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CHINA'S EMERGING MILITARY LEADERSHIP - 2025/2026

Consequent to the purge of Generals Zhang Youxia and He Weidong, both Vice Chairmen of the Central Military Commission (CMC), along with eight other Generals in key positions in the CMC and Theatre Commands (TCs), a group of young Lieutenant Generals have been promoted to many of their positions. More and deeper changes in the upper echelons of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) are anticipated.

2. The bio-profiles of 15 senior PLA officers and 1 People's Armed Police (PAP) officer (Lt. Gen. Cao Junzhang), comprising part of China's emerging military leadership are appended. It will be noticed that while the officers come from across the PLA's main services: the Air Force (PLAAF), Navy (PLAN), Rocket Force (PLARF), and the Ground Force (PLAGF), the PLAAF and the PLAN have higher representation. The seven officers of the PLAAF includes Gen. Yang Zhibin, now Commander of the Eastern Theatre Command (ETC) and Gen. Han Shengyan, now Commander of the Central Theatre Command (CTC). Others are Lt. Gen. Wang Chengnan, Deputy Director of CMC Political Work Department; Lt. Gen. Dong Li, Deputy Director of CMC Joint Operations Command Centre; Lt. Gen. Chen Chi, Director of CMC Logistics Support Department; Lt. Gen. Liu Di, Director of CMC Training and Management Department; and Gen. Chen Hui, Political Commissar of the PLAGF (cross-branch transition from PLAAF). The Navy is also well represented, with Lt. Gen. Cui Yuzhong appointed Acting Commander of the PLAN; Lt. Gen. Zhu Chuansheng, Deputy Chief of CMC Joint Staff Department; Lt. Gen. Xiong Zhaoyuan, Deputy Director of CMC Political Work Department; Lt. Gen. Zhang Like, Director of CMC National Defense Mobilisation Department; and Lt. Gen. Leng Shaojie, Political Commissar of PLAN (cross-branch transition from PLAGF). Of these, two have a background in naval aviation or marine operations.

3. Two senior officers, including Gen. Zhang Shengmin, CMC Vice Chairman and Lt. Gen. Zhang Yutang, Deputy Director of CMC Political Work Department come from the PLARF, which manages China's strategic missile forces. Only one officer, Lt. Gen. Zheng Shoudong, has a long career mainly in the PLAGF having served in a Group Army (GA).

4. Most of the officers are in their early 60s. The oldest is Gen. Zhang Shengmin, aged 67. Many others are between 60 and 63 years old. The youngest is Lt. Gen. Liu Di, aged 54. This age pattern reflects the typical senior leadership level in the PLA, where officers usually reach top Theatre or CMC positions in their late 50s or early 60s.

5. Many of these officers have experience in important Theatre Commands (TCs), especially the Western (WTC), Southern (STC), ETC, and CTC Theatre Commands. Gen. Han

Shengyan previously served as Deputy Commander of the WTC before being appointed Commander of the CTC in 2025. Gen. Yang Zhibin has moved through the Southern, Western, and Eastern TCs and was promoted as Commander of the ETC in December 2025. Lieutenant Generals Dong Li and Cui Yuzhong have held senior positions in the ETC. Lieutenant Generals Wang Chengnan and Leng Shaojie served in senior political roles in the CTC. Their Theatre experience could have been a factor in their elevation and selection for the present posts.

6. Very few of those recently promoted are members of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCP CC). Gen. Zhang Shengmin was elected as a member of the 19th Central Committee in 2017 and Lt. Gen. Cui Yuzhong as an Alternate Member of the 19th and 20th Central Committees. The others are all delegates to Party Congresses or deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC). Their elevation, therefore, for the present does not compensate for the drastic reduction in the PLA representation in the CCP CC or Politburo.



Zhang Shengmin (张升民)



DOB: August 1958

Age: 67

Ethnicity: Han

POB: Wugong County, Shaanxi Province

Rank: General in the People's Liberation Army
Rocket Force (PLARF)

Current Position: Vice Chairman (second-ranked) of the Central Military Commission (CMC), member of the CMC, Deputy Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), Secretary of the Discipline Inspection Commission of the CMC and Director of the Supervisory Commission of the CMC and Party Committee Secretary.

Previous Position: Member of the CMC and Deputy Secretary of the CCDI.

Education: He holds a postgraduate degree from the Central Party School with a Master's in Political Science, reflecting his early focus on political education within the PLA's ideological framework.

Experience:

- He enlisted in the military in February 1978 at the age of 20, beginning his military service during a period of post-Cultural Revolution reforms in China's armed forces. He joined the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in July 1979. Entry into the PLA typically requires CCP membership, a prerequisite for senior roles that highlights the organization's prioritization of political reliability alongside professional skills.

