

Purges in the Chinese Military
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Xi Jinping has purged members of his top military brass in his war against corruption. The world has gone into hysterics because of it, using this to show how “weak” the Chinese really are. They will use anything they like this to confirm the theories they already hold about China. The truth is that such purges are a normal part of life in almost every government

Reuters, January 26, 2026

China's investigation into its top general is taking President Xi Jinping's years-long corruption purge into his innermost circle, underlining that even close personal ties do not offer protection when it comes to loyalty to the party leadership. "China experts" said Xi's move against his long-term ally and Politburo member Gen. Zhang Youxia also concentrates even more power in the president's hands, makes the already secretive command of China's military more opaque, and suggests that a near-term attack on Taiwan is less likely.

"Zhang's removal means that truly nobody in the leadership is safe now," said Jonathan Czin of the Washington-based Brookings Institution, who called the

investigation “astonishing.”

[He] added that the probe marked a “profound shift” in Chinese politics. The change is remarkable as past purges targeted people who may have had some overlap with Xi but lacked strong personal ties. This time around, the purge has crossed into what Czin has described as the “asteroid belt” of Xi's political solar system.

Both Xi and Zhang are princelings, children of former senior officers. The 75-year-old general was initially expected to retire in 2022, but Xi kept him on the Central Military Commission (CMC), the Chinese military's top leadership body, for a third term, underscoring their closeness.

1.

The defense ministry announced a probe on Saturday into Zhang – second-in-command under Xi as senior vice-chairman of the CMC – “for suspected serious violations of discipline and law.” The military was one of the main targets of a broad corruption crackdown ordered by Xi after coming to power in 2012. The purges reached its elite Rocket Force, which oversees nuclear weapons as well as conventional missiles, in 2023. Two former deference ministers were also purged from the ruling Communist Party in recent years for corruption. . .

In a front-page editorial on Sunday, the PLA Daily described the probe as a major achievement, adding that the two generals had “seriously undermined and violated” the Chairman Responsibility System. Under the system, Xi, as the CMC chairman, is vested with the “supreme military decision-making.” It also serves as the “institutional arrangement for practicing the party's absolute leadership over the army,” according to China's government spokesman

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Zhang has in the past overseen the PLA's procurement department which has become the target of a broad corruption crackdown ordered by Xi, but he himself has until now been spared.

James Char, a scholar at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, said that by placing Zhang under the probe, “Xi has also responded to criticisms that his PLA anti-corruption campaign has been a selective process, that his fellow princeling gets a free pass.”

“Zhang had got off scot-free after his acolyte, Li Shangfu, got into trouble in the latter half of 2023,” added Char. Former defense minister Li was ousted for suspected corruption in military procurement, but leaving the army leadership depleted and without replacements raises questions about how the world's largest military is run: “It is honestly not clear how the chain of command should be

functioning, especially since so many of the officers who would otherwise be eligible to replace the disposed members of the CMC have themselves been ousted,” Brookings’ Czin said. . .

While China has not fought a war in decades, it is taking an increasingly muscular line in regional maritime disputes, as well as over the self-ruled Taiwan, which is claimed by China. Beijing staged the largest war games to date around Taiwan late last year. With U.S. President Donald Trump’s attention elsewhere, and Taiwan scheduled for an election in 2028, Xi has time to “clean house,” analysts said. “Gutting the PLA high command suggests that Xi is not contemplating a major military escalation against Taiwan in the near term, but his crackdown is designed to elevate a cadre of more competent and loyal generals who will pose more of a threat in the future,” Thomas said. “Xi is a man on a mission,” he added. “He will do whatever it takes to ensure the Party and its military are politically loyal and ideologically committed.”

2.

This has created hysterical headlines in the west:

China's Disappearing Generals (NYT)

China's Military Purge Shows a Regime in Crisis (Left

Voice)

The Real Danger Behind China's Military Purge (Think China)

Is Xi's Military Purge a Sign China Can't yet Match America's Might? (The Times)

China's Decadence and the Military Purge (Hudson Institute)

Chinese Military Purge Said to Show Corruption, Weakness (Arms Control Association)

Ruptures in China's Leadership Could Be Due to Paranoia and Power Plays (NYT)

China's Military Purge: Power, Paranoia and the Silence Before a Storm (Modern Diplomacy)

