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China Maritime Report #58: Tightening the Institutional Cage: The PLA Navy's Discipline Inspection Commission

Eric Hundman

Connor Akiyama

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Main Findings

- The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) operates a pervasive system of discipline inspection commissions (DICs) spanning the Party and military hierarchy to enforce political discipline and loyalty.
- The PLAN headquarters DIC supervises a system of subordinate PLAN DIC organizations located in major units across the navy. Broadly speaking, that system is designed to enforce party discipline among PLAN personnel.
- The CCP's specific priorities for discipline in the PLAN have shifted over the years, and they currently center on failure to adhere to (or succeed in implementing) political priorities, lax training, financial impropriety, and abuse of military benefits.
- Corruption in the PLAN DIC context is much broader than commonly thought and includes not only financial corruption but also political and moral concerns.
- Enforcing discipline gives the PLAN DIC a role in personnel selection and management.
- Disciplinary measures imposed by DICs can, per CMC guidance, include anything from dismissal from the military altogether to warnings, demotions, and records of demerit.
- Annoyance with discipline inspection officials seems likely to be substantial. According to some PLA accounts, this annoyance has translated into passive resistance.
- The activities of the PLAN DIC and its subordinate DICs may have resulted in a higher degree of professionalism among PLAN personnel, although the magnitude of the change is not clear based on publicly available information.
- For the PLAN, as well as the rest of the PLA, political loyalty in contemporary China means personal control by and loyalty to Xi Jinping himself.

Introduction

Ever since the CCP was founded, one of its driving concerns has been maintaining its “revolutionary spirit” (革命精神) by enforcing party policy and strengthening discipline among its members. The most important mechanisms for doing so have had various names, but they are best known in their contemporary form as discipline inspection commissions (DICs, 纪律检查委员会). During his tenure, Xi Jinping has blended the Party's longstanding desire for internal discipline into what he portrays as an existential battle against the vast corruption that he views as emblematic of historical nihilism, which involves dangerous contradictions of the People's Republic of China's official narratives.¹ Broadly speaking, while the specific violations defined as “corruption” and problems with “discipline” have shifted over time, the broad goal of enforcing political discipline and loyalty

¹ “The Symptoms, Damages, and Lessons of Historical Nihilism in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” *Contemporary World and Socialism*, translated by CSIS Interpret: China, 20 December 2019, <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/the-symptoms-damages-and-lessons-of-historical-nihilism-in-the-communist-party-of-the-soviet-union/>.

to the Party remain the same.² Today, the CCP operates a pervasive system of DICs spanning the Party hierarchy, all of which are ultimately overseen by the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC, 中央纪律检查委员会).³

Starting in 1981, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) established its DIC system. It was directed by the Central Military Commission's (CMC, 中央军事委员会) DIC.⁴ This system has also gone through numerous changes over the years. In the 2016 “above the neck” reforms to the PLA, the CMC DIC was upgraded in status from a subordinate office of the (now dissolved) CMC General Political Department (GPD) to an office directly subordinate to the CMC itself, and the CMC DIC secretary, Zhang Shengmin, was elevated to serve as a CMC member. This upgrade centralized the military's discipline inspection system and ensured it could report directly to CMC leaders. With this new structure, the military's DIC system “now functions as a parallel chain of information that reaches directly up to Xi and provides an independent assessment of the performance of commanders, political commissars, and party committees.”⁵

The PLA Navy (PLAN) headquarters also hosts its own Discipline Inspection Commission, which has undergone a number of organizational and mission changes over the past few decades. Today, the PLAN DIC appears to be at the top of a PLAN hierarchy of DICs that extend down into operational units. Importantly, national-level regulations indicate that it is probably a cohesive hierarchical system in the sense that the PLAN headquarters DIC does not have a distinct mission from lower-level DICs. It does, however, have more authority than they do and would be responsible for managing disciplinary cases that lower-level DICs could not resolve. That process is laid out in more detail below, and while it is not clear from public reporting which specific units will have DICs, the system extends at least down to individual bases and units.⁶

DICs are present in the Theater Commands, although it is not clear whether those commissions are subordinate to the service branch headquarters DICs or subordinate to the CMC in parallel to service branch headquarters DICs. Other reporting indicates the Theater Command DICs may focus more on violations involved in operational matters, while other DICs in naval components of the Theater Commands remain supervised generally by the PLAN headquarters DIC.⁷ Theater Command DICs

² Aisi Zhang, “China's New Anti-Corruption System: Strengths, Limitations, and the Embedded Dilemma,” *China: An International Journal* 23, no. 4 (November 2025), pp. 1-21, <https://dx.doi.org/10.56159/chn.2025.a976470>.

³ Xuezhi Guo, “Controlling Corruption in the Party: China's Central Discipline Inspection Commission,” *The China Quarterly* 219 (September 2014), pp. 597-624, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741014000770>.

⁴ Graham Young, “Control and Style: Discipline Inspection Commissions Since the 11th Congress,” *The China Quarterly* 97 (March 1984), pp. 24-52, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000008481>.

⁵ Philip C. Saunders, Arthur S. Ding, Andrew Scobell, Andrew N.D. Yang, and Joel Wuthnow, eds, *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), p. 29.

⁶ 秦生祥在海军纪委扩大会议上强调：全面深入贯彻习主席重军强军精神推进海军正风肃纪反腐工作向纵深发展 [“At the Enlarged Meeting of the Navy Disciplinary Inspection Commission, Qin Shengxiang Emphasized: Thoroughly and Comprehensively Implement the Spirit of Chairman Xi's Important Speeches to Advance the Navy's Work on Discipline Inspection and Anti-Corruption to Greater Depths”], 人民海军 [*People's Navy*], 1 February 2021, p. 1; 傅俊仁 [Fu Junren] and 施建华 [Shi Jianhua], 海军 3 个单位和 4 名个人分别被表彰为全军纪检监察工作先进单位和先进个人 [“Three Units and Four Individuals of the Navy Were Respectively Commended as Advanced Units and Individuals in the Discipline Inspection and Supervision Work of the Entire Military”], 人民海军 [*People's Navy*], 5 November 2021, p. 1.