- Much of his career was spent as a Political Commissar, first in the former Second Artillery Force (the predecessor of the PLARF), spanning from 2004 to 2015.
- In July 2004, he was transferred from the PLA General Political Department to serve as Director of the political department at the Second Artillery's 96351 Unit, also known as the 56th Base, a major missile facility.
- Subsequently, he advanced to Political Commissar of a Second Artillery missile base, where he oversaw ideological work, discipline, and morale among personnel handling nuclear and conventional missile operations. In this capacity, he directed efforts to align unit activities with PLA modernization priorities, including training for enhanced missile deployment and readiness during a period of rapid technological upgrades in road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles.
- By around 2011, he was appointed Political Commissar of the Second Artillery Force Command Academy, responsible for educating officers in strategic missile command, tactics, and logistics, thereby contributing to the professional development of the force's operational cadre.
- He also served in the CMC's General Logistics Department (GLD).
- From approximately 2012 to 2015, he served as Director of the Second Artillery Political Department.
- In January 2017, he was appointed Secretary of the CMC Commission for Discipline Inspection, taking over from General Du Jincai, whose career was tied to former CMC Vice-Chairmen Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou, both of whom were later dismissed and imprisoned following major corruption investigations. Following Zhang Shengmin's appointment, he was tasked with ensuring that all traces of Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou's influence were cleared before the 19th Party Congress in 2017. The appointment therefore signalled a deliberate purge of remnants of the old patronage networks and the installation of a Xi Jinping–trusted loyalist in one of the most sensitive oversight roles in the military, strengthening Xi Jinping's control over the PLA by ensuring that disciplinary authority was no longer linked to rival power centres. The role also positioned

Zhang Shangmin as the military's chief anti-corruption overseer, concurrently serving as Deputy Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party's CCDI, which amplified his authority over PLA-wide compliance efforts. Since 2017, Zhang Shengmin has led teams to check whether the PLA follows party rules. These teams visit military offices and units to make sure leaders obey central orders and follow proper procedures.

- During the 19th National Congress of the CCP in October 2017, he was elected a member of the 19th Central Committee. He was also made one of the four members of the CMC and one of the eight Deputy Secretaries of the CCDI.
- On October 23, 2025, he was elevated to the position of the Vice Chairman of the CMC of the CCP after the dismissal of the then Vice Chairman General He Weidong, who was expelled from the CCP and PLA on corruption charges on October 17, 2025.
- On 28 October 2025, he was appointed the second-ranking Vice Chairman of the CMC of the People's Republic of China (PRC) by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The role positioned him as the third-ranking member of the CMC after Chairman Xi Jinping and the first-ranked Vice Chairman Zhang Youxia.

Promotions:

- On November 2, 2017, he was promoted to the rank of General.

Miscellaneous:

- Zhang Shengmin is a member of the “Shaanxi Gang,” a faction within the PLA, composed of senior figures who share regional and revolutionary ties to Shaanxi province, the ancestral home of Xi Jinping. In China's elite politics, such shared origins often translate into political trust. Power within the PLA comes from trust and proximity to Xi Jinping. Because Zhang Shengmin is seen as politically reliable within Xi Jinping's Shaanxi-linked network, he was assigned a disciplinary and oversight role, responsible for enforcing ideological conformity and loyalty rather than commanding troops. Zhang Youxia, as senior

Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, gave this network weight at the top of the military hierarchy because he was widely regarded as Xi Jinping's most trusted uniformed ally. The fact that he was a princeling, second generation family friend and came from Shaanxi suggested his authority flows from a shared regional background, revolutionary lineage, and personal loyalty to Xi Jinping.

- Zhang Shengmin also had a role in the tragedy about downfall of Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou
- In 2010, when Zhang Shengmin was posted at a military base in Northwest China, he led more than 1,000 Second Artillery troops in the reconstruction work immediately after the 2010 Yushu earthquake in Qinghai Province. His unit helped to build emergency living quarters for the monks at the Changu Monastery (禅古寺), the largest Kagyu Tibetan Buddhist temple in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. This had political significance because PLA assistance to Tibetan religious institutions served both humanitarian needs and the state's objectives of stability and legitimacy in sensitive minority regions. It reinforced Zhang Shengmin's profile as a trusted political officer capable of managing military operations having ethnic, religious, and social implications.
- As Secretary of the CMC's CCDI since 2017, Zhang Shengmin has directed enforcement of anti-corruption and discipline measures within the PLA, targeting senior officers for violations including financial crimes. These campaigns have focused on high-level probes and expulsions, particularly in units like the PLA Rocket Force where Zhang Shengmin previously served.

Wang Chengnan (王成男)



DOB: October 1964

Age: 61

Ethnicity: Han

POB: Shulan, Jilin Province

Rank: Lieutenant General in the PLA Air Force (PLAAF)

Current Position: Deputy Director of CMC's Political Work Department (PWD)

Previous Position: Political Commissar of the Central Theatre Command Air Force.

