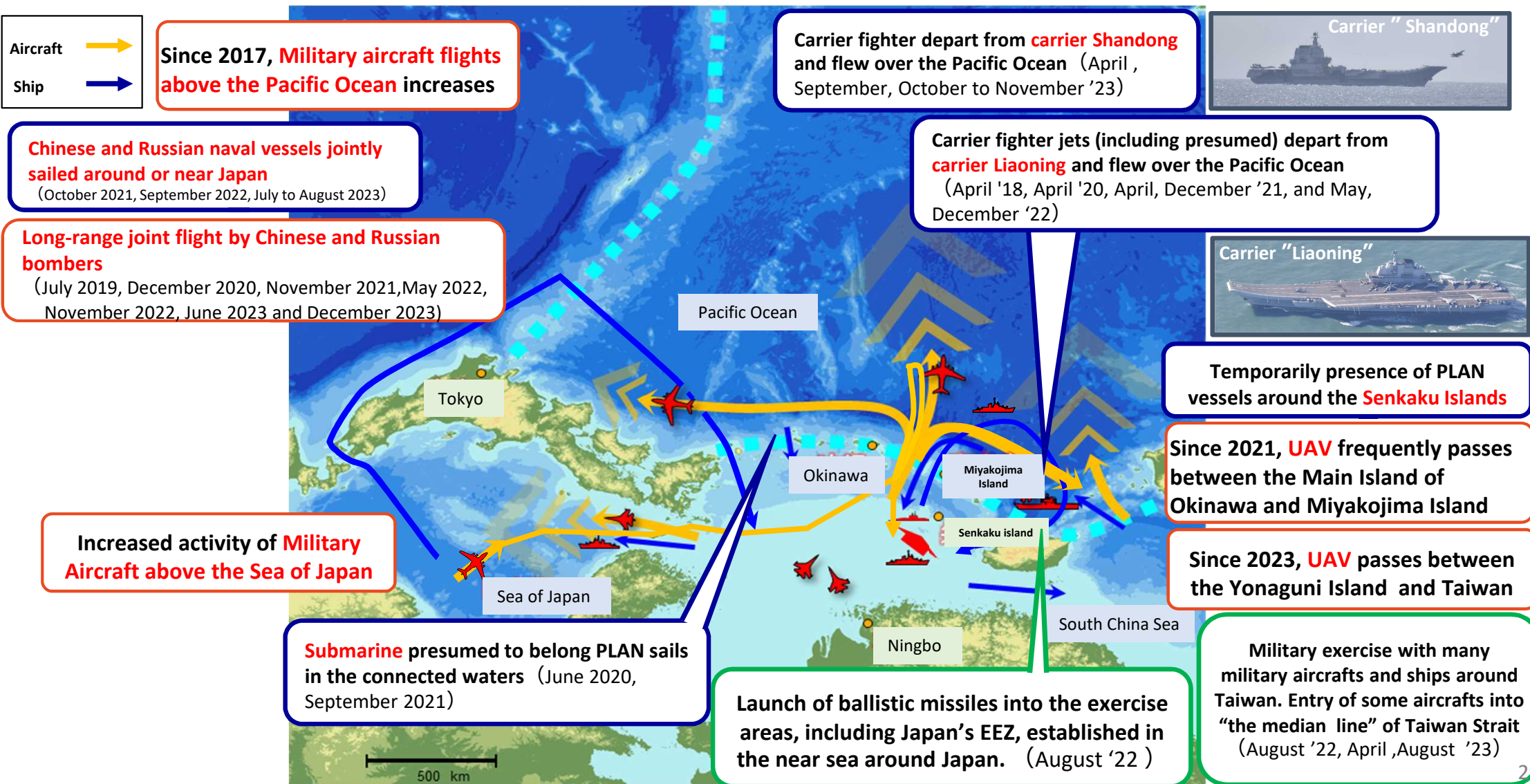


**March 2024  
Japan Ministry of Defense**



# Summary: PLA Activities around Japan

- People's Liberation Army (PLA) have **rapidly expanded and intensified their activities** in the maritime and aerial domains, including **the escalation of unilateral activities**.
- China seems to attempt to make its activities routine **in the Sea of Japan** and **Pacific Ocean** in addition to **the sea area around the Senkaku Islands**. There is also a probability that the activities in the Sea of Japan and Pacific Ocean will be **further expanded and intensified**.