⁷ 全军副战区级以上单位纪委书记集体谈军队纪律 [“Secretaries of Disciplinary Inspection Commissions from Units at or Above the Deputy Theater Command Level Across the Entire Military Collectively Discuss Military Discipline”], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 10 October 2016, <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2016/1010/c1011-28764440.html>; 海军党委十二届

are likely at a similar grade to those of the service branches, and they possess both overlapping and joint supervisory authorities that were allegedly addressed in the PLA's 2020 Regulations on Party Building in the Military (中国共产党军队党的建设条例), although how they were addressed has not been made public.⁸

The remainder of this report explores the PLAN headquarters DIC in as much detail as publicly available sources allow. It is worth noting that much of the detail must be inferred from reporting on the full system of naval DICs, because very little public information about the specific actions of the headquarters DIC and its isolated impacts is available. Based on the national-level regulations that are attempting to impose uniformity on the PLA's DIC systems, we treat the PLAN's DICs as a system with coherent goals, led by the PLAN headquarters DIC and the relevant Party committees. On that basis, we first detail the mission of the PLAN Headquarters DIC, go on to explore its personnel and internal organization, highlight its publicly reported activities, and finally conclude with our assessments of its impact, strengths and weaknesses, and implications for the United States.

The Mission of the PLAN Headquarters Discipline Inspection Commission

Broadly speaking, all of the PLA's DICs are supposed to share the same mission laid out by the CMC: they are “responsible for comprehensively and strictly governing the Party and performing its duties of supervision, discipline, and accountability.”⁹ They are CCP enforcement organs, not state legal agencies, and broadly speaking they enforce CCP discipline as the Party defines it at any given time. In the PLA, most recently financial and moral corruption have risen in importance, but this kind of discipline also involves, for instance, avoiding excessive drinking and ensuring that military commands “are obeyed without exception.”¹⁰

The PLAN's official newspaper indicated in 2023 that the “fundamental goal [of the PLAN headquarter DIC] is to urge the Party organizations of relevant units to shoulder their main responsibilities and promote the implementation of comprehensive and strict party discipline.”¹¹ In general, that involves identifying discipline violations, processing cases and passing judgment,

六次全体（扩大）会议在京闭幕 [“The Sixth Plenary (Enlarged) Meeting of the 12th Party Committee of the Navy Concluded in Beijing”], 人民海军 [*People's Navy*], 8 January 2021, p. 1.

⁸ 李兵正 [Li Bingzheng], 全面加强新时代军队党的建设——中央军委政治工作部领导就《中国共产党军队党的建设条例》答记者问 [“Comprehensively Strengthen the Party Building of the Military in the New Era—The Leaders of the Political Work Department of the Central Military Commission Answered Reporters' Questions about the ‘Regulations on Party Building in the Military of the Communist Party of China’”], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 11 September 2020, p. 2; 杨玉文 [Yang Yuwen], 为强军兴军提供坚强纪律保证——全军副战区级以上单位纪委书记培训班发言摘登 [“Providing a Strong Disciplinary Guarantee for a Strong and Prosperous Army—Excerpts from Speeches at the Training Class for Secretaries of the Disciplinary Committees of Units above the Deputy Theater Level in the Whole Military”], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 27 September 2016, p. 4.

⁹ “Comprehensively Strengthen the Party Building of the Army in the New Era: Leaders of the Political Work Department of the Central Military Commission Answer Reporters' Questions on the Regulations on the Party Building in the Military of the Chinese Communist Party,” *Xinhua*, Translated by CSIS, 10 September 2020, <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/comprehensively-strengthen-the-party-building-of-the-army-in-the-new-era-leaders-of-the-political-work-department-of-the-central-military-commission-answer-reporters-questions-on-the-regulations-on/>.

¹⁰ “Secretaries of Disciplinary Inspection Commissions from Units at or Above the Deputy Theater Command Level Across the Entire Military Collectively Discuss Military Discipline.”

¹¹ 李优 [Li You] and 伍飞 [Wu Fei], 北部战区海军纪委建立完善全流程监督体系 岷点榆佳发力 重长效全程踟 [“The Northern Theater Command Navy Discipline Inspection Commission Has Established a Complete Full-Process Supervision System, Making Great Efforts to Focus on Long-Term Effectiveness and Full Process”], 人民海军 [*People's Navy*], 5 July 2023, p. 1.

deciding on penalties (or passing the case elsewhere, if needed), and establishing policies and mechanisms for reducing the likelihood of such violations in the future. It furthermore issues policy guidance for lower-level PLAN DICs at bases and individual units.

It is worth noting the related tasks for which the PLAN DIC is not responsible: security and counterintelligence, the procuratorates, and the military court system. All of those functions fall to the PLAN Politics and Legal Affairs Commission (PLAC), which works closely with the PLAN DIC to uncover and prosecute acts of corruption.¹² The secretary of the PLAC is typically the first-ranked deputy political commissar, and the secretary of the PLAN DIC is typically the second-ranked deputy political commissar.¹³ This implies that DIC cases brought against the senior leadership of the PLAC are likely to be routed upwards to the CMC's political organs to carry out punishments.

The current priorities of the PLAN DIC are focused on implementing Xi's guidance of various types—most likely including the “Chairman Responsibility System,” which assigns ultimate authority in military affairs to CMC Chairman Xi Jinping—and combatting the “Four Malpractices” (lit. “Four Winds,” 四风) of “formalism, bureaucratism, hedonism, and extravagance” (形式主义、官僚主义、享乐主义和奢靡之风).¹⁴ These goals have been in place for around a decade and are intended make the PLA more professional and effective, as well as to “further win the trust of the people and enhance their confidence with the new achievements in work style construction.”¹⁵ Starting shortly after the 2016 reforms to the PLA, the focus in the PLAN appeared to be on bad behavior among high-level “leading cadres,” who had a number of issues that the PLAN DIC reported openly: some were reported for using public vehicles for personal purposes, some were investigated and punished for illegal banquets and drinking, and some were held accountable for their lack of success in correcting the “Four Malpractices.”¹⁶ DIC cadres themselves have further stressed

¹² “Regulation on the Communist Party of China's Political-Legal Work,” *China Law Translate*, 18 January 2019, <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/regulation-on-the-communist-party-of-chinas-political-legal-work/>.