Yet military purges are a regular aspect of life all over the world. Few countries in recent memory have avoided it. Only in China does it get the hysteria mentioned above. No one uses such neurotic and absurd headlines to describe them when they happen elsewhere. Those at the major news sources, entirely ignorant on China, have created an array of nonsense theories about these purges. These are just a tiny smattering of similar (usually far worse) purges of the army in recent memory:

USA, 2013

What the American president calls “my military” is being cleansed of any officer suspected of disloyalty to or

disagreement with the administration on matters of policy or force structure, leaving the compliant and fearful. Yet what has happened to our officer corps since President [Obama](#) took office is viewed in many quarters as unprecedented, baffling and even harmful to our national security posture. We have commented on some of the higher profile cases, such as Gen. Carter Ham. He was relieved as head of US Africa Command after only a year and a half because he disagreed with orders not to mount a rescue mission in response to the Sept. 11, 2012, attack in Benghazi.

Rear Adm. Chuck Gaouette, commander of the John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group, was relieved in October 2012 for disobeying orders when he sent his group on Sept. 11 to "assist and provide intelligence for" military forces ordered into action by Gen. Ham.

Other removals include the sacking of two nuclear commanders in a single week - Maj. Gen. Michael Carey, head of the 20th Air Force, responsible for the three wings that maintain control of the 450 intercontinental ballistic missiles, and Vice Adm. Tim Giardina, the No. 2 officer at US Strategic Command.

From Breitbart.com's Facebook page comes a list of at least 197 officers that have been relieved of duty by President Obama for a laundry list of reasons and

sometimes with no reason given. Stated grounds range from "leaving blast doors on nukes open" to "loss of confidence in command ability" to "mishandling of funds" to "inappropriate relationships" to "gambling with counterfeit chips" to "inappropriate behavior" to "low morale in troops commanded."

Nine senior commanding generals have been fired by the Obama administration this year, leading to speculation by active and retired members of the military that a purge of its commanders is under way. Retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Paul Vallely, an outspoken critic of the Obama administration, notes how the White House fails to take action or investigate its own officials but finds it easy to fire military commanders "who have given their lives for their country." Vallely thinks he knows why this purge is happening.

"Obama will not purge a civilian or political appointee because they have bought into Obama's ideology," Vallely said. "The White House protects their own. That's why they stalled on the investigation into Fast and Furious, Benghazi and ObamaCare. He's intentionally weakening and gutting our military, the Pentagon and reducing us as a superpower, and anyone in the ranks who disagrees or speaks out is being purged."

Another senior retired general told TheBlaze on the

condition of anonymity, because he still provide services to the government and fears possible retribution, that “they're using the opportunity of the shrinkage of the military to get rid of people that don't agree with them or do not toe the party line. Remember, as (former White House chief of staff) Rahm Emanuel said, never waste a crisis.”

3.

Argentina: Military Purge Strengthens New Government May 29, 2003

Argentine President Nestor Kirchner has ordered the biggest command shake-up in the history of his country's armed forces, naming new senior commanders he knows and trusts. The ousted generals and admirals are furious, but Argentina is at no risk of a military coup or mutiny. Meanwhile, Kirchner's move has strengthened the political foundations of his new government and increased his political capital with most Argentine voters.

Colombia, 2000

The Colombian military has sacked nearly 400 officers and soldiers in the biggest ever purge of the armed forces, but it denied this was in response to US pressure to improve human rights. President Andres Pastrana granted

the military powers to fire soldiers for misconduct in September. On Monday, the Defense Minister, Luis Fernando Ramirez, refused to expand on the reasons why 89 officers and 299 rank-and-file members of the army, navy and air force had been dismissed. "This has nothing to do with recommendations of a foreign government," the defence minister insisted in an apparent reference to the United States. Washington has made progress on human rights a condition of a \$1.3bn anti-drug aid package for Colombia. Most of the resources promised are for the armed forces to boost the war against drugs.

Many human rights groups say US money should not be going to the Colombian military because the army is alleged to maintain close ties with outlawed paramilitary death squads. A civil war in the country has seen 35,000 killed in the past 10 years. Left-wing rebels are fighting right-wing paramilitaries and government forces. The military's official policy is to fight the paramilitaries as well as the rebels, but allegations of collusion and corruption are rife. President Pastrana has fired several army generals since he took power in 1998. But Armed Forces chief General Fernando Tapias has said these latest sackings are unprecedented and would "guarantee transparency and cohesion" in the 150,000- member forces.