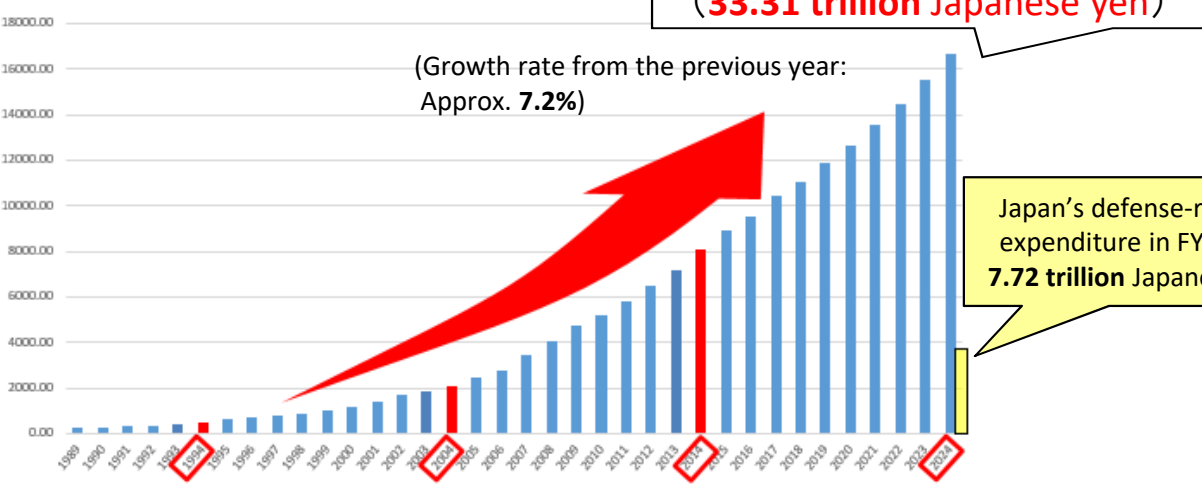
# Enhancement of Military Power

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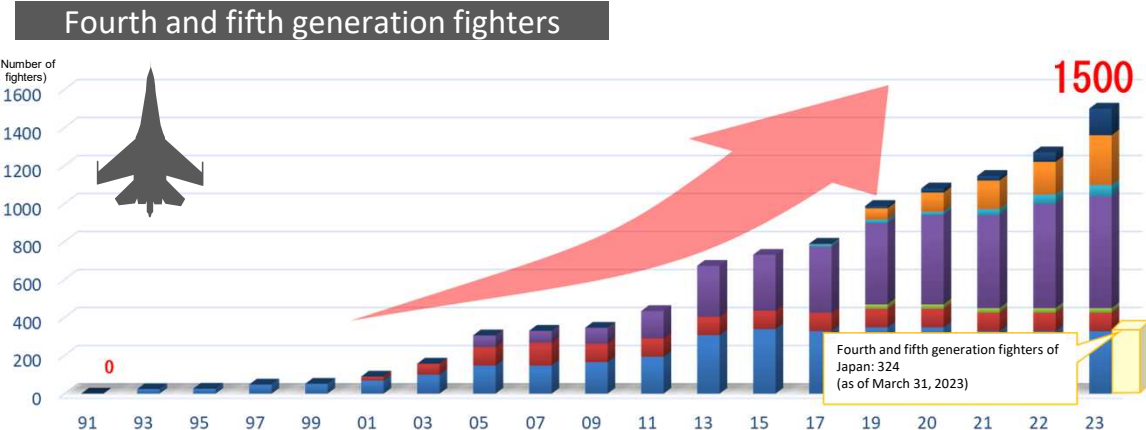
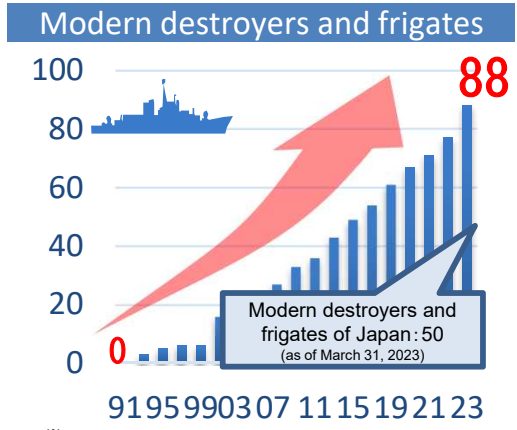
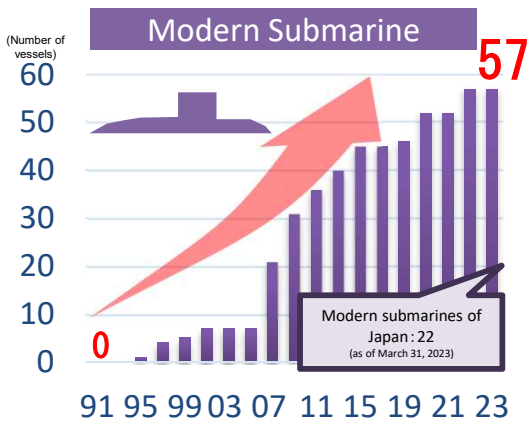
- China has been enhancing its military power, especially its **naval or air forces** and its **nuclear or missile forces**, extensively and rapidly due to the increase of its defense budget by a significant margin.
- It is noted that the amount of the announced defense budget is considered to be only a part of its actual military expenditures and does not include foreign equipment procurement costs or R&D expenses.

