India, Japan Conclude Joint Naval Exercises in Arabian Sea



Navy ships from India and Japan take part in JIMDEX, a bilateral exercise in the Arabian Sea. *INDIAN NAVY*

A significant bilateral naval exercise just completed in the Arabian Sea. The navies of Japan and India conducted JIMDEX 2021, the fifth iteration of their joint maritime exercises, which ran Oct. 6-8.

The exercise was led by Rear Adm. Ajay Kochhar, flag officer commanding the Western Fleet of the Indian navy, and Japanese maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) Rear Adm. IkeuchiIzuru, commander, Escort Flotilla Three.

India's guided missile destroyer INS Kochi (D64) and guided missile frigate INS Teg (F45) operated with Izumo Class-multi-purpose destroyer Kaga (DDH 184) and destroyer JS Murasame (DD 101).

According to an Indian ministry of defense press release, the forces were engaging in a high tempo of operations focused on air, surface and sub-surface dimensions of maritime operations as well as the air domain.

"The complex maritime exercises undertaken will enable the two navies to further strengthen their already wide-ranging strategic partnership and, when required, to jointly safeguard their maritime interests and ensure peace, security and stability in the region."

Both navies share some similar platforms and systems, like the P-8 maritime patrol aircraft. Both navies operate indigenous ships and aircraft, like the Kochi and Izumo, which looks more

like a helicopter carrier than a destroyer (at 27,000 tons fully loaded, Izumo is the largest ship in the JDMSF fleet). India's and the Russian designed stealth frigate Teg and MiG 29 fighters might be representative of potential adversaries.

During the exercises the units conducted over-the-horizon targeting, antisubmarine warfare, naval gunnery and underway replenishment. The ships' embarked cross-deck landings to demonstrate interoperability. The exercise involved what the Indian MoD statement described as "a high tempo of flying operations with MiG 29K fighters coming in for multiple simulated air strike on surface units."

India's cooperation with other navies may be seen as statement to an increasingly competitive China.

"The IOR [Indian Ocean Region] is quickly becoming the home of a contest between India and China," wrote Aman Thakker in New Perspectives in Foreign Policy, published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "China has made aggressive moves to advance its strategic interests in the region, particularly by gaining access to military bases and strategic ports by employing illiberal and predatory economic practices.

"India now recognizes that it cannot allow China to replicate the playbook it used in the South China Sea and challenge territorial claims and international norms of freedom of navigation, overflight, and unimpeded commerce in the IOR," Thakker wrote.

It is also significant for Japan in that it is conducting exercises far from home waters and with a nation other than the U.S., which can also be interpreted as a signal to China.

"The complex maritime exercises undertaken will enable the two navies to further strengthen their already wide-ranging strategic partnership and, when required, to jointly safeguard

their maritime interests and ensure peace, security and stability in the region," the Indian navy said in its statement.