Experience:

- He has spent much of his career in political leadership roles within the Air Force and airborne units, holding key Political Commissar positions.
- Starting in the early 2000s, he served as a Deputy Director of the Air Force Aviation University's Political Department.
- Served as Political Commissar of the First Air Force Aviation Division (Shenyang MRAF).
- Served as Deputy Political Commissar of the former PLAAF 15th Airborne Corps (also associated with Unit 95829).
- Appointed Political Commissar of the PLA Airborne Corps in July 2017, making his first public appearance in this role the same month.
- Elected as a delegate to the 13th National People's Congress in 2018.

- From December 2019 until May 2020, he served as the Secretary of the PLAAF Discipline Inspection Commission and concurrently Director of its Supervisory Committee.
- Appointed Political Commissar of the Central Theatre Command Air Force in April 2020 and concurrently Central Theatre Command Deputy Political Commissar in May 2020.
- He was a member of the CCP's 13th NPC and the Hubei Province's 12th People's Congress.
- Deputy Director of the Political Work Department of the Central Military Commission in December 2021.

Promotions:

- Promoted to Major General on 10 May 2016.
- Promoted to Lieutenant General in December 2019.

Miscellaneous:

- During the “Two Sessions” in March 2019, Wang Chengnan proposed measures to strengthen a nationwide ethos of respect for the military and valour, and to stimulate public enthusiasm for supporting and honouring the armed forces. He suggested improving mechanisms for joint military–civilian development and sharing of Red (revolutionary) resources, standardizing the production and promotion of military cultural products, summarizing and applying the successful experience of outstanding films and television works such as *Operation Red Sea*, and incorporating the suppression of military-related online rumours into the Criminal Law.
- On May 15, 2020, the *PLA Daily* published an article titled “Military Delegates and CPPCC Members Discuss Implementing the Chairman Responsibility System of the Central Military Commission.” The article noted that delegate Wang Chengnan, Deputy Political Commissar of the Central Theatre Command

and concurrently Political Commissar of the Central Theatre Command Air Force, stated that Party committees at all levels of the military must fulfil their principal responsibilities, and that leading officials must shoulder primary responsibility. This marked Wang Chengnan's first public appearance in his new roles. Wang Chengnan emphasised that leading cadres must strengthen their political responsibility and sense of mission, adhere to high standards and strict requirements, set an example for the troops in implementing the Chairman Responsibility System of the Central Military Commission, and ensure that this system is fully and effectively carried out across all areas and throughout the entire process of national defence and military development.

- In April 2022, he participated in a major ceremony at the August 1st Building during which Xi Jinping, Chairman of the CMC, met with leaders of newly restructured military-level units. He was among six officers representing major service branches who reaffirmed loyalty to the Party and readiness to support national defence reforms and missions under the new force structure.

Zhang Yutang (张玉堂)



DOB: June 1967

Age: 58

Ethnicity: Han

Rank: Lieutenant General of the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF)

Current Position: Deputy Director of the Political Work Department of the CMC.

Previous Position: Vice Chairman of the All-China Journalists Association (ACJA).

Education: He has a postgraduate degree obtained while in service.

Experience:

- Has long specialized in military propaganda, media management, and political work within the PLA and the CMC system.
- Served as Director of the CMC Political Work Department's Online Public Opinion Bureau.
- Appointed Director of the Publicity Bureau, Political Work Department of the Central Military Commission in July 2017.
- Served as Director of the PLA News and Communication Centre. Concurrently served as President (Editor-in-Chief) of the *PLA Daily*.
- Served as Vice Chairman of the All-China Journalists Association (ACJA); appointed to this role in December 2021.
- Delegate to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.
- Vice Chairman of the 10th Council of the All-China Journalists Association.

Xiong Zhaoyuan (熊照元)



DOB: August 1966

Age: 60

Ethnicity: Han

Rank: Lieutenant General in the PLA Navy
(PLAN)

Current Position: Deputy Director of the Political Work Department of the CMC.

Previous Position: Deputy Director of the Navy Political Work Department.

Education: A graduate of a military academy.

Experience:

- Has held multiple senior political work appointments spanning the Rocket Force and Navy systems.
- Served as Secretary-General of the Office of the Political Department, former Second Artillery Corps.
- Served as Deputy Political Commissar of the Rocket Force Command College.
- Served as Political Commissar of the Navy Command College.
- Deputy to the 14th National People's Congress.
- Deputy Director of the Political Work Department of the PLA Navy.
- Deputy Director of the Political Work Department of the CMC.

Promotions:

- Promoted to Major General on 22 January 2017.
- Promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General in late 2025.

Miscellaneous:

- He comes from the Rocket Force system and is a long-time loyalist of Zhang Shengmin, having served as Secretary-General of the former Second Artillery Force Political Department when Zhang Shengmin was its Director.
- According to the *Baidu* search preview screenshot from the original, unedited version of the post (<https://archive.ph/xNTQO>), on 19 December 2021, Xiong Zhaoyuan, the College's Political Commissar and the Commander, Li Hanjun delivered a keynote speech at the first "Banshan Forum" of the College with the theme of "New Quality Navy in the Era of Intelligisation."
- Military analysts have noted his recent promotion to the CMC as part of a broader "reshuffling" of high-ranking officers following purges of other defense officials. He is often associated with the factions of senior leaders like Zhang Youxia and Zhang Shengmin due to his historical career path within the Rocket Force and political departments.

