

# CHINA'S ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN IN THE PLA

Since the launch of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign in 2012, **hundreds of People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers** across services and command levels have been investigated for "serious violations of discipline and law." Initially focused on graft and procurement abuses, the campaign has progressively evolved into a **mechanism for enforcing political loyalty, strengthening command discipline, and consolidating centralized control** over the PLA's senior leadership.

## FROM GRAFT TO COMMAND DISCIPLINE?

Mid-2023

### ROCKET FORCE CRACKDOWN

Anti-corruption probes intensify within the Rocket Force, targeting senior commanders and procurement networks linked to missile forces. Commander Li Yuchao, is investigated and later expelled.

### DEFENSE MINISTRY REMOVALS

Former defence ministers **Li Shangfu** and **Wei Fenghe** are formally expelled from the CCP and the PLA for "serious violations of discipline and law," confirming corruption probes tied to weapons procurement and missile systems.

Jun 2024

Sept 2023-2024

### STATE-OWNED DEFENSE COMPANIES TARGETED

Anti-corruption enforcement expands from the PLA into the **military-industrial base**, targeting executives linked to missile programs, aerospace systems, and PLA procurement chains.

### EXPANDED SENIOR-LEVEL CRACKDOWN

**He Weidong** and **Miao Hua** are expelled from the CCP and the PLA, along with **7 high-ranking officials** in the navy, armed police and the PLA's Eastern Theater force (Taiwan operations).

Oct 2025

Jan 2026

### TOP CMC INVESTIGATIONS

CMC members **Zhang Youxia** and **Liu Zhenli** are placed under investigation — an unprecedented move that pushes the anti-corruption campaign into the core of China's military command.

## TOP MILITARY LEADERSHIP UNDER PROBES

The **Central Military Commission (CMC)** is the PLA's highest command body, overseeing military strategy, force management, and operational control across the armed forces. Since 2023, multiple CMC members and former members have been **removed or placed under investigation**, underscoring the extension of the anti-corruption campaign into the PLA's highest decision-making body.

### CMC LEADERSHIP JAN. 2026



**XI JINPING**

CMC Chairman



**ZHANG YOUXIA**

Vice Chairman; 20th Politburo member; Former head of the CMC Equipment Development Department; "Shaanxi Gang" Faction



**HE WEIDONG**

Former Vice Chairman; Former 20th Politburo member; "Fujian Clique Faction"



**ZHANG SHENGMIN**

Current Vice Chairman; Secretary of the CMC Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CCDI); Former political commissar of the PLA Rocket Force



**MIAO HUA**

Former head of the CMC Political Work Department; Former political commissar of the PLA ground force and navy; "Fujian Clique" Faction



**LI SHANGFU**

Former Minister of National Defense; Former head of the CMC Equipment Development Department



**LIU ZHENLI**

Chief of staff of the CMC Joint Staff Department

- Active member
- Removed
- Under Investigation

# WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR THE PLA?

2027 will mark two major milestones for the Chinese leadership: the **PLA's centenary** and the run-up to the **21st Party Congress**, where a leadership reshuffle and a likely fourth term for Xi Jinping will be on the agenda. As the anti-corruption campaign shifts from targeting graft to enforcing command discipline, it raises pressing questions about its impact on **PLA combat readiness, procurement reliability, and modernization goals** - especially as 2027 is widely seen as a key capability benchmark for **Taiwan contingencies**.

## PLA MODERNIZATION GOALS

2027 → 2035 → 2049

Improve Joint Integrated Combat Capabilities

Complete Basic Modernization

Build a World-Class Military

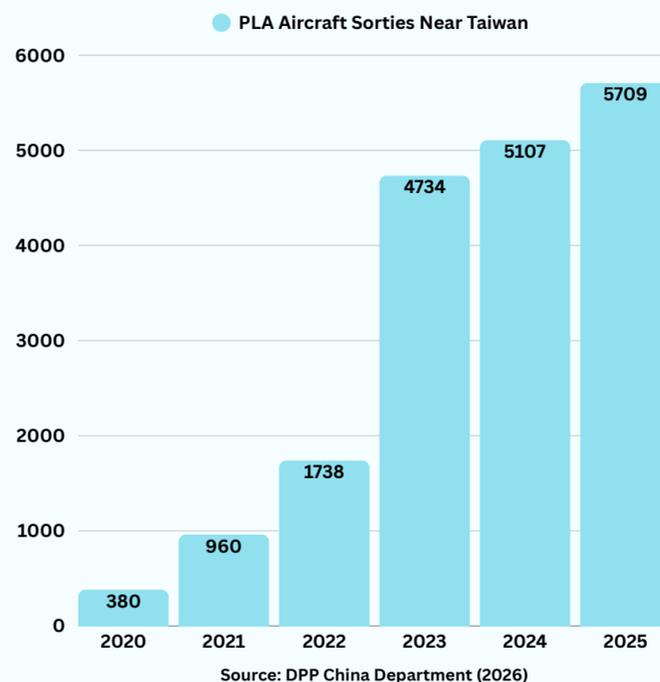
## DEFENSE INDUSTRY IMPACT

-10%

Procurement disruptions linked to anti-corruption contributed to a **10% drop in China's major defense firms' arms revenues** in 2024.

## WEAKENED COMBAT READINESS ?

- Despite senior-level purges, the PLA's **operational tempo** appears largely intact.
- Heightened political discipline may **narrow the space for dissenting or risk-averse professional advice** within the PLA command system.



## CLOSER TO CONFLICT?

Chinese military aircraft incursions around Taiwan have surged nearly **15-fold** over the past five years, reflecting a shift from episodic activity to routine, high-frequency operations.

## TAIWAN-U.S. COOPERATION

In response to sustained PLA pressure and the growing focus on 2027 as a key capability benchmark, **U.S. and Taiwanese forces** have expanded joint planning, interoperability efforts, and firepower coordination to strengthen deterrence and defense preparedness.