¹³ 习近平在二十届中央纪委二次全会上发表重要讲话强调一刻不停推迷 全面从 严治党保障党的二十大决策部署贯彻落实 [“Xi Jinping Delivered an Important Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the 20th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, Emphasizing that We Must Continue to Solve the Mystery and Strictly Govern the Party in an All-Around Way to Ensure the Implementation of the Decisions and Arrangements of the 20th National Party Congress”], 人民海军 [*People's Navy*], 10 January 2023, p. 1; and 张文龙 [Zhang Wenlong] and 牛涛 [Niu Tao], 海军党委政法工作电视电话会议强调坚决贯彻中央政法工作会议精神为海军建设发展创造良好安全环境 [“The Navy Party Committee's Political and Legal Work Teleconference Emphasized the Resolute Implementation of the Spirit of the Central Political and Legal Work Conference to Create a Good and Safe Environment for the Construction and Development of the Navy”], 人民海军 [*People's Navy*], 24 February 2023, p. 1.

¹⁴ “CMC Leaders Participate in Thematic Meetings of Democratic Life in PLA Major Units,” *China Military Online*, 18 October 2023, <http://en.people.cn/90786/8429055.html>; 四风 [“The Four Winds”], 维基百科 [*Wikipedia*], n.d., accessed 12 April 2025, <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%9B%9B%E9%A3%8E>; “Secretaries of Disciplinary Inspection Commissions from Units at or Above the Deputy Theater Command Level Across the Entire Military Collectively Discuss Military Discipline.”

¹⁵ 钧浩 [Jun Hao], 推动全面从严落到基层末端形成常态长效 [“Promote Comprehensive and Strict Implementation at the Grassroots Level to Form a Normal and Long-Term Effect”], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 23 December 2024, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/101633112>; 新华社评论员: 狠刹“四风”, 严惩腐败 -- 学习贯彻习近平总书记十九届中央纪委三次全会重要讲话精神 [“Xinhua News Commentator: Severely Curb the ‘Four Malpractices’ and Severely Punish Corruption—Study and Implement the Spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's Important Speech at the Third Plenary Session of the 19th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection”], 新华网 [*Xinhua Online*], 13 July 2019, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0113/c40531-30524426.html>.

¹⁶ 于波涛 [Yu Botao], 曲涛 [Qu Tao], and 王智涛 [Wang Zhitao], 正分肃纪: 咬定青山不放松 [“Rectify Rules and Discipline: Hold on to the Green Mountains and Never Let Go”], 人民海军 [*People's Navy*], 17 April 2019, p. 4.

the importance of the 30,000 RMB (~\$4,100 USD) redline that requires transferring bribery and embezzlement cases exceeding this amount to the judiciary.¹⁷ It is worth noting, however, that the kinds of corruption the PLAN DIC is concerned with are not simply economic—they are also tasked with ensuring personnel are doing their best to set an example that can “contribute to creating a clean and upright environment for the troops.”¹⁸ As specified in more detail below, this can involve anything from avoiding lavish banquets to demonstrating effort in training sessions.

More specifically, a 2020 special inspection initiative of the Southern Theater Command Navy’s DIC provided further details on six current PLAN priorities for discipline:¹⁹

- 1) At the top of the list was searching for failures of political discipline, including lax implementation of regulations, inappropriate commentary on major policies, and insufficient success in achieving stated priorities.
- 2) Second was identifying problems with the organization of inspections and with lack of interest in training.
- 3) The third priority focused on the aforementioned “Four Malpractices,” including the misuse of public funds, inappropriately receiving or sending gifts, “lavishly holding weddings or funerals,” and using funds without reporting them properly.
- 4) The next category was broadly focused on unearthing illegal behavior: infringing on servicemembers’ rights, taking bribes to allow home visits, drunk driving, and online gambling.
- 5) This initiative further focused on personnel who pursue benefits beyond those that are currently allowed, such as expensive vehicles, “housing of excessive size and standards,” and seeking preferential access at entertainment venues and tourist attractions.
- 6) Finally, the notice specified “other situations related to improving work style.”

Mirroring the Party’s wider “tigers and flies” anti-corruption campaign, the PLA’s focus on leading, high-level corrupt individuals appears to have expanded downwards to focus on improving the “grassroots atmosphere” among personnel in the lower levels of the military. A 2018 article discussing Xi’s inspection of the PLAN headquarters, for instance, noted that “[o]ver the past year,

¹⁷ 吴伟 [Wu Wei], 聚力正体清源勇做忠诚卫士 [“Focus on the Rectification and Purity and Be a Loyal Guard”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], 21 June 2021, p. 3.

¹⁸ “Focus on the Rectification and Purity and Be a Loyal Guard.”

¹⁹ 南海舰队 [South China Sea Fleet], 南部战区海军纪委对 2023 年中秋国庆期间作风建设专项督查工作作出部署 [“The Southern Theater Command Navy Discipline Inspection Commission Has Made Arrangements for the Special Inspection of Work Style Construction during the Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day in 2023”], 腾讯网 [Tencent Online], 26 September 2023, <https://news.qq.com/rain/a/20230926A038ZZ00>. Special inspections do not seem to have standard parameters for DICs, but in other contexts they appear to have been campaigns to improve progress on specific areas of concern for leadership. See, for example, 汤传飞 [Tang Chuanfei], 军委纪委部署开展作风建设专项督查工作 [“The Central Military Commission’s Discipline Inspection Commission Has Launched a Special Inspection Campaign to Strengthen Conduct and Improve Work Style”], 新华社 [Xinhua News Agency], 29 April 2018, <http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/qwfb/jwjljcwyyh/4812244.html>.

the Navy has held hundreds of training sessions at all levels and trained more than 100,000 cadres, *pushing learning to go deeper and extend it to the grassroots.*”²⁰

This focus on grassroots discipline continues today. At the beginning of 2024, for instance, the CMC’s Political Work Department and DIC (which, recall, directly supervises the PLAN Headquarters DIC) jointly issued a notice calling for standardized execution of the “First Form” (第一种形态) guideline for ideological education among the grassroots, which it sees as a process for identifying and resolving nascent disciplinary issues.²¹ “Grassroots atmosphere supervisors” have also apparently become common in PLA units. Appointed by unit discipline inspection committees, they appear to serve as ground-level enforcers of rules and policies promulgated by both unit and higher-level DICs.²² One example in the PLA Army, for instance, notes that they are trained to handle specific areas especially in need of supervision, including training, sensitive matters, engineering construction, and bidding and procurement.”²³