Dong Li (董立)



DOB: 1964

Age: 61

Ethnicity: Han

Rank: Lieutenant General in the PLA Air Force (PLAAF)

Current Position: Deputy Director of the Joint Operations Command Centre of the CMC

Previous Position: Deputy Commander of the PLA Air Force

Experience:

- Served as Commander of the Air Force Cangzhou Flight Test and Training Base.
- Served as Deputy Commander of the Air Force Test and Training Base.
- Served as Commander of the Air Force Test and Training Base.
- Appointed Chief of Staff of the Eastern Theatre Command Air Force in 2017.
- Appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of the PLA Air Force in 2018.
- Appointed Deputy Commander of the Northern Theatre Command in March 2021.
- Appointed Deputy Commander of the PLA Air Force in 2022.
- Transferred to the Joint Operations Command Centre of the Central Military Commission in February 2023.

Promotions:

- Promoted to Air Force Major General in July 2015.
- Promoted to Air Force Lieutenant General in March 2021.

Miscellaneous:

- According to the Civil Aviation Administration of China, Dong Li attended and delivered remarks at an August 8-9, 2018 exchange seminar in Yanji, Jilin, which focused on the safety and operational management of dual-use airports.
- His continued visibility in senior-level activities such as participating as a unit leader during February 2018 visits by Nanjing city officials to forces under the Eastern Theatre Command and related units highlights his standing within the Air Force and his role in advancing military-civil fusion, particularly in areas where aviation safety, joint infrastructure, and military-civil coordination intersect.

Zheng Shoudong (郑守东)



DOB: April 1961

Age: 65

Ethnicity: Han

Rank: Lieutenant General in the PLA

Current Position: Deputy Director of the Joint Operations Command Centre (JOCC) of the CMC

Previous Position: Commander of the 80th Group Army under the Northern Theatre Command

Experience:

- He has spent most of his career in ground force command and training roles, with extensive experience in group army leadership across multiple Theatre Commands.
- Served as Commander of an armoured brigade under the former Shenyang Military Region.
- Served as Director of the Training Department, Shenyang Military Region Headquarters.
- Served as Deputy Commander of the 40th Group Army (Northern Theatre Command).
- Served as Commander of the 72nd Group Army (Eastern Theatre Command).

- Served as Commander of the 80th Group Army in August 2019, marking a cross-theatre transfer from the Eastern Theatre Command to the Northern Theatre Command.
- Appointed as Deputy Director of the Joint Operations Command Centre of the CMC.

Promotions:

- Promoted to Major General on 31 July 2016.

Miscellaneous:

- Zheng Shoudong served as Operations Director in the former Shenyang Military Region approximately between 2007 and 2013, during the period when Zhang Youxia was Commander of the region (2007-2012). In the PLA, the operations portfolio is central to day-to-day command and crisis response, necessitating close, continuous interaction with the Commander. As a result, Zheng Shoudong would have worked directly under Zhang Youxia and earned his confidence. This shared command experience explains why Zheng Shoudong is regarded as a trusted close associate of Zhang Youxia and suggests that his subsequent career advancement is linked to Zhang Youxia's patronage and influence within the senior military leadership. With Zhang Youxia's downfall in January 2026, Zhang Shoudong's future is uncertain.
- In August 2019, participated in flood-relief inspections in Shouguang City, Shandong Province, alongside senior provincial and military leaders. This appearance confirmed his formal transfer from Commander of the 72nd Group Army to Commander of the 80th Group Army.

Yang Zhibin (楊志斌)



DOB: April 1963

Age: 62

Ethnicity: Han

POB: Anyang, Henan Province

Rank: General in the PLA AirForce (PLAAF)

Current Position: Commander of the Eastern Theatre Command

Previous Position: Deputy Commander of the Eastern Theatre Command

Experience:

- Began his military career in the PLA Air Force, serving in a range of operational and command roles.
- Served as Commander of the 26th Air Force Aviation Division under the former Nanjing Military Region.
- Served as Commander of the Shanghai Air Force Command Centre.
- In 2010, he served as Commander of the Wuhan Air Force Command Centre.
- Appointed Commander of the Fuzhou Air Force Command Centre in 2011, where he played a key role in strengthening air-defense readiness in China's southeastern coastal regions.
- Promoted to Deputy Chief of Staff and later Chief of Staff of the Lanzhou Military Region Air Force in December 2014.
- During the 2016 military reforms, he served as Director of the Lanzhou Theatre Air Force Office.

