



NDIA's Business &  
Technology Magazine

**INTERNATIONAL**

# JUST IN: Lack of U.S. Participation in Taiwan Military Exercise a Concern, Experts Say

**7/14/2025**

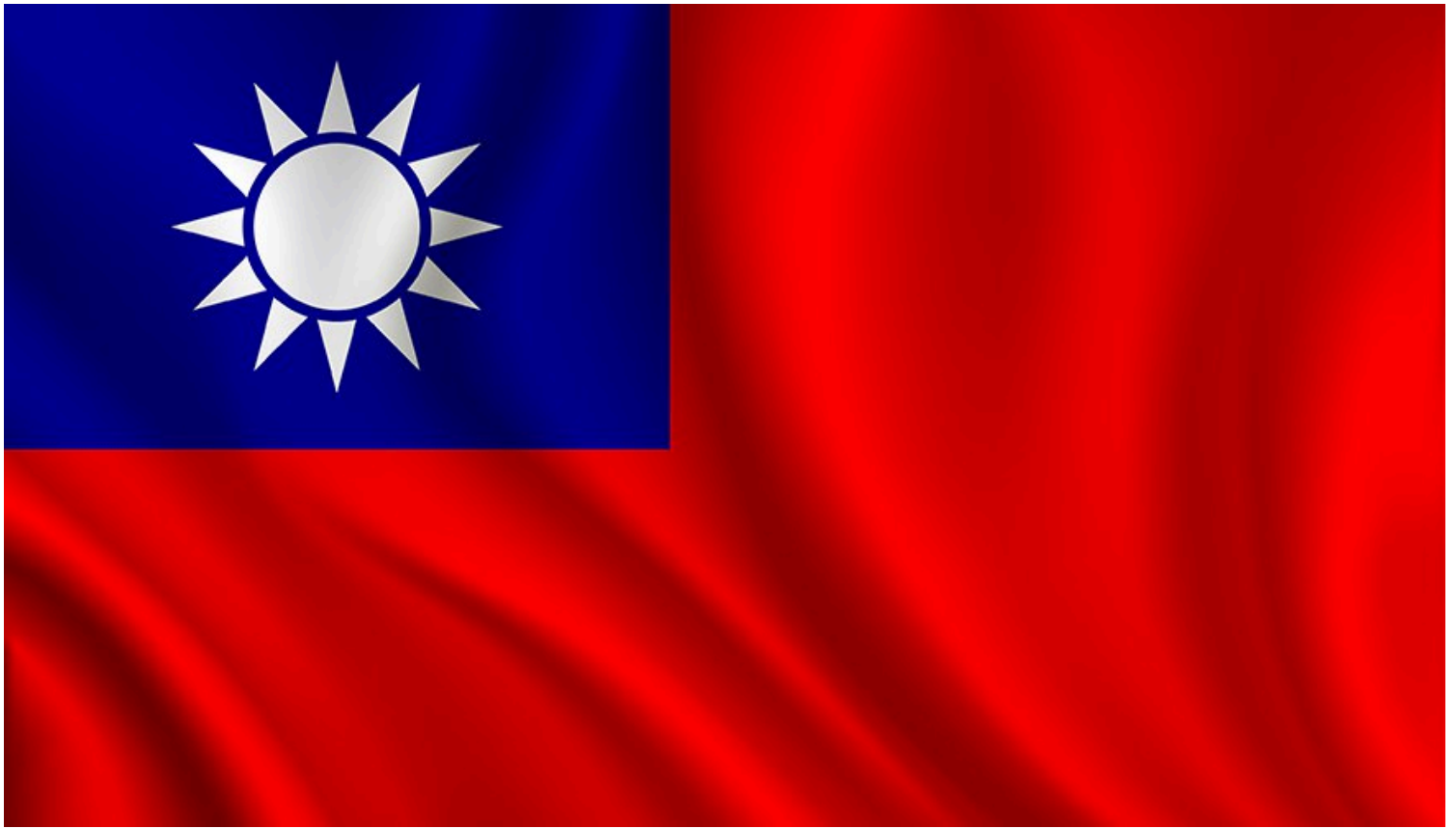
By [Sabina Lum](#)

[Share](#)

[Tweet](#)

[Email](#)

[Share](#)



iStock illustration

Taiwan's largest military exercise recently launched its biggest iteration yet, but it still lacks crucial U.S. participation, experts said.

The 41st annual exercise, called Han Kuang, began July 9 and kicked off 10 days of live fire drills incorporating some 22,000 reservists, making it one of the longest and largest in Taiwan's history.

The exercise, a simulated response to Chinese aggression, has a different theme every year. This year's is a 2027 scenario where a gray zone activity elevates into a military conflict, said Riley Walters, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

The gray zone theme reflects the ever-evolving threat of Chinese provocation in the region, Walters said during a panel hosted by the Hudson Institute July 11. "Taiwan, Philippines, Japan — many of these countries today are currently facing the threat of Chinese non-military action against their territories, whether it's through their coast guard or maritime militia."

