

## **China to hold drills with Malaysia in Malacca Strait**

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**Reuters**

China will hold joint military drills next month with Malaysia in the strategic Strait of Malacca, and will also hold training exercises with Australia and the United States in Australia, China's Defence Ministry said today.

China's rapidly modernising armed forces have been increasing their global reach and carrying out exercises in ever more distant locations, as the government seeks to protect its interests around the world.

But China has jangled nerves, especially in its territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas with a growing assertiveness.

Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson Yang Yujun said the Malacca Strait drill would involve 1,160 Chinese personnel, two Chinese warships, helicopters and transport aircraft.

It would focus on disaster relief, search and rescue and hijack rescue, he said.

Piracy is a problem in the strait, between peninsular Malaysia and Indonesia's Sumatra island, through which most of China's crude oil imports pass from the Middle East and Africa.

Malaysia's image in China was battered after the disappearance of a Malaysia Airlines flight with 239 people on board, most of them Chinese nationals, last year. Malaysia's response to that disaster came under fire in China from the public and state media.

Separately, Yang said that China would take part in survival training and activities like canoeing and mountaineering in Australia with Australian and US forces.

- Reuters

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