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Chinese president Xi Jinping has ordered his military to be ready to invade Taiwan in 2027, CIA director says

CIA director William Burns said Beijing still had its eyes set on taking Taiwan, despite watching Russia's struggle to defeat Ukraine.

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Chinese president Xi Jinping has ordered his military to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027, according to the CIA.

CIA director William Burns said Beijing still had its eyes set on taking Taiwan, despite watching Russia's struggle to defeat Ukraine.

China considers Taiwan to be its own territory and does not recognise the government in Taipei.

Burns said the US knew “as a matter of intelligence” that Xi wants his forces to be war-ready by 2027.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (Photo by SPA / AFP)

“Now, that does not mean that he’s decided to conduct an invasion in 2027, or any other year, but it’s a reminder of the seriousness of his focus and his ambition,” he told an event at Georgetown University in Washington.

“Our assessment at CIA is that I wouldn’t underestimate President Xi’s ambitions with regard to Taiwan.”

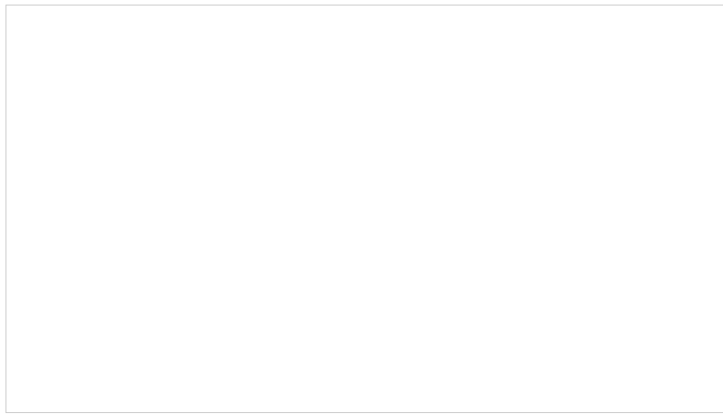
Burns added that Xi had likely been “surprised and unsettled” by Russia’s failures in Ukraine.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine had sparked fears that China would soon wage war in Taiwan.

The two nations signed a “no limits” pact in the days before Putin’s troops crossed the Ukrainian border.

Beijing has rarely commented on the Russian invasion but has not provided military support to Moscow.

“I think it’s a mistake to underestimate the mutual commitment to that partnership, but it’s not a friendship totally without limits,” Burns said.

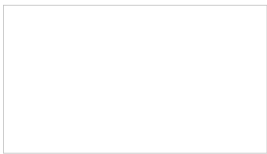


Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers assemble during military training at the Pamir Mountains in Kashgar, northwestern Xinjiang region. (Photo by AFP)

Earlier this week, Taiwan activated its missile systems and sent fighter jets into its skies after Chinese aircraft swarmed towards the democratic nation.

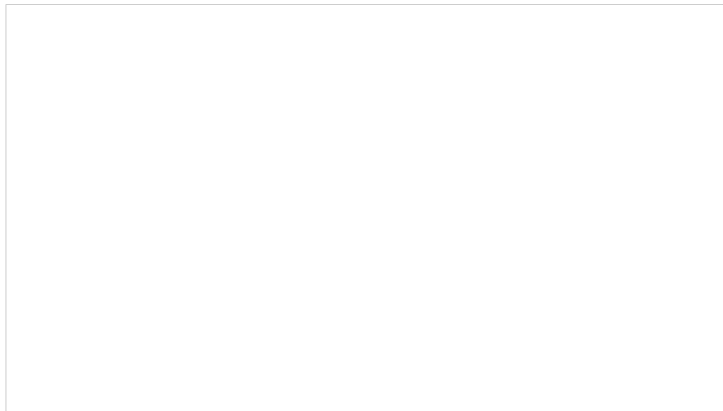
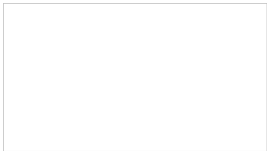
Taiwan's ministry of defence stated that 34 People's Liberation Army aircraft and nine PLA naval vessels crossed the median line in the waters between China and Taiwan in the 24 hours between 6am January 31 and 6am February 1 local time (9am to 9am AEDT).

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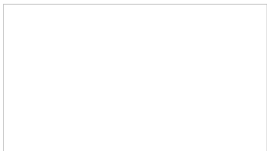
The median line is an unofficial maritime border between the two countries. However, Beijing has, with increasing regularity, breached the demarcation. PLA aircraft have done so several times in 2023 already.

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CIA Director William Burns (Photo by ALEX WONG / GETTY IMAGES NORTH AMERICA / Getty Images via AFP)



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While Beijing doesn't recognise any boundary between it and Taiwan, the various aircraft turned back to China relatively quickly after crossing the line and did not enter Taiwan's national airspace.

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“Armed Forces have monitored the situation and tasked (combat air patrol) aircraft, navy vessels, and land-based missile systems to respond these activities,” the ministry stated on social media.

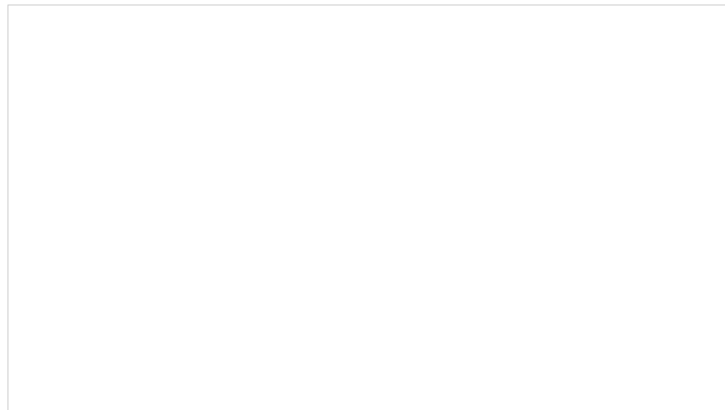
Taiwan used to be a region of China under Beijing’s control. However when Communist rule was established on the mainland in 1949 the previous Nationalist Government fled to Taiwan and it has remained out of reach to Beijing since.

There are fears China is gearing up for a blockade or even an invasion of Taiwan to bring it under communist rule.

US Air Force General Mike Minihan said last month it was possible such a move could happen within the next two years. That in turn could lead to direct conflict between China and the US.

“I hope I am wrong. My gut tells me we will fight in 2025,” he said in an internal memo.

Laying out his reasoning, Gen Minihan said Taiwan’s presidential elections next year would offer Chinese President Xi Jinping an excuse for military aggression, while the United States would be distracted by its own contest for the White House.



Deputy head of Russia’s Security Council and chairman of the United Russia party Dmitry Medvedev shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping (Photo by Yekaterina SHTUKINA / Sputnik / AFP)

The US and Taiwan are allies, with much of the world’s advanced semiconductors being produced on the island.

While the US has no obligation to defend Taiwan from

invasion, US President Joe Biden has repeatedly signalled that Washington DC would intervene militarily.

An analysis by think tank the Centre for Strategic and International Studies suggested China would lose a Taiwan conflict, if the US intervened, but each side would suffer “enormous losses”.

On a visit to Tokyo this week the secretary-general of the NATO military alliance Jens Stoltenberg said a similar situation to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could happen in East Asia.

“We must remain united and firm, standing together for freedom and democracy,” he said.

Mr Stoltenberg said he was worried by the increasing co-operation between China and Russia in Asia.

China was “not our adversary,” he said, but warned of its growing military presence in Asia “including nuclear weapons, bullying neighbours and threatening Taiwan”.

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