Bryan Clark, senior fellow and director of the Center for Defense Concepts and Technology at the Hudson Institute, said grading Han Kuang's success means "looking to see if there's really an effort to deal with the ramp-up to conflict — are they doing a realistic effort to deal with the likely escalation of presence and the escalation of activity pre-invasion?"

However, part of its success could also hinge on U.S. participation, which is lacking, the panel discussed. The United States' absence from Han Kuang not only limits its effectiveness, but also incurs heavy costs in the event of an actual invasion scenario, they said.

Mark Montgomery, senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, noted that the exercise is not

bilateral.

“As a result, it’s not developing the bilateral skills that are absolutely necessary,” he said. “If we went to war, the Taiwanese and American forces would be de-conflicted at best, instead of the next level of coordinated or integrated or unified.”

Support from the United States during an invasion would likely include a combination of an inundation of uncrewed systems on the battlefield, known as Project Hellscape, and long-range fires coming from U.S. bombers or submarines to take out amphibious ships, both of which would help drive down potential casualties, Clark explained.

“A lot of analysis shows that if you can coordinate that correctly, the long-range fires and the Hellscape work ... enough to keep China from succeeding in that first invasion attempt. But if it’s a mess because it’s not well coordinated, then China might just be able to get enough troops ashore to succeed,” he added.

The absence of these crucial rehearsals could mean a return to a “world where we have strike fighters flying over the very contested airspace over Taiwan in an effort to try to stop the invasion,” Clark said. “We lose a lot of pilots, we probably lose carriers, we lose destroyers in the process. Being able to do the fight in a way that manages casualties is going to require us to exercise with the Taiwanese — and that’s a part of the calculus that hasn’t really clicked on the U.S. side.”

Brent Sadler, a senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, attributed the inconsistency in U.S.-Taiwan policy, despite apparent bipartisan support for Taiwan’s defense, to domestic considerations. “Each politician has got their own constituent to think about,” he said, and there’s “not enough political sentiment at the constituent level to really drive this.”

This year’s Han Kuang exercise has the potential to make American participation in future years more likely, Sadler said. The exercise has “morphed to take on a regional messaging as well, and an important one here to Americans: that Taiwan’s people are willing to stand up and defend themselves if they are attacked by mainland China,” he said. This would help counter what Sadler called a “very caustic, unhelpful narrative” that the Taiwanese people are not willing to defend themselves, “and that’s why we shouldn’t spend any money.”

While the experts agreed that Han Kuang is shaping up to be a success, the benefits of bilateral training against a Chinese invasion remain unrealized.

“We can only do that if we start to do these exercises together, and build the command and control and communications interoperability between the two countries,” Clark said.

**Topics:** [International](#), [Internation Cooperation](#)

## Related Articles

[Service Chiefs Want Changes in Acquisition Process](#)

---

[Secretary Carter Blasts Armed Services Committees' Authorization Bills](#)

---

[Defense Committees Poised to Receive Military 'Unfunded Requirements' List \[UPDATED\]](#)

---

**[VIEW ALL ARTICLES ►](#)**

# Comments (3)

new **Re: JUST IN: Lack of U.S. Participation in Taiwan Military Exercise a Concern, Experts Say**

Msg to Taiwan: You are a lost cause. We are not risking a Cuban Missile Crisis type of nuclear escalation over a few EUV machines.

54 at 11:14 PM

new **Re: JUST IN: Lack of U.S. Participation in Taiwan Military Exercise a Concern, Experts Say**

A conflict with China will likely be mostly hundreds of thousands of drones killing each other. But the Taiwanese people need to demonstrate stronger resolve to prepare to defend themselves, as well as other nations in the region.

Bryan Davis at 10:58 AM

new **Re: JUST IN: Lack of U.S. Participation in Taiwan Military Exercise a Concern, Experts Say**

An outstanding article by Sabina Lum highlighting enormous bilateral training gaps identified by think tank subject matter experts.

Will Marsh at 11:33 AM

Name \*

Email \*

Comment \*



Please enter the text displayed in the image.

Characters \*

### Legal Notice \*

NDIA is not responsible for screening, policing, editing, or monitoring your or another user's postings and encourages all of its users to use reasonable discretion and caution in evaluating or reviewing any posting. Moreover, and except as provided below with respect to NDIA's right and ability to delete or remove a posting (or any part thereof), NDIA does not endorse, oppose, or edit any opinion or information provided by you or another user and does not make any representation with respect to, nor does it endorse the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, or reliability of any advice, opinion, statement, or other material displayed, uploaded, or distributed by you or any other user. Nevertheless, NDIA reserves the right to delete or take other action with respect to postings (or parts thereof) that NDIA believes in good faith violate this Legal Notice and/or are potentially

☐ **I have read the legal notice.**

**SUBMIT COMMENT**

---