- Appointed Commander of the Shaanxi Military Region in April 2017, with responsibility for national defense mobilization, reserve force development, and militia construction in Shaanxi Province.
- Appointed Member of the Shaanxi Provincial Party Committee.
- Appointed Standing Committee Member of the Shaanxi Provincial Party Committee.
- In March 2021, he was promoted to Deputy Commander of the Southern Theatre Command.
- In 2023, he was transferred to the Western Theatre Command as its Deputy Commander.
- In September 2025, he was appointed Deputy Commander of the Eastern Theatre Command and attended the twelfth Martyrs Memorial Day.
- In December 2025, he got promoted to Commander of the Eastern Theatre Command, after the dismissal of Lin Xiangyang (林向陽) in October for violating party discipline and laws.

Promotions:

- In July 2011 he was promoted to the rank of Major General.
- In March 2021 to the rank of Lieutenant General.
- In December 2025 to the rank of General.

Miscellaneous:

- He was until recently the Deputy Commander of the Eastern Theatre Command. Later, he was seen attending a memorial of the Nanjing Massacre in early December 2025 in place of Lin Xiangyang.

Chen Hui (陈辉)



DOB: November 1963

Age: 62

Ethnicity: Han

POB: Wen'an County, Hebei Province

Rank: General in the PLA Air Force (PLAAF)

Current Position: Political Commissar of the PLA Ground Force (PLAGF)

Previous Position: First Political Commissar of the PLA Aerospace Force (ASF)

Education: Graduated from Hebei University of Technology, an institution known for engineering programs that align with the demands of the PLA.

Experience:

- Chen Hui began his career in the PLA Air Force, serving primarily in political and disciplinary roles.
- In 2009, he served as Political Commissar of the 43rd Airborne Division in the PLAAF Airborne Corps. The division, based in Kaifeng, Henan province, forms part of the PLAAF's Airborne Corps, an elite formation trained for rapid aerial insertion, para-troop assaults, and strategic mobility to support joint operations across diverse terrains. In this operational role, Chen Hui provided hands-on political leadership to paratroop regiments, emphasizing ideological indoctrination and party discipline to maintain unit cohesion amid the demands of airborne training and preparedness for high-risk deployments. The Airborne Corps' structure integrates political oversight directly into combat units, where

Commissars like Chen Hui ensured that tactical proficiency and loyalty to the CCP were aligned.

- From March 2010, Chen Hui served as Deputy Political Commissar at the PLA Air Force Command College in Beijing, a position involving oversight of political education and discipline for training future air force officers.
- In January 2016, he was appointed Secretary of the Discipline Inspection Commission for the Southern Theatre Command Air Force, focusing on enforcing anti-corruption measures and verifying unit loyalty amid Xi Jinping's broader campaign against anti-corruption initiated in late 2012. These efforts focussed on factional risks with empirical data from post-2012 to 2021 purges showing over 100 high-ranking officers who were disciplined to restore discipline.
- In September 2020, Chen Hui was promoted as Secretary of the Discipline Inspection Commission of the PLAAF and Director of the PLAAF Supervisory Commission, becoming the Air Force's top discipline-inspection official.
- In August 2021, he was appointed Political Commissar of the Space Systems Department (SSD) within the former Strategic Support Force (SSF), a position he held until April 2024. The department managed key space-based assets, including satellite systems and orbital infrastructure, as part of the SSF's mandate to support informationised warfare through integration of space, cyber, and electronic domains. During this period, the PLA expanded its space capabilities, with reported launches exceeding 60 satellites annually by 2023, emphasizing dual-use technologies for reconnaissance and navigation.
- He was a representative to the 14th National People's Congress.
- In April 2024, amid the PLA's structural reforms that dissolved the SSF and established specialized branches, Chen Hui was transitioned to Political Commissar of the newly formed PLA Aerospace Force (ASF), serving until December 2024. This force consolidated space operations previously under the SSF, focusing on aerospace defense and offensive capabilities, including anti-satellite systems and hypersonic vehicle integration. The reforms, announced

in late 2023, aimed to streamline command for emerging domains, with the Aerospace Force inheriting over 100 operational satellites by mid-2024.

- In December 2024, Chen Hui assumed the role of Political Commissar for the PLA Ground Force (PLAGF), marking a notable cross-branch transition from his prior position in the ASF.

Promotions:

- Chen Hui was promoted to the rank of Major General in July 2011, during his tenure as Deputy Political Commissar at the Air Force Aviation University.
- To the rank of Lieutenant General in September 2020, coinciding with his elevated responsibilities in Air Force disciplinary inspection.
- To the rank of General on December 23, 2024.

Miscellaneous:

- With his appointment to his current position Chen Hui replaced Qin Shutong, whose abrupt departure from the role was announced without detailed explanation by official state media.