Composition of the PLAN Headquarters DIC

The complete organizational structure of the PLAN headquarters DIC has not been made public. However, public reporting has confirmed it operates an Inspection and Supervision Bureau (海军纪委监委纪检监察局), a Case Handling and Security Office (办案保障室), and a Case Hearing Department (案件审理处).²⁴ In 2011, the PLAN DIC established the Navy Discipline Inspection and Supervision Cadre Training Base (海军纪检监察干部培训基地) on a model similar to the CDIC’s Hangzhou Training Center (中央纪委监察部杭州培训中心), although there has been no additional reporting about the current status of this base.²⁵

²⁰ 向海图强谱新篇 [“Striving for a Strong Maritime Future”], 解放军报 [PLA Daily], reprinted in *Sina News* [新浪新闻], 25 May 2018, <https://news.sina.com.cn/o/2018-05-25/doc-ihaysvvy3664378.shtml>.

²¹ “Chinese Military Activities Report, 15 March 2021,” *U.S. Army Asian Studies Detachment*, 15 March 2021.

²² Similar to other aspects of the Chinese political system, the PLAN headquarters DIC appears to operate at the top of a hierarchy of similar organizations in lower-level organizations subordinate to them. The CMC issues guidance for the service branch DICs, which in turn issue guidance for lower-level DICs in their respective branches. Meetings of the PLAN headquarters DIC, for instance, involve reports on discipline and law enforcement in lower-level PLAN units. “At the Enlarged Meeting of the Navy Disciplinary Inspection Commission, Qin Shengxiang Emphasized: Thoroughly and Comprehensively Implement the Spirit of Chairman Xi’s Important Speeches to Advance the Navy’s Work on Discipline Inspection and Anti-Corruption to Greater Depths,” p. 1.

²³ 薛维高 [Xue Weigao], 陆天成 [Lu Tiancheng], and 朱磊磊 [Zhu Leilei], 打造基层风气监督专业队伍, 这个旅都想出了哪些实招? [“In Order to Build a Professional Team for Supervising Grassroots Work Styles, what Practical Measures Has This Brigade Come Up With?”], 解放军报 [PLA Daily], 4 November 2024, http://www.81.cn/yw_208727/16349272.html.

²⁴ Fu and Shi, “Three Units and Four Individuals of the Navy Were Recognized as Advanced Units and Individuals in the Discipline Inspection and Supervision Work of the Whole Military,” p. 1; 全国纪检监察系统先进工作者名单 [“List of Advanced Workers in the National Discipline and Inspection Supervision System”], 中央纪委国家监委驻应急管理部纪检监察组 [Discipline Inspection and Supervision Group of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission in the Ministry of Emergency Management], 16 September 2022, https://www.mem.gov.cn/jiz/gzdt/202209/t20220916_422518.shtml; and 在深化“三专”中践行忠诚干净担当 [“Practicing Loyalty, Integrity, and Responsibility in Deepening the ‘Three Specializations’”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], 6 June 2016.

²⁵ 海记宣 [Hai Jixuan], 拒腐防变, 清风正气满海疆 [“Resist Corruption and Prevent Change, and Let the Wind of Justice Fill the Sea”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], 30 November 2011, p. 1.

Members of the PLAN DIC are elected at PLAN Party Congresses every five years, along with the representatives to the next PLAN Party Committee.²⁶ Although individuals elected to the PLAN DIC are not typically identified at the Congress, in 2016, four members of the PLAN's DIC were publicly identified as the deputies of the four other major departments.²⁷ However, the size of the DIC is public: in 2017, 11 members were elected to the PLAN DIC, and in 2022, 10 members were elected.²⁸ Immediately after a Party Congress is held, the PLAN Headquarters DIC holds plenary meetings to elect its secretary and deputy secretary.²⁹ Based on recent reporting, the secretary of the PLAN DIC usually concurrently holds two additional positions: as a PLAN deputy political commissar, and as the Supervisory Committee secretary. The deputy secretary of the PLAN DIC concurrently serves as the deputy director of the Supervisory Committee.³⁰

As of early 2026, the PLAN DIC secretary was Vice Admiral Chen Hongke (陈洪珂), who has been serving in the role since the likely removal of Vice Admiral Cheng Dongfang (程东方).³¹ Chen Hongke is likely a career PLA Rocket Force political officer and previously served as political commissar of the Rocket Force Engineering University, but very little else is known about his career.³²

Chen's predecessor, Cheng Dongfang, went missing after entering the role sometime in early 2025. Cheng previously served as deputy secretary of the CMC's Political and Legal Affairs Commission (PLAC), the same role in which another previous PLAN DIC secretary, Liu Xunyan (刘训言) had served for a few months before replacing his predecessor in the PLAN DIC role in 2017.³³ Prior to

²⁶ 中国共产党海军十二次代表大会胜利闭幕 [“The 12th National Congress of the Navy's Chinese Communist Party Successfully Completed”], 人民海军 [People's Navy], 26 May 2017, p. 1; 刘吉文 [Liu Jiwen], 虞章才 [Yu Zhangcai], and 王宏博 [Wang Hongbo], 中国共产党海军第十一次代表大会胜利闭幕 [“The 11th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party Navy Was Successfully Concluded”], 人民海军 [People's Navy], 8 December 2011, p. 1.

²⁷ 岳怀让 [Yue Huairang], 管建国、夏平、毕正、魏刚出任海军纪委副书记 [“Guan Jianguo, Xia Ping, Bi Zheng, and Wei Gang Were Appointed as Deputy Secretaries of the Navy Discipline Inspection Commission”], 澎湃 [The Paper], 14 March 2016, https://web.archive.org/web/20190629060543/https://news.ifeng.com/a/20160314/47840407_0.shtml.

²⁸ 中国共产党海军十二次代表大会胜利闭幕 [“The 12th Congress of the Navy's Communist Party of China Successfully Concluded”], 人民海军 [People's Navy], 26 May 2017, p. 1.

