# Japan and China face heightened risk of conflict as Chinese carriers operate near Japanese islands



Tensions between Japan and China have escalated following a series of close encounters between military aircraft in the Pacific. Recently, Japan's Defence Ministry expressed grave concerns after a Chinese J-15 fighter jet reportedly came alarmingly close to a Japanese P-3C surveillance aircraft. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi articulated Japan's apprehension, stating that the government had raised the issue with China, emphasising that such incidents could lead to unintended collisions. These incidents are particularly concerning as they occurred amidst the first joint operation of two Chinese aircraft carriers, the Shandong and the Liaoning, in this strategic region.

Details from Japan's Defence Ministry indicate that on Saturday, a Chinese fighter jet took off from the Shandong and pursued a Japanese reconnaissance plane, closing to within 45 meters for approximately 40 minutes. Additionally, on Sunday, another Chinese jet crossed 900 meters in front of a Japanese P-3C for about 80 minutes. The operation of the two Chinese carriers, reportedly spotted near the Japanese islands, showcases China’s expanding military capabilities in the Pacific, a move Japan finds increasingly provocative.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry responded to Japan's protestations by asserting that their military activities are consistent with international law. Spokesperson Lin Jian contended that it was Japanese vessels and aircraft that posed a risk by conducting close reconnaissance of China’s military movements. The situation reveals a significant friction point, given that these encounters are occurring as the region witnesses heightened military activity from both nations.

Militarily, the waters off Iwo Jima, where these incidents transpired, are strategically significant and are now accessible to Chinese carriers, raising alarms not just in Japan but also among U.S. military officials. The region's growing complexity is underscored by a recent incident involving a Chinese J-11 fighter jet, which came dangerously close to an American B-52 bomber over the South China Sea, making international headlines. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command reported that this encounter nearly resulted in a collision, as the Chinese jet executed reckless manoeuvres in proximity to the American aircraft. This incident mirrored Japan's concerns, highlighting a worrying trend of unsafe interactions between military aircraft in the Asia-Pacific region.

Military experts warn that such close encounters not only pose risks of aerial collisions but also exacerbate already fraught geopolitical tensions. With both Japan and the U.S. increasing their military vigilance in response to China's growing assertiveness, the airspace over not just the East China Sea but the broader Pacific is becoming a potential flashpoint for future conflicts. As these nations navigate a complex balance of power, the emphasis remains on avoiding miscalculations that could have dire repercussions for regional stability.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/china-japan-pacific-tokyo-guam-b2768704.html), [[4]](https://www.aerotime.aero/articles/chinese-fighter-jet-in-near-collision-with-us-b-52-bomber-over-south-china-sea)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/china-japan-pacific-tokyo-guam-b2768704.html), [[2]](https://www.apnews.com/article/us-south-china-sea-military-jet-bomber-0af848de95db435276e7642a4a401939), [[5]](https://www.npr.org/2023/10/27/1208941174/a-chinese-fighter-jet-came-within-10-feet-of-a-b-52-bomber-u-s-military-says)
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2. <https://www.apnews.com/article/us-south-china-sea-military-jet-bomber-0af848de95db435276e7642a4a401939> - On October 27, 2023, the U.S. military reported that a Chinese J-11 fighter jet came within 10 feet of an American B-52 bomber over the South China Sea, nearly causing an accident. The Chinese aircraft approached the U.S. plane at an uncontrolled excessive speed, flying below, in front of, and within 10 feet of the B-52, putting both aircraft in danger of a collision. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command expressed concern that the Chinese pilot was unaware of the proximity to the American aircraft. China's Foreign Ministry suggested that the U.S. aircraft was provocatively operating in the region. This incident underscores the potential for mishaps as both nations vie for influence in the area. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/us-south-china-sea-military-jet-bomber-0af848de95db435276e7642a4a401939?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/10/27/us-military-says-chinese-fighter-jet-came-within-10-feet-b-52-bomber-over-south-china-sea.html> - The U.S. military reported that on October 24, 2023, a Chinese J-11 fighter jet came within 10 feet of an American B-52 bomber over the South China Sea, nearly causing an accident. The Chinese aircraft approached the U.S. plane at an uncontrolled excessive speed, flying below, in front of, and within 10 feet of the B-52, putting both aircraft in danger of a collision. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command expressed concern that the Chinese pilot was unaware of the proximity to the American aircraft. China's Foreign Ministry suggested that the U.S. aircraft was provocatively operating in the region. This incident underscores the potential for mishaps as both nations vie for influence in the area. ([military.com](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/10/27/us-military-says-chinese-fighter-jet-came-within-10-feet-of-b-52-bomber-over-south-china-sea.html?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.aerotime.aero/articles/chinese-fighter-jet-in-near-collision-with-us-b-52-bomber-over-south-china-sea> - On October 24, 2023, a Chinese J-11 fighter jet came within 10 feet of a U.S. Air Force B-52 bomber over the South China Sea, nearly causing a collision. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command stated that the Chinese pilot flew in an unsafe and unprofessional manner, closing with uncontrolled excessive speed. The U.S. military expressed concern that the Chinese pilot was unaware of how close he came to causing a collision. China's Foreign Ministry suggested that the U.S. aircraft was provocatively operating in the region. This incident highlights the potential for mishaps as both nations vie for influence in the area. ([aerotime.aero](https://www.aerotime.aero/articles/chinese-fighter-jet-in-near-collision-with-us-b-52-bomber-over-south-china-sea?utm_source=openai))
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