Cao Junzhang (曹均章)



DOB: 1965

Age: 61

Ethnicity: Han

POB: Chongqing, Sichuan Province

Rank: Lieutenant General of the People's
Armed Police

Current Position: Acting Commander of China's People's Armed Police (PAP)

Previous Position: Deputy Commander of the People's Armed Police

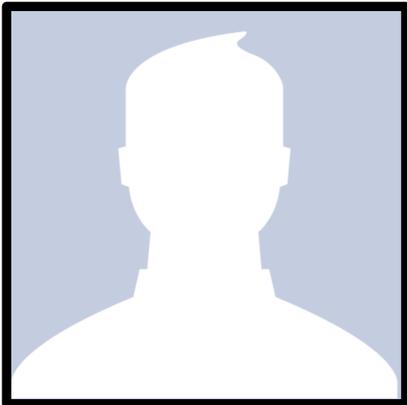
Experience:

- His career has been closely tied to China's northwestern and western frontier regions, particularly border areas opposite India. Cao Junzhang served for a long period in the former Chengdu Military Region. He held positions that included Director of the Operations Department of the Chengdu Military Region Headquarters, Division Commander of a unit under the former 13th Group Army, and Chief of Staff of the Sichuan Provincial Military District.
- In 2016, he became Deputy Commander of the former 13th Group Army. The erstwhile 13th Group Army was known as one of the PLA's most proficient formations in mountain, plateau, and tropical jungle warfare, earning honorifics such as "Fierce Tigers of the Mountains" and the "Great Wall of the Southern Frontier." It was also one of the PLA's rapid-reaction forces.
- In addition, the former 13th Group Army participated in the Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Indian self-defensive counterattacks, as well as peacekeeping missions in Cambodia, Haiti, and Africa. During the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake relief operations, the entire group army was mobilized. It was one

of the fastest units to cover 400 kilometres in just 3.5 hours to reach the disaster zone with virtually no preparation time.

- After the military reforms in 2016, Cao Junzhang was appointed Deputy Commander of the 76th Group Army in the Western Theatre Command. Chinese public sources cite 76th Group Army as the formation with the 'highest average garrison altitude, the weakest infrastructure, and the harshest natural conditions among the 13 group armies. They mentioned that the unit is stationed all-year-round in China's northwest frontier regions and trains in extreme environments such as deserts, gobi terrain, and high-altitude cold plateaus, aiming to build a hardened high-altitude combat force.
- According to the media reports, on March 26, 2017, Cao Junzhang's father passed away due to illness. As a newly appointed Deputy Group Army Commander, and with operational demands pressing, Cao Junzhang returned to duty just two days later from his hometown to resume work.
- In April 2017, Cao Junzhang, along with the WTC Ground Force's Deputy Commander Major General Wang Kai, visited the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army Western Route Army Memorial Hall in Gaotai County, Gansu Province to commemorate revolutionary history and conduct political education with the troops.
- In 2020, Cao Junzhang was appointed Deputy Commander of the Joint Logistics Support Force.
- In March 2023, Cao Junzhang was appointed Deputy Commander of the Armed Police Force.
- In 2025, he replaced General Wang Chunning and became the Acting Commander of China's People's Armed Police.

Chen Chi 陈炽



POB: Tieling, Liaoning Province

Rank: Lieutenant General in the PLA Air Force (PLAAF)

Current Position: Director of CMC's Logistics Support Department

Previous Position: Deputy Director of CMC's Logistics Support Department

Experience

- Served as Chief of Staff and later Commander of the 2nd Regiment of the Southern Air Force Training Base (Baitabu)
- Served as Commander of the Jinan Military Region Air Force Training Base
- Served as President of the Air Force Shijiazhuang Flight Academy. In this role, he oversaw pilot cultivation, curriculum design, and teaching-evaluation reforms at a time when the PLA was emphasizing higher training standards and talent quality.
- In 2022, Chen Chi was transferred to the CMC Logistics Support Department as a Deputy Director of CMC's Logistics Support Department.
- In September 2025, Chen Chi was appointed Deputy Director of CMC Logistics Support Department.
- Chen Chi's professional trajectory reflects a consistent specialization in flight training and training-base management.

Promotions

- In June 2019, he was promoted to the rank of Major General (少将).

Miscellaneous

- In 2019, while he was serving as President of the Air Force Shijiazhuang Flying Academy, he wrote an article on reforms to improve the quality of pilot training, with a clear focus on preparing for real combat and implementation of Xi Jinping Thought on Strengthening the Military, citing measures taken by the academy to cultivate high-quality, professional flight personnel.
- In 2022, Chen Chi, then a Major General and Deputy Minister of the CMC Logistic Support Department, addressed the opening ceremony (via video) of China-Laos “Peace Train-2022” Humanitarian Medical Rescue Joint Exercise, a bilateral military-medical drill held in Phonhong, Laos, marking the first overseas deployment of a PLA hospital train and integrating medical treatment with epidemic prevention and control to improve joint rescue capabilities.