²⁹ 陈和福 [Chen Hefu], 牛涛 [Niu Tao], and 王汉唐 [Wang Hantang], 新一届海军纪委第一次会议在京召开: 刘训言同志主持会议并讲话 [“The First Meeting of the New Navy Discipline Inspection Commission Was Held in Beijing: Comrade Liu Xunyan Presided Over the Meeting and Delivered a Speech”], 人民海军 [People's Navy], 16 June 2022, p. 1.

³⁰ 吴宏博 [Wang Hongbo], 海军参加和支援经济社会建设领导小组第一次会议召开: 研弟曙海军部躺接支持乡村振兴工作 [“The First Meeting of the Navy's Leading Group for Participating in and Supporting Economic and Social Development Was Held: The Navy Department Will Support Rural Revitalization Work”], 人民海军 [People's Navy], 23 June 2021, p. 1.

³¹ China Power Project, “CSIS Database of Chinese Military Purges,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, n.d., accessed 16 March 2026, <https://chinapower.csis.org/data/chinese-pla-military-purges/>; 时局眼 [The Political Watch], 中纪委全会的人事信号: 解放军最年轻上将军常丁求出局 [“Personnel Signals from the CCDI Plenary Session: Chang Dingqiu—the PLA's Youngest General—is Out”], Youtube, 15 January 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epaN875Xka4>.

³² Ma Xiu, “PLA Rocket Force Organization,” *China Aerospace Studies Institute*, 24 October 2022, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Research/PLARF/2022-10-24%20PLARF%20Organization_1.pdf?ver=1L6s2SiplssJ1pjNlyPQQ%3D%3D.

³³ 程东方 [“Cheng Dongfang”], 百度百科 [Baidu Encyclopedia], n.d., accessed 13 April 2025, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E7%A8%B%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9/20380800>; [视频]中央军委政治工作会议在延

taking the PLAC role, Cheng served as the director of the PLA's Hong Kong Garrison Legal Department, vice president of the PLA Military Court, chief prosecutor of the PLA Military Procuratorate, president of the PLA Military Court, and political commissar of the Sichuan Provincial Military District.³⁴ He is depicted in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Cheng Dongfang³⁵

Liu Xunyan, pictured in Figure 2 below, was the first in a generation of PLAN DIC secretaries to have significant career experience in disciplinary investigative work, as well as the first with direct experience in the PLA's investigatory and criminal apparatus.³⁶ Since Xi Jinping took power in 2012, there have been seven PLAN DIC secretaries: Cen Xu (岑旭), Wang Sentai (王森泰), Wang Dengping (王登平), Chen Xuebin (陈学斌), Liu Xunyan, Cheng Dongfang, and Chen Hongke. At least three of these men have prior experience in the CMC's General Political Department, and they all had experience serving as political officers and/or commissars in various operational units. However, none of those serving prior to Liu had the same depth of professional experience with disciplinary organs that he did.

安召开 习近平出席会议并发表重要讲话强调 贯彻落实新时代政治建军方略 为强军事业提供坚强政治保证
 [“Video: The Central Military Commission Political Work Conference Was Held in Yan'an. Xi Jinping Attended the Meeting and Delivered an Important Speech, Emphasizing the Implementation of the Strategy of Political Military Building in the New Era to Provide a Strong Political Guarantee for the Cause of Strengthening the Military”], 央视网 [CCTV Online], 19 June 2024, <https://tv.cctv.com/2024/06/19/VIDEYi5VyduNBq7VMT3uLOs240619.shtml?spm=C22822.PTZDB3iULygm.ErIMl2WCixKb.6>.

³⁴ 汲古知新 [Learn from the Past and Gain New Insights], 海军中将程东方 [“Vice Admiral Cheng Dongfang”], 网易 [NetEase], 26 March 2024, <https://www.163.com/dy/article/JRJAEPKM05563DJA.html>.

³⁵ “Video: The Central Military Commission Political Work Conference Was Held in Yan'an. Xi Jinping Attended the Meeting and Delivered an Important Speech, Emphasizing the Implementation of the Strategy of Political Military Building in the New Era to Provide a Strong Political Guarantee for the Cause of Strengthening the Military.”

³⁶ 今日凯旋的这支舰队出访时间最长访问国家最多 [“The Fleet That Returned Triumphant Today Had the Longest Overseas Visit and Visited the Most Countries”], 新浪新闻 [Sina News], 15 October 2017, <https://news.sina.com.cn/c/nd/2017-10-15/doc-ifymvece2069685.shtml>.

Liu most likely spent much of his early career in the PLA Air Force (PLAAF),³⁷ and later rose to serve as the as the director of the CMC GPD (总政治部) Security Department's Security Bureau, deputy director and director of the GPD's Security Department, and deputy secretary of the CMC PLAC.³⁸ His seven-year tenure as the PLAN DIC's secretary was the longest since his predecessor Liu Xiaojiang (刘晓江), who served from 2001-2008 before becoming the PLAN political commissar.³⁹



Figure 2: Liu Xunyan, secretary of the PLAN DIC until late 2025

Unlike PLAN DIC secretaries, who seem to have come to that role exclusively from careers in political roles, deputy secretaries of the PLAN DIC, historically, can come from either operational or political backgrounds. As of 2021, one deputy secretary of the PLAN Headquarters DIC was Wu Yuhong (吴育红) (multiple individuals can hold this role at once). Information about his career is scant, but unverified reports indicate he may have served as political commissar for the Shanghai Naval Base (海军上海基地).⁴⁰ Wu might have also previously served in the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) as a political commissar of a missile brigade and as a political director of a PLARF base.⁴¹ In late 2018, he was promoted from Senior Captain (大校) to Rear Admiral (少将), and in 2019 one

³⁷ 五大军种新添 19 名中将 这两位是咱济南人! ["The Five Major Military Services Have Added 19 New Lieutenant Generals, Two of Whom Are from Jinan!"], 海报新闻 [Haibao News], 10 July 2019, <https://hb.dzwww.com/p/p8WsLbJ1C5.html?f=00000v&r=vnmh>; 特别报道 ["Special Reports"], 高检网直播访谈 ["Live Interview on the Supreme People's Procuratorate Website"], n.d., accessed 13 April 2025, <https://login.12309.gov.cn:8443/spp/c107762/zxftlist.shtml>.

