

N *Chinese Soldiers Storm Beach in Military Landing Drill Amid Taiwan War Tension*

John Feng

The Chinese Navy released footage of a simulated beach assault on Tuesday as state media says President Xi Jinping is preparing for wars on multiple fronts.



Getty Images File photo: People's Liberation Army soldiers.

Chinese Communist Party newspaper Global Times also voiced its support for the release of a so-called "Taiwan secessionists" blacklist, just two weeks after a former Taiwanese intelligence officer warned that such an announcement would be a precursor of a cross-strait armed conflict.

The official People's Liberation Army video was captured off the coast of China's southern province of Guangdong, where joint armed forces exercises are being held between November 17 and 30, the state-run tabloid said.

*Watch: #PLA Navy recently conducted amphibious assault drills offshore of South China's Guangdong Province, setting up multiple records including "fastest speed" and "longest combat range."
pic.twitter.com/m8bxtBn9D4*

Global Times (@globaltimesnews) November 17, 2020

In the footage, large amphibious landing craft can be seen offloading armored vehicles and soldiers as the combined arms forces storm the unidentified beach. Citing a military expert, Global Times said Saturday that the Central Military Commission, of which Xi is the chair, had requested improvements to the PLA's joint combat capabilities.

The exercises were in response to the "intensifying situation and increasing risk of military conflicts" in sensitive regions including the Taiwan Strait, South China Sea and China-India border, the last of which sees a continuing stalemate following this summer's bloody clashes in Ladakh.

The Chinese leadership has never ruled out the possibility of resorting to military force in its efforts to reunify the self-ruled democratic island of Taiwan, which in recent years has been emboldened by the United States under the presidency of Donald Trump.

Increased talk of war from both official and unofficial sources in China, coupled with an unprecedented number of Chinese warplane incursions into Taiwanese airspace since September, has left observers uncertain about the transition period before President-elect Joe Biden takes office.

"The People's Liberation Army conducted intensive military exercises in the Taiwan Straits [sic] region recently," the hawkish Beijing-controlled newspaper said in a recent editorial.

"One of the purposes was to deal with challenges during the U.S. government transition. Once the U.S. and Taiwan island touch the bottom line, the mainland will fight a war that it is fully prepared for," it said.

Naming names

After Hong Kong's pro-China newspaper Ta Kung Pao reported Sunday that Beijing was mulling the release of a so-called "Taiwan secessionist" blacklist, Global Times lent its support to the idea.

In the mold of the new national security law for Hong Kong, those deemed to be separatists, and those found to be funding related activities, would be arrested and charged under China's Anti-Secession Law of 2005, National Security Law of 2015, and Criminal Law of 1997.

While leaders such as Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, who was elected to a second term in January, are all but certain to appear on such a list, the newspaper singled out her premier, Su Tseng-cang, as "very likely" to be included.

"Su is a typical extreme, die-hard Taiwan secessionist ideologue who holds strong hatred against the Chinese mainland," the state-owned publication said of Tsai's chief minister, who belongs to the ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

The newspaper likened the mooted "wanted list" to classing pro-independence thinkers as "war criminals" who have become a "blatant challenge to the mainland's bottom line of safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

"Formulating the blacklist is an important move to combat and contain Taiwan secessionist forces," the newspaper said.

"Those on the list will be punished in accordance with the laws and may face criminal prosecution."

"That means they will no longer be able to set foot in Hong Kong, Macao and the Chinese mainland, and it will also be very dangerous for them to travel to other countries and regions," it explained.

"China will never allow its island of Taiwan to be separated from the country. Those extremists who commit crimes to their country and people will pay the price, sooner or later."

Forewarned

Last month, Lee Tien-tuo, a retired army colonel and former intelligence officer with Taiwan's National Security Bureau, warned of the implications of a hypothetical separatists blacklist.

In an interview with Hong Kong's China Review News Agency on October 30, Lee said a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would be preceded by two actions: the release of a list of "Taiwan separatist" war criminals; and the ripping up of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, which Beijing signed with Tsai's predecessor, Ma Ying-jeou, in 2010.

Uncertainty over the United States' continued support for Taipei while under new leadership may be another motivating factor, although thought leaders and national security experts in Taiwan expect similar reassurances from Washington under President-elect Biden.