Connections

- At the time of his promotion, the Commander of the Central Theatre Command Air Force was Han Shengyan, a Lieutenant General who also served concurrently as Deputy Commander of the Central Theatre Command. The Air Force Shijiazhuang Flight Academy was administratively subordinate to the Central Theatre Command Air Force, placing Chen Chi directly under Han Shengyan during his tenure as Academy President.
- Chen Chi served under Han Shengyan on more than one occasion. Han Shengyan previously acted as overall commander of major PLA Air Force training and parade-related tasks, and Chen Chi was subordinate to him both during his time in training units and later while serving as President of the Shijiazhuang Flight Academy.

Cui Yuzhong (崔玉忠)



DOB: November 1964

Age: 62

POB: Hailun County, Heilongjiang

Rank: Lieutenant General of PLA Navy

Current Position: Acting Commander of the PLAN

Previous position: Deputy Commander of the PLAN

Experience:

- He served as the Chief of Staff of the Naval Aviation Force of the North Sea Fleet. In July 2013, he became Assistant Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army Navy.
- In March 2016, he was appointed Deputy Commander of the South Sea Fleet, concurrently serving as Commander of South Sea Fleet Naval Aviation Force.
- In July 2016, he was transferred to the East Sea Fleet and appointed Deputy Commander of the East Sea Fleet and concurrently served as the Commander of East Sea Fleet Naval Aviation Force.
- In April 2020, he became Deputy Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army Navy.
- In December 2020, he was promoted as the Deputy Commander of the Eastern Theatre Command.
- In June 2021, he was appointed Deputy Commander of People's Liberation Army Navy.

- He was a delegate to the 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party and an Alternate Member of the 19th CCP CC and 20th CCP CC. In November 2023, he participated in the Beijing Xiangshan Forum.
- In September 2025, Cui Yuzhong in his capacity as Deputy Commander of the PLA Navy, hosted an official bilateral visit by a Myanmar Navy delegation to China led by Lieutenant General Htine Win, Chief of Staff of the Myanmar Navy. He held talks on naval cooperation and joint training, and hosted an official welcome banquet.
- In CCTV's News Broadcast coverage of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th CCP CC held in Beijing from October 20-23, 2025, Cui Yuzhong was the only PLA representative interviewed by Xinhua. In the interview, Cui Yuzhong mentioned that the military has undergone a 'revolutionary transformation' (革命性锻造) under Xi Jinping and that high-quality development in national defence and military building has taken new steps forward. He mentioned that the PLA Navy will comprehensively enhance maritime deterrence and real combat capabilities and deliver a satisfactory performance report (交出合格答卷) to the Party Central Committee and Chairman Xi Jinping."

Promotions

- In July 2014, he was promoted to the rank of Major General. In December 2020, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General.

Han Shengyan (韩胜延)



DOB: May 1963

Age: 63

Ethnicity: Han

POB: Zhuolu County, Zhangjiakou, Hebei

Rank: General of the People's Liberation Army Air Force

Current Position: Commander of the PLA Central Theatre Command and member of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee of the 14th National People's Congress

Previous position: Deputy Commander of the PLAN

Experience:

- He has spent most of his career in the People's Liberation Army Air Force, where he held a series of command and staff positions. In the early 1990s, he participated in an overseas study program organized by the Chinese military.
- Han Shengyan served as Commander of the 3rd Air Division and the 1st Air Division of the Air Force and then Deputy Chief of Staff of the Chengdu Military Region Air Force.
- In July 2011, he was appointed Chief of Staff of the Lanzhou Military Region Air Force.
- In June 2013, he became Deputy Commander of the Chengdu Military Region Air Force.
- Han Shengyan was appointed Deputy Commander of the Western Theatre Command in September 2016.

- He is a deputy to the 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party and the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party; Deputy to the 14th National People's Congress and Member of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee of the 14th National People's Congress.
- In November 2018, he was transferred to serve as Commander of the Central Theatre Command Air Force. In 2025, he was appointed Commander of the PLA Central Theatre Command. He was also designated parade commander of the 2025 China Victory Day Parade.

Promotion:

- In 2009, he was promoted to the rank of Major General of the Air Force.
- In 2017, Han Shengyan was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General.
- On December 22, 2025, Han Shengyan was promoted to the rank of General.

Miscellaneous:

- In the early 1990s, he wrote a poem titled "The Motherland Is in My Heart," which was published in the People's Daily.
- In 2006, he was recognized as an Outstanding Command Officer of the Entire Army.

Leng Shaojie (冷少杰)



DOB: April 16, 1963

Age: 63

POB: Lishu County, Jilin Province

Rank: Lieutenant General

Current Position: Political Commissar of the PLA Navy

Previous position: Deputy Political Commissar of the Central Theatre Command

Experience

- VADM Leng is a career PLA Army (PLAA) officer with no experience in the PLAN. He spent much of his career assigned to northeast China's former Shenyang Military Region. He is a delegate to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.
- He enlisted in the PLA in October 1982 and has held various posts including soldier, platoon leader, regimental organization officer, divisional propaganda officer, political instructor, Director of the Political Department of an artillery regiment, and Deputy Director of the Political Department of the 3rd Armoured Division.
- In December 2001, he was appointed Political Commissar of the 9th Armoured Regiment and Director of the Political Department of the 3rd Armoured Division.
- In May 2010, he became Political Commissar of the 3rd Armoured Division, later Political Commissar of the 115th Division, and Deputy Director of the Political Department of the 39th Group Army.