³⁸ Ibid.; 秦生祥与海军部分老同志座谈 ["Qin Shengxiang Holds Talks with Selected Veteran Comrades of the Navy"], 人民海军 [People's Navy], 10 November 2017, p. 1.

³⁹ 鄭大誠 [Cheng Ta-Chen], 解放軍將領培養之觀察與分析 – 兼論中共十七大軍方人事安排 ["Observing and Analyzing Current Personnel Arrangement of the PLA"], 展望與探索 [Outlook and Prospects], 6, no. 1 (January 2008), pp. 93-108, https://www.mjib.gov.tw/FileUploads/eBooks/c4fa278023294cd8b5dbc688be348775/Book_file/0c1bb4ebf8b74cebb3c65cf9f42b0a6a.pdf.

⁴⁰ 将星闪耀：共和国新增 45 名少将 ["Shining Stars: The People's Republic Added 45 Major Generals"], 澎湃 [The Paper], n.d., accessed 13 April 2025, https://m.thepaper.cn/wifiKey_detail.jsp?contid=2817056&from=wifiKey#.

⁴¹ 常委理论宣讲团 [Standing Committee Theoretical Lecture Group], 岩石与烈焰的交响——品味火箭军战地文化的独特风景 ["A Symphony of Rock and Flame—Savoring the Unique Landscape of the Rocket Force's Battlefield Culture"], 火箭兵报 [Rocket Force News], 13 October 2012, p. 2.

unverified source confirmed that rank and indicated he was deputy political commissar for the Eastern Theater Command Navy (东部战区海军副政委).⁴²

Some other previous deputy secretaries of the PLAN DIC have included:

- Xin Chongdong (辛崇东) (as of 2018), who concurrently served as a PLA deputy to the National People's Congress.⁴³
- Guan Jianguo (管建国) (as of 2016), who previously served as Chief of Staff of the Guangzhou Support Base of the South China Sea Fleet, Commander of the Zhanjiang Base of the Navy, Deputy Chief of Staff of the South China Sea Fleet, and Deputy Commander of the South China Sea Fleet. In 2015, he was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of the Navy.⁴⁴
- Xia Ping (夏平) (as of 2016), who previously served as the head of the cadre department of the Navy Political Department, the director of the Political Department of the Nanjing Political Academy of the PLA, and the deputy director of the Political Department of the North Sea Fleet. In 2015, he was promoted to the role of deputy director of the Navy Political Department.⁴⁵
- Bi Zheng (毕正) (as of 2016), who once served as the director of the Policy Research Office of the Navy Logistics Department and the deputy commander of a naval test base. In 2015, he was transferred to the position of deputy minister of the Navy Logistics Department.⁴⁶
- Wei Gang (魏刚) (as of 2016), who was previously vice president of the Naval University of Engineering and deputy minister of the Navy Equipment Department.⁴⁷

Other personnel identified in the PLAN Headquarters DIC include:

- Gao Xudong (高旭东) (until 2024): member.⁴⁸

⁴² 帧察点 [Frame Observation Point], 共和国武装力量徒步方队+地面装备方队+空中战机梯队 [“The People's Republic's Armed Forces Marching Column + Ground Equipment Column + Air Fighter Column”], 观风闻 [Observer Rumors], 2 October 2019, <https://user.guancha.cn/main/content?id=180632&page=0>.

⁴³ 邵薇 [Shao Wei], 会客厅|人大代表谈形成风清气正的政治生态 [“Reception Room | People's Congress Representatives Talk about Forming a Clean and Upright Political Ecology”], 中国军网综合 [China Military Network Comprehensive], 13 March 2018, http://www.81.cn/2018zt/2018-03/13/content_7969707.htm.

⁴⁴ Yu, “Guan Jianguo, Xia Ping, Bi Zheng, and Wei Gang Were Appointed as Deputy Secretaries of the Navy Discipline Inspection Commission.”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ 事业单位人事管理司 [Personnel Management Department of Public Institutions], 国家药品监督管理局高级研修学院 2023 年度第二批公开招聘拟聘人员公示 [“Announcement of the Second Batch of Candidates for the 2023 Open Recruitment of the National Medical Products Administration Advanced Training Institute”], 国家药品监督管理局高级研修学院 [National Medical Products Administration Advanced Training Institute], 24 March 2024, https://www.mohrss.gov.cn/wap/fw/klzp/zgsygzkp/202403/t20240320_515304.html.

- Xu Xiaoyin (徐小寅) (as of 2022): Deputy Director of the Case Handling and Support Office of the PLAN Headquarters DIC (海军纪委监委办案保障室).⁴⁹
- Wu Wei (吴伟) (as of 2022): member and director of an unspecified bureau.⁵⁰
- Li Chunfei (李纯飞) (as of 2017): director of the Discipline Inspection and Supervision Division of the Discipline Inspection Bureau of the PLAN Headquarters DIC (海军纪委监委纪律检查局纪检监察处处长). He won an award that year from the Central Commission on Discipline Inspection (CCDI), one of only 12 individuals to be so nominated from the PLA and the only nominee that year from the PLAN.⁵¹
- Wang Qiang (王强) (as of 2021): deputy director of the Discipline and Supervision Inspection Bureau (监委纪检监察局) of the PLAN Headquarters DIC.⁵²

As more PLAN officers are promoted through the service's disciplinary and legal organs, and as corruption scandals continue to roil the PLA more broadly, other specialized discipline inspection officers in the mold of Liu and Cheng will likely rise to senior discipline inspection billets. Navy officers serving in theater command navy discipline inspection commissions will likely themselves be rotated into other PLA services because of their limited personal connections to the commands they are assigned to oversee. A prime example of this trend from among PLAN officers is Major General Du Naihua (杜乃华), a DIC secretary for the Western Theater Command Army. Du previously served as the deputy secretary of the Northern Theater Command Navy DIC and worked in the PLAN PWD Discipline Inspection Department before he was transferred to the PLA Army in another discipline inspection role.⁵³ However, the swift removal of Cheng Dongfang in favor of Chen Hongke in early 2026 may indicate that Xi Jinping did not find this kind of professional experience in disciplinary organs sufficient to reduce corruption and that he may consequently be prioritizing political reliability and control.