China's Announced Defense Budget

(100 million yuan)



China's announced military budget has increased rapidly. It increased **approx. 32-fold over the past 30 years, approx. 7.9-fold over the past 20 years and approx. 2.1-fold over the past 10 years.**



※ Total number of Jin-class, Shang-class, Song-class, Yuan-class and Kilo-class submarines

※1 Total number of Renhai-class, Luhai-class, Luhai-class, Sovremenny-class, Luyang-class, Luzhou-class destroyers, and Jiangwei-class frigates  
 ※2 Additionally, China also has 72 Jiangdao-class corvettes (2022).

■ Su-27(J-11) ■ Su-30 ■ Su-35 ■ J-10 ■ J-15 ■ J-16 ■ J-20

# **East China Sea, Pacific Ocean and Sea of Japan**

# PLA's Activities in East China Sea

- **PLA Navy** (PLAN) **vessels** have been conducting **operations in the East China Sea (ECS)** **continuously and actively**. Moreover, these are **continuously operating in the areas near Japan's Senkaku Islands**.
- PLA Air Force (PLAAF) aircrafts have actively flown in airspace closer to Japan's Southwestern Islands (including the Okinawa Island and the Senkaku Islands)

## Activities of PLAAF aircrafts

### 【Activities of PLA aircrafts】

These are thought to include warning and surveillance, combat air patrols (CAPs), training, and such activities possibly intended to operate the "ECS ADIZ."

### 【Activities of UAVs】

They flew past alone in the air space between the Okinawa and Miyakojima Islands.

- Jul. 2022 : TB-001 (reconnaissance/attack UAV)
- Aug. 2022 : TB-001 and BZK-005 (reconnaissance UAV)
- Jan. 2023 : BZK-005 and WZ-7 (reconnaissance UAV)

## Activities around the Senkaku Islands

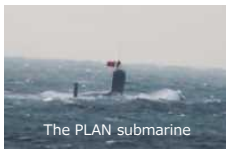
PLAN vessels **continuously operating in the areas near Senkaku Islands**.

- [Jun. 2016] A Jiangkai I-class frigate became the first ever PLAN combatant vessel to enter the contiguous zone.
- [Jul. 2022] A Jiangkai II-class frigate passed into the contiguous zone.



A Jiangkai I-class frigate

[Jan. 2018] A Shang-class submerged submarine and a Jiangkai II-class frigate passed into the contiguous zone