- In January 2016, he was appointed Deputy Director of the Political Work Department of the former Shenyang Military Region.
- In September 2018, he became Political Commissar of the PLAA Headquarters Logistics Department.
- In August 2021, he was promoted as Deputy Political Commissar of the Central Theatre Command (CTC) while concurrently serving as Director of CTC Political Work Department.
- As early as December 2024, he was transferred to the PLAN and was appointed Secretary of the PLAN Party Committee.

Promotions

- Leng Shaojie was promoted to the rank of Major General in July 2016.
- He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General in August 2021.

Liu Di (刘镛)



DOB: 1972

Age: 54

Rank: Lieutenant General of PLA Air Force

Current Position: Director of the Training and Management Department of CMC

Previous position: Deputy Director of the Training and Management Department of CMC

Experience

- He served as the Director of the Training Bureau of the Air Force Staff Department (空军参谋部训练局局长). His publicly available profile highlights a career focused on air force training and operational readiness.
- In 2025, he was appointed Director of Training and Management Department of CMC.

Promotion

- He was promoted to the rank of Major General on June 28, 2019.

Zhang Like (张立克)



DOB: February 1967

Age: 58

POB: Nanhe County, Hebei Province

Rank: Lieutenant General

Current Position: Director of the National Defence Mobilisation Department

Previous position: Deputy Director of the National Defence Mobilisation Department

Experience

- Zhang Like spent a long period serving in the PLA Navy. Early on, he served in the Naval Aviation force of the East Sea Fleet, where he held senior leadership posts including Division Chief of Staff and Division Commander. He was later transferred to the PLA Navy of the Southern Theatre Command (formerly the South Sea Fleet), serving as Deputy Commander of Naval Aviation of the Southern Theatre Command Navy.
- In 2022, Zhang Like entered the national defence mobilization system, taking up the post of Commander of the Shandong Provincial Military District and later Deputy Minister of the CMC National Defence Mobilization Department.
- In 2025, he was appointed Director of the Central Military Commission National Defence Mobilization Department.
- Zhang Like is a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress and a deputy to the 14th People's Congress of Shandong Province.

Promotions

- He was promoted to the rank of Major General in December 2019.

Zhu Chuansheng (祝传生)



DOB: 1970

Age: 55

POB: Sheqi County (Shedian Town),
Nanyang, Henan

Rank: Lieutenant General

Current Position: Deputy Chief of the CMC Joint Staff Department

Previous position: Deputy Commander of PLA Navy Unit 91811

Zhu Chuansheng was born in Laojie Community, Shedian Town, Sheqi County, Nanyang City, Henan Province. His father was a cadre who moved south (南下干部). Although originally from Bole Township, Chengwu County, Shandong, he relocated for work and settled in Sheqi County in the 1960s. As per Chinese media, Zhu Chuansheng grew up immersed in this environment and aspired to follow his elders' example by joining the military and serving the country.

Experience:

- Zhu Chuansheng has held a range of operational and command posts, including regimental commander of a “Brave and Combat-Capable Model Regiment” under the former Guangzhou Military Region, chief of staff of a division, and commander of Unit 75120 stationed in Guangxi.
- On October 1, 2019, he served as formation leader of the amphibious assault vehicle unit during the 70th anniversary National Day military parade in Beijing. The contingent was formed from units under the PLA Navy Marine Corps.
- Currently, Zhu Chuansheng serves as Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff Department, and Assistant to assisting Chief of the CMC Joint Staff Department Liu Zhenli, who was placed under investigation in January 2026.

Promotion:

- He was promoted from PLA Navy Senior Colonel to Major General on January 9, 2018, while serving as Deputy Commander of Unit 91811.

Miscellaneous:

- In November 2014, Zhu Chuansheng published an article in the PLA Daily, in which he pointed out shortcomings observed in military exercises. Based on evaluation of recent exercises, he noted that command posts commonly suffer from problems such as overly ambitious setups, excessively large battlefield objectives, and slow mobility and redeployment. On the modern battlefield, he argued, “large often means danger, and slow often means death.” In the same article, he suggested that command-post organizations should be designed according to the characteristics of different combat styles, with an emphasis on lean, streamlined structures.
- In November 2025, he published an article titled ‘Accelerating the Development of (PLAN) Marine Corps Combat Capabilities to Win in High End Maritime Warfare’ in which he mentioned that China’s national security threats are at sea and advocated identifying the Marine Corps operational role in winning in combat. He mentioned that it must urgently focus on the development of “Three major strategic capabilities” (三大战略能力), including joint academy training and a potential amphibious-warfare academy to address weak personnel cultivation and meet future operational demands.