⁴⁹ 全国纪检监察系统先进工作者名单 [“List of Advanced Workers in the National Discipline Inspection and Supervision System”], 中国纪检监察报 [*China Discipline Inspection and Supervision News*], 16 September 2022, https://www.mem.gov.cn/jjz/gzdt/202209/t20220916_422518.shtml.

⁵⁰ 看，军队党风廉政建设和反腐败斗争取得的历史性成就！ [“Look at the Historic Achievements Made in the Military's Building of Clean and Honest Party Conduct and in the Fight Against Corruption!”], 央视网 [*CCTV Online*], 10 October 2022, <https://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202210/10/WS6344f204a310817f312f1956.html>.

⁵¹ 中共中央纪委嘉奖名单 [“List of Awards from the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party of China”], 中共铜仁市纪律检查委员会、铜仁市监察委员会 [*Tongren Municipal Commission for Discipline Inspection and Tongren City Supervisory Committee*], September 2017, <https://www.trjw.gov.cn/uploadfile/2017/0911/20170911101756700.doc>; and 拟表彰的中央纪委嘉奖名单 [“List of Proposed Central Commission for Discipline Inspection Awards”], 上湘风闻 [*Shangxiang News*], n.d., accessed 13 April 2025, <https://www.sxfj.gov.cn/UploadFiles/da8158dfa72977f822b9c801c2d6442c.doc>.

⁵² “Three Units and Four Individuals of the Navy Were Recognized as Advanced Units and Individuals in the Discipline Inspection and Supervision Work of the Entire Military.”

⁵³ 杜乃华 [“Du Naihua”], 百度百科 [*Baidu Encyclopedia*], n.d., accessed 15 April 2025, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%9D%9C%E4%B9%83%E5%8D%8E/19419485>; 辽宁舰原舰长张峥、原政委梅文双双晋升少将军衔 [“Zhang Zheng, Former Captain of the *Liaoning*, and Mei Wen, Former Political Commissar, Were Both Promoted to the Rank of Major General”], 澎湃 [*The Paper*], n.d., accessed 15 April 2025, https://m.thepaper.cn/wifiKey_detail.jsp?contid=1752181&from=wifiKey#.

Activities of the PLAN Headquarters DIC

The PLAN Headquarters DIC conducts a wide range of activities, often in coordination with the PLAN Headquarters Political Work Department officials and the inspection group at the PLAN Headquarters Party Committee. As discussed briefly above, those activities broadly include identifying discipline violations, processing cases and passing judgment, deciding on penalties (or passing the case elsewhere, if needed), and establishing policies and mechanisms for reducing the likelihood of such violations in the future. Enforcing discipline also gives the PLAN DIC a role in personnel selection and management.

The PLAN DIC is responsible for implementing Navy-specific guidance generated by the PLAN Party Committee, such as the “Measures on Implementing the Requirements of Comprehensively and Strictly Governing the Party to Promote a Fundamental Improvement in the Political Ecology of the Navy” (关于贯彻全面从严治党要求推动海军政治生态根本好转的措施) (likely issued around 2018).⁵⁴ Implementing such guidance, broadly speaking, involves a combination of formal disciplinary casework, regular “open and secret” inspection activities,⁵⁵ supporting and training “grassroots” volunteer inspectors, and propaganda work. As part of the dual leadership for subordinate DICs, the PLAN Headquarters DIC additionally provides a core oversight function over the rest of the navy’s DICs.

The Discipline Inspection Investigation Process

According to the “Discipline Regulations of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (2025)” (中国人民解放军纪律条令 (2025 年)) promulgated by the CMC, the services’ discipline investigation processes—including those of the PLAN—are supposed to be unified.⁵⁶ Following the discovery of a violation, the DIC in receipt of a case or complaint would in most cases be the primary party organ tasked with verifying the facts of the case and preparing a report for its corresponding party committee.⁵⁷ Under these regulations, the party committee is required to meet with the accused individual and hear their opinions. Afterwards, the party committee will study the report and decide on the punishment if it is within their authority to do so. These regulations require units complete this entire process within 45 days of the discovery of the violation, except in special circumstances in

⁵⁴ 海军党委 [PLA Navy Party Committee], 努力把人民海军全面建成世界一流海军 —— 深入学习贯彻习近平主席海上阅兵重要讲话精神 [“Strive to Build the People’s Navy into a World-Class Navy in an All-Around Way – Deeply Study and Implement the Spirit of President Xi Jinping’s Important Speech at the Naval Parade”], 求是 [Seeking Truth], 31 May 2018, http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2018-05/31/c_1122897922.htm.

⁵⁵ 向海图强谱新篇 [“Striving for a Strong Maritime Future”], 解放军报 [PLA Daily], reprinted in 新浪新闻 [Sina News], 25 May 2018, <https://news.sina.com.cn/o/2018-05-25/doc-ihaysvivy3664378.shtml>.

⁵⁶ 中国人民解放军纪律条令 (2025 年) [“Discipline Regulations of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (2025)”], 维基文库 [Wikisource], n.d., accessed 15 April 2025, [https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E8%A7%A3%E6%94%BE%E5%86%9B%E7%BA%AA%E5%BE%8B%E6%9D%A1%E4%BB%A4_\(2025%E5%B9%B4\)](https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E8%A7%A3%E6%94%BE%E5%86%9B%E7%BA%AA%E5%BE%8B%E6%9D%A1%E4%BB%A4_(2025%E5%B9%B4)); and 中國人民解放軍紀律條令（試行） [“Discipline Regulations of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (Trial Implementation)”], 解放军报 [PLA Daily], 18 April 2018, http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/qwfb/4809753_4.html.