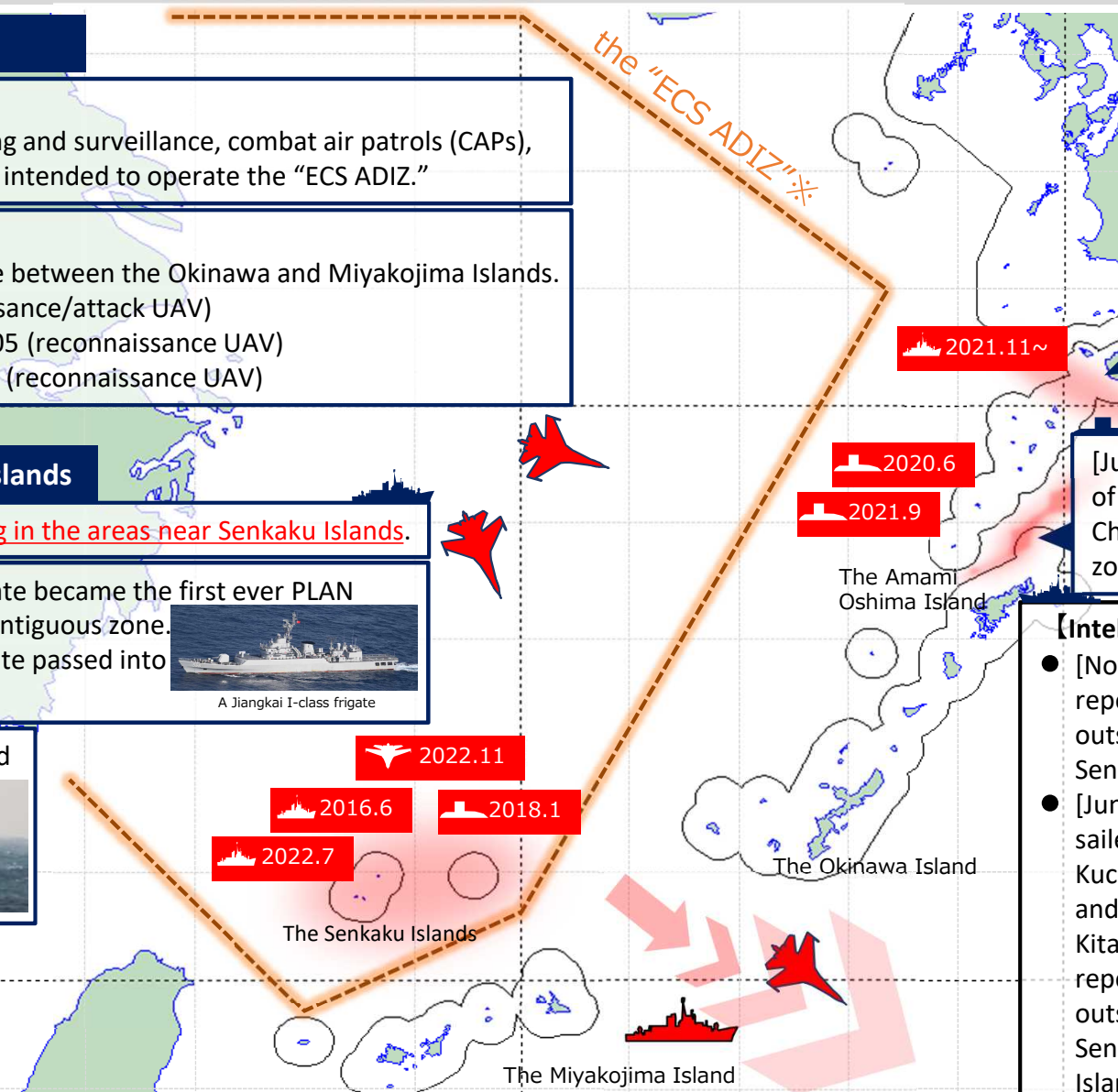


The PLAN submarine

[Nov. 2022] one presumed PLA UAV flew from the ECS, after passing south, and flew off in the direction of the continent.

※Descriptions and locations of each event are solely for illustration purpose

※China established the "ECS ADIZ" including the Senkaku Islands misleadingly indicated as if they were China's territory. China requires aircraft flying in the zone to abide by rules set by its Ministry of National Defense and claims to take military "defensive emergency measures" against aircraft failing to do so, unduly infringing on the principle of freedom of overflight.



## 【Survey ships】

From Nov. 2021, a PLAN Shupang-class survey ship sailed through territorial waters near Yakushima, Kuchinoerabujima and Kuchinoshima.