Pakistan, 2023

The Pakistan army has begun an all-out purge of the institution in its bid to weed out those who were apparently complicit or did not confront mobs that targeted key military facilities on May 9. It is apparent that Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen. Asim Munir is marshaling the cleanup.

During a press conference on Monday, Director General Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry announced that many heads have rolled including that of a Lieutenant General, who has been dismissed from service. Others facing disciplinary action comprise 15 officers including three major generals and seven brigadiers.

The announcement confirms that the Army Chief is pulling no punches to unify the military and eliminate chances of a civil war. It also signals that the operation to dismantle ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan's extensive network within the military, the civil society and overseas. Pakistan is advancing remorselessly. Besides, it reveals the army is walking the talk and is in no mood to cut any deal with the planners and masterminds of the May 9 events.

Bangladesh, 2025

Bangladesh today is at a perilous crossroads. Behind the façade of reform and Nobel prestige, Muhammad Yunus and his regime—dominated by Islamist-jihadist elements— are systematically dismantling the very institutions that safeguard national sovereignty. The Army, the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), and the country’s counterterrorism agencies are being directly targeted through propaganda, legal harassment, and carefully designed purges.

The ultimate objective is nothing short of replacing Bangladesh’s armed forces with a new Islamist military order modelled after Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and supported by an Iranian-style intelligence network.

Behind the polished image of a reformer, Yunus has surrounded himself with Islamist elements and jihadist sympathisers. His government increasingly resembles Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Turkey: suppressing critical journalists while Islamist radicals—including al-Qaeda and Hizb ut-Tahrir affiliates—operate with growing freedom.

Turkey, 2024

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shared updated statistics regarding the purge of military officers following a coup attempt on July 15, 2016 during a ceremony at the National Defense University on Saturday. He revealed that 1,524 out of 1,886 staff officers were purged from the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK). Additionally, of the 32,189 officers serving on July 15, 2016, a total of 10,468 have been expelled.

According to earlier figures announced by the Turkish Ministry of Defense at the end of 2023, a total of 24,339 members of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), including noncommissioned officers and civil servants, were dismissed.

Ironically, the official account states that only 8,651 military members took part in the coup, corresponding to 1.5 percent of the TSK. Of those, 1,761 were conscripts and 1,214 were military cadets. Given the fact that some 150 generals and thousands of lower-ranking officers were sentenced on coup charges, military experts find it odd that such an insignificant number of troops took part in the coup attempt.

Only 42 flag officers out of the 325 who were on active duty at the time of the abortive putsch managed to retain their rank or receive promotions after the coup attempt,

confirming the view that Erdogan's government was intent on transforming the military into a bastion of partisans, zealots and loyalists.

Turkish government-run unofficial detention site in 2016 where thousands of officers were kept in inhuman conditions, tortured and ill-treated for weeks. Staff officers form the leadership cadre of the TSK and are considered the military's brain. According to unwritten practice, colonels who are staff officers, meaning those who graduated from the prestigious war academies, were typically promoted to the rank of general. These academies only accept candidates who pass a difficult entrance exam. Staff colonels used to speak at least one foreign language, hold master's degrees in non-military fields and receive specialized training in war strategies, military tactics and troop management. They were often assigned to overseas missions, especially within NATO, and military attachés were usually selected from among them.

5.

South Korea, 2026

The Ministry of National Defense will carry out a large-scale "personnel renewal" through next week's corps commander-level general officer appointments. It is

known that at least 20 out of over 30 lieutenant general positions within the military will change. With all generals already replaced, the Ministry of National Defense is expected to conduct follow-up appointments for brigadier generals and major generals as early as late this month.

The government states that this is “personnel renewal” following martial law and the launch of the new administration, but within and outside the military, there are remarks that "replacing virtually all generals and lieutenant generals is the largest-scale purge since the Kim Young-sam administration’s eradication of the Hanahoe (a military clique) during the military purge." While the government is known to have established a principle of excluding all personnel related to martial law, concerns are also emerging that preparedness against North Korea could be affected.

President Lee Jae-myung replaced all seven active-duty generals in September. Lieutenant general appointments were also scheduled to follow, but it is known that they were delayed due to a larger scale than in the past. With this lieutenant general appointment, key positions in the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), including the Chief of Operations, the 1st and 5th Army Corps commanders responsible for frontline preparedness, and the Air Force Operations Commander and Navy Operations

Commander, who are at the core of air and naval forces, will all be replaced.

6.