

Large-scale drill simulates attack by China forces

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An F-16 jet takes off as part of an emergency scramble exercise yesterday morning at Hualien Air Base.

Photo: Yu Tai-lang, Taipei Times

The armed forces yesterday held large-scale air, land and sea exercises throughout the nation, with eight fighter jets from Hualien Air Base conducting simulated long-range and duration intercept missions.

Units from all branches of the military took part in the Joint Air Exercise from 5am to 8am in response to a simulated Chinese invasion.

The drill put into practice air and anti-air components of the war plan, which the armed forces had drawn according to experience derived from past Han Kuang military exercises, an official said on condition of anonymity, adding that the exercise coincided with and tied into the Joint Electronic 107-2 Exercise.

The aerial component of the drills was unusual in the number of aircraft and the amount of equipment involved, as six Lockheed Martin F-16s and two Dassault Mirage 2000s flew with a full load of missiles, ALQ-184 electronic attack pods and double drop tanks, the official said.

Ground crew began preparations at 4am and the fighter jets took off at 5:40am.

Additionally, four Indigenous Defense Fighters simulated an emergency landing from Taichung's Ching Chuan Kang (清泉崗) Air Base to Hualien Air Base, sources said.

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The navy deployed Kidd-class destroyers, and Cheng Kung and Kang Ding-class frigates in anti-air maneuvers at multiple zones, while the army fielded anti-air units to assist in the defense of air bases.

The Joint Air Exercise is a combination of routine drills that are conducted in a way that is simultaneous and coordinated according to a specific military scenario whose details are classified, the official said.

While simulated fighter interception is commonplace, the air drills that took place yesterday were much larger than previous joint air exercises, the official said.

In response to the rising military threat from China, Southeast Asian nations and the US have been bolstering their defenses with joint military exercises and Taiwan should not be an exception, the official said.

The armed forces are to increase the frequency and realism of the nation's military drills through the institution of an operational preparedness month and other measures, the official said.

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