

The United States and Indonesian militaries began annual joint combat exercises on Indonesia's Sumatra Island, joined for the first time by partakers from other nations, betokening stronger ties amid growing maritime activity by China in the Indo-Pacific region. The joint drill was opened by Flynn, the commanding general of the US Army Pacific and Indonesia's military chief General Andika Perkasa on 3rd August in Baturaja, a coastal town in South Sumatra province.

Wakasad Hadiri Pembukaan Latma Super Garuda Shield 2022

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— TNI AD (@tni_ad) [August 3, 2022](#)

Garuda Shield, the annual military training, has been taking place since 2009, but this year's drill is the largest ever amid rising tension with China in the region. The macroscale drill which took place on 3rd August had participants from several other countries making it the largest ever. The exercise featured more than 5,000 soldiers from the US, Indonesia and other nations. Australia, Japan and Singapore joined the drill for the first time, said U.S Embassy in Jakarta in a statement. Furthermore, other participating nations included Canada, India, France, the Republic of Korea, Timor Leste, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Malaysia.

US Embassy in a statement said "the exercises are designed to strengthen interoperability, capability, trust and cooperation in support of free and open Indo-Pacific."

"It's a symbol of the US-Indonesia bond and the growing relationship between land forces in this consequential region." Charles Flynn, said in the statement. "Because land forces are the glue that binds the region's security architecture together". The exercise fence in Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine drills and will last until August 14.

In retaliation to the US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the self-governing Taiwan, which China claims as part of its territory to be annexed by force if necessary. The planned two-week drills have begun since the Chinese Defence Ministry said that it would conduct a

series of targeted military operations to “safeguard national sovereignty”.

Besides, China has also been increasingly decisive over its claim to the entire South China Sea. U.S Gen Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the number of intercepts by Chinese aircraft and ships in the Pacific region with the US and other partner forces has increased significantly over the past five years and the number of unsafe interactions has risen by similar proportions.

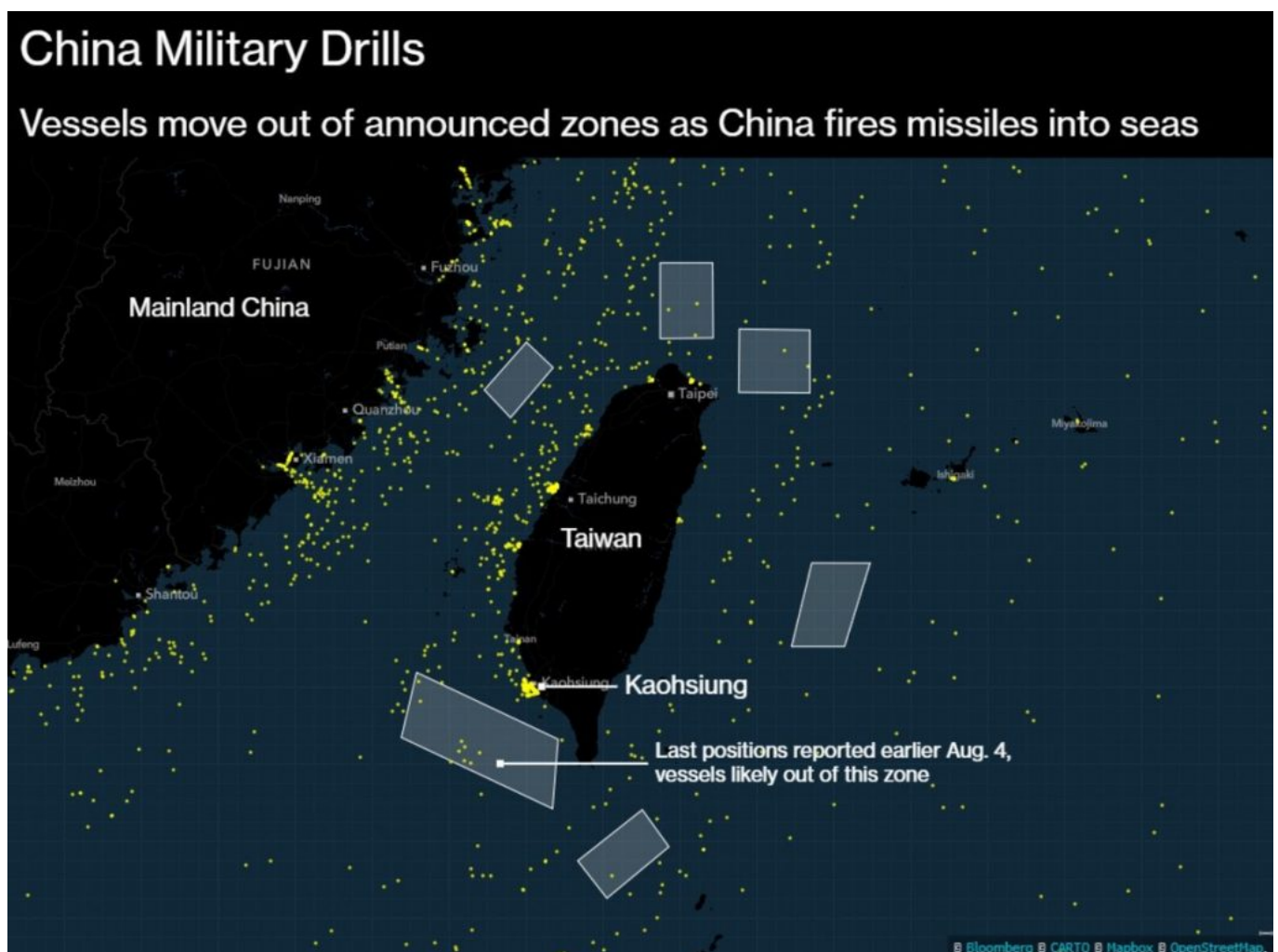


Image source: Bloomberg

According to Milley, Indonesia is strategically censorious to the region and has always been a salient US partner. Earlier this year, the US granted a \$13.9bn sale of advanced fighter jets to Indonesia. Also, in December 2021, an agreement for expanded joint naval drills between the US and Indonesia was signed by Antony Blinken, the Secretary of State.

Despite the fact that Indonesia and China enjoy favourable relations, Indonesia has expressed its apprehension over Chinese encroachment into its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea, which China claims in totality.

With the arrival of Pelosi in Taiwan, the high-ranking American official visited the self-governing Island in 25 years, just in time for the US-Indonesian military drills.

With the US and other democracies in the region, the Japan Ground Self Defence Force is participating for the first time in the exercise and all the partakers support “free and open” Indo-pacific vision of security and trade.

The joint drill is seen as a threat by China. Chinese media has accused the US of forming an Indo-Pacific alliance analogue to NATO in order to intentionally provoke conflict.

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