- ① Nov. 2021    ② Apr. 2022    ③ Jul. 2022
- ④ Sep. 2022    ⑤ Nov. 2022    ⑥ Dec. 2022
- ⑦ Feb. 2023    ⑧ Jun. 2023    ⑨ Sep. 2023



Shupang-class survey ship

[Jun. 2020] [Sep. 2021] Submerged transit of a submarine presumed to belong to China was confirmed in the contiguous zone surrounding Amami Oshima Island

## 【Intelligence Gathering Vessels (AGIs)】

- [Nov. 2015] A PLAN Dongdiao-class AGI repeatedly navigated back and forth outside of the contiguous zone south of the Senkaku Islands
- [Jun. 2016] A PLAN Dongdiao-class AGI sailed in territorial waters near Kuchinoerabujima and Yakushima Islands, and then passed contiguous zone north of Kitadaitojima Island. Subsequently, It repeatedly conducted eastwest passages outside the contiguous zone south of the Senkaku Islands.



Dongdiao-class AGI

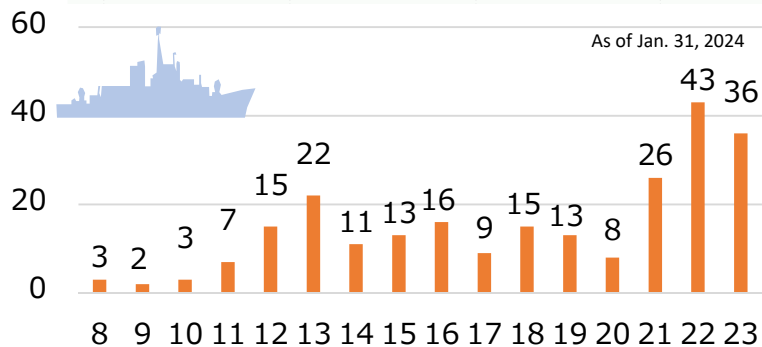
# PLA's Advancement into the Pacific Ocean

- PLAN combat vessels continue to transit the waters near Japan to advance into the Pacific Ocean (PO) with high frequency.
- As of PLA aircrafts, advances into the PO, passing between Okinawa/ Miyako Island, have become more active since 2017. The types and flight patterns of aircraft (including UAVs) passing through the airspace have also diversified.

## PLAN vessels

### 【PLAN combat vessels】

- PLAN vessels advance to the Pacific with high frequency
- More diverse routes
  - ①The Soya Strait, ②The Tsugaru Strait,
  - ③The Osumi Starit,
  - ④Amami Oshima/ Yokoatejima Island
  - ⑤Okinawa/ Miyako Island,
  - ⑥Yonaguni/ Iriomote Island,
  - ⑦Yonaguni/ Taiwan Island,



The number of Japan's press releases that PLAN combatant vessels and aircraft carriers operate around Southeast Islands, Soya Strait and Tsugaru Strait (Fiscal Year)

※Descriptions and locations of each event are solely for illustration purpose

## PLAN Aircraft Carriers

### 【CV "Liaoning"】

- Since 2016, advancements into PO have been confirmed eight times.
  - Landings/takeoffs of aircrafts (including carrier-based fighters) were frequently observed.
- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| ①Dec. 2016 | ②Apr. 2018 |
| ③Jun. 2019 | ④Apr. 2020 |
| ⑤Apr. 2021 | ⑥Dec. 2021 |
| ⑦May 2022  | ⑧Dec. 2022 |



CV "Liaoning"

### 【CV "Shandong"】

- Since 2023, advancements into PO have been confirmed three times.
  - Landings/takeoffs of aircrafts (including carrier-based fighters) were observed every time.
- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| ①Apr. 2023 | ②Sep. 2023 |
| ③Oct. 2023 |            |



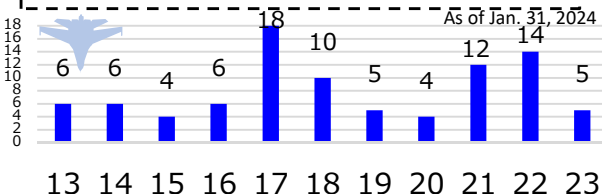
CV "Shandong"

## PLA aircrafts

### 【Flights through Okinawa and Miyako Island】

- More diverse types/routes of aircraft

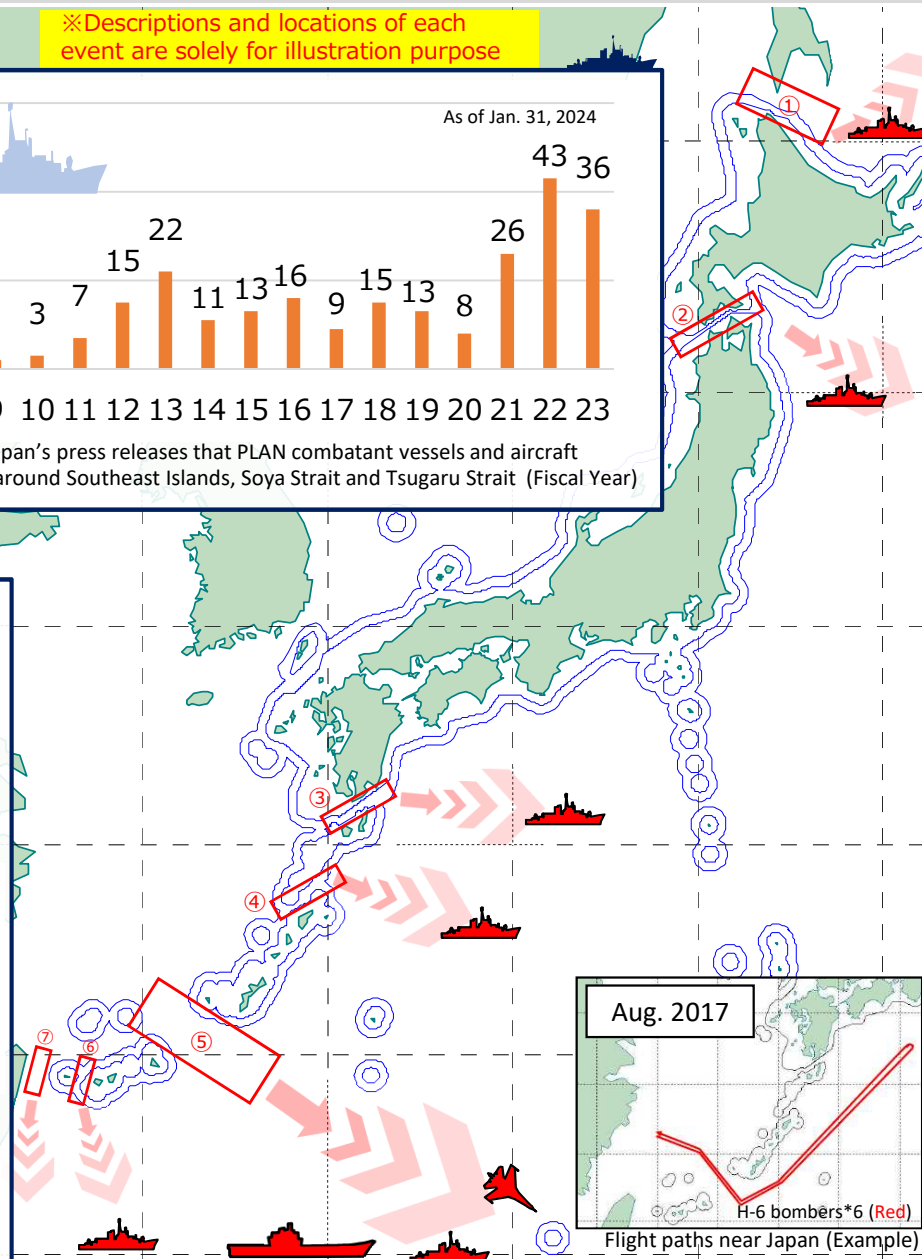
Y-8 AEW/SIGINT/EW, Y-9 SIGINT, Tu-154 SIGINT, H-6 bombers, Su-30 fighter, TB-001 UAV, BZK-005 UAV, WZ-7 UAV



The number of Japan's press releases on PLA aircraft's flights between Okinawa/Miyako Islands (Fiscal Year)

### 【Flights through Yonaguni Island and Taiwan】

- In Apr. 2023, PLA aircraft(UAV(est.))'s passages were confirmed for the first time.



Aug. 2017

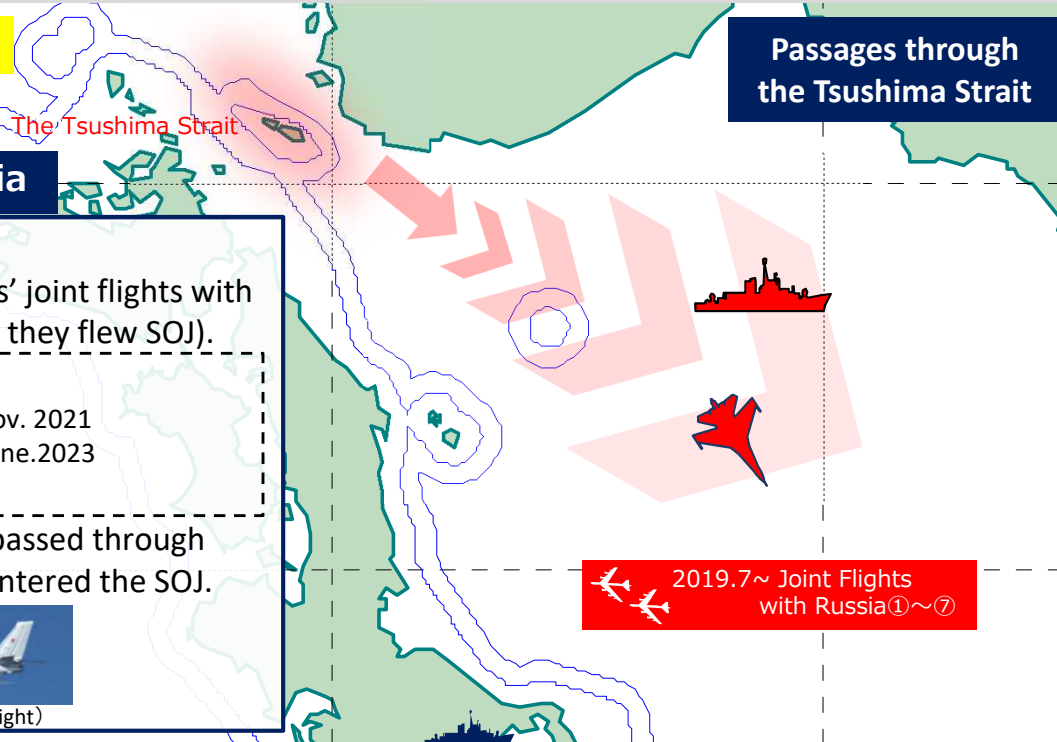
H-6 bombers\*6 (Red)

Flight paths near Japan (Example)

# PLA's Activities in the Sea of Japan

- In the Sea of Japan (SOJ), PLAN and PLAAF have intensified activities, including joint activities with Russia.
- PLAN combat vessels have advanced into the SOJ on some occasions (including trainings), and recently, PLAN AGIs passing through the Tsushima Strait have frequently been confirmed.
- PLA aircraft have been increasing their activities in the SOJ since Jan. 2016, when PLA aircraft's passage through the Tsushima Strait was confirmed for the first time.

※Descriptions and locations of each event are solely for illustration purpose



## Joint Activities with Russia

**【PLA aircrafts】**

- Since 2019, PLA made bombers' joint flights with Russia seven times (every time they flew SOJ).

**【Record of the joint flights】**

1. July. 2019	2. Dec. 2020	3. Nov. 2021
4. May. 2022	5. Nov. 2022	6. June. 2023
7. Dec. 2023		

- On one occasion, PLA aircraft passed through Russian airspace and directly entered the SOJ.

PLA H-6 (left) and Russian Tu-95MS (right)

**【PLAN vessels】**

- Since 2013, the China-Russia bilateral exercise "Joint Sea" has also been conducted in the SOJ on a regular basis.
- After "Joint Sea 2021", they conducted the first joint navigation.
- In Sep. 2022, PLAN vessels joined "Vostok 2022" for the first time. After that, they conducted the second joint navigation.
- In July. 2023, Russian Navy joined PLA's exercise "Northern Interaction 2023." After that, they conducted the third joint navigation.

Russian Navy vessels (left), PLAN vessels (right)

Source: Joint Staff (Oct. 2021)

## Passages through the Tsushima Strait