⁵⁷ Units and individuals in the PLAN can, per the regulations, report to DICs at any level, including but not limited to the PLAN headquarters DIC. Per the regulations, violations can be reported “either through established hierarchical channels or by bypassing intermediate levels,” and “when reporting or filing complaints... details of the matter may be submitted to the military’s disciplinary inspection and supervision departments or its political and legal affairs departments.” “Discipline Regulations of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (2025);” “Discipline Regulations of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (Trial Implementation).”

which approvals are needed from higher authorities for certain unspecified violations. Following this decision, the units then have 30 days to publicly announce the decision through a meeting, and in special situations, the punishment can be circulated in writing or privately handed to the disciplined party. The punished individual has 30 days following the announcement to appeal the decision. See the flowchart in Figure 3 (below) for a visualization of this process.

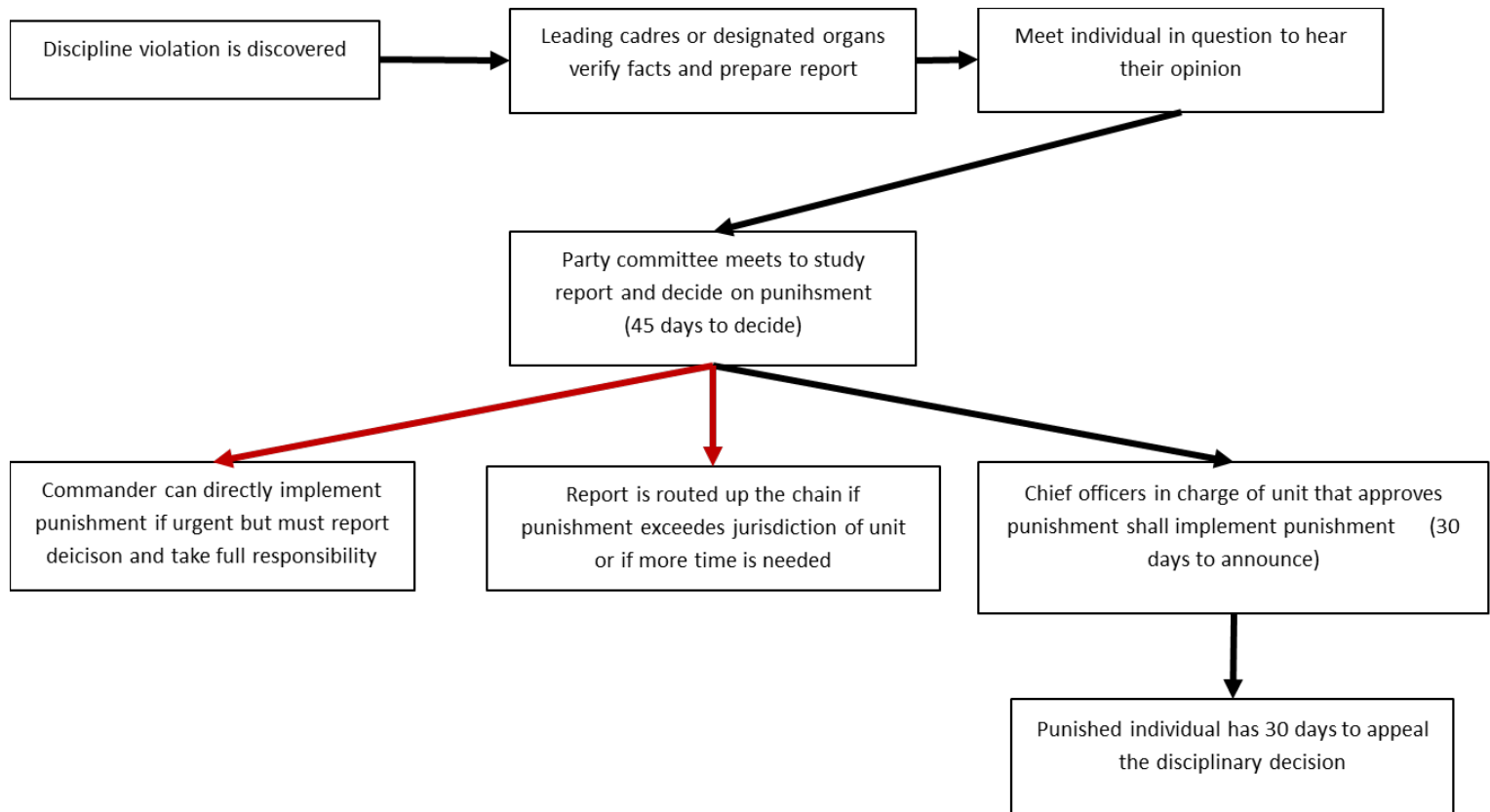


Figure 3: A flowchart of disciplinary investigation process according to the 2025 Discipline Regulations of the PLA.⁵⁸

The newest version of the “Discipline Regulations of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (2025)” was released in February 2025 and came into effect in April 2025. The newest regulations replaced the trial regulations that had previously come into effect in 2018. One of the most notable changes to the PLA’s disciplinary authorities was the addition of regulations that provide lower-grade units with expanded disciplinary powers during war, as well as the addition of specific disciplinary regulations for temporary units that have been established for less than six months.⁵⁹

It is likely that many deviations from this ideal CMC-dictated process occur in the PLAN. For instance, in 2018, the secretary of the Southern Theater Command’s Navy DIC, Xiang Jian (向健), published an article in the *Study Times* indicating that, practically, building out those statutory

⁵⁸ China Law Translate, “Chinese People’s Liberation Army Disciplinary Regulations, 2018, CHAPTER VI,” 1 November 2024, <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E8%A7%A3%E6%94%BE%E5%86%9B%E7%BA%AA%E5%BE%8B%E6%9D%A1%E4%BB%A4%EF%BC%88%E8%AF%95%E8%A1%8C%EF%BC%89%E7%AC%AC%E5%85%AD%E7%AB%A0/>.

⁵⁹ “Discipline Regulations of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (2025).”

processes will take time. Xiang noted, among other things, that improving the speed in the “construction and improvement” of such processes still needed work.⁶⁰ As of 2022, furthermore, a report in *People’s Navy* about the discipline and inspection work of the Navy noted much room for improvement in these processes. That report refers explicitly to a “100-day zero-clear campaign” (百日清零会战), likely indicating resolution of cases had not yet met the CMC-mandated 45 days.⁶¹ Along similar lines, the PLAN Headquarters DIC at that time had recently implemented monthly, quarterly, and biannual mechanisms to review case investigation and handling.⁶²

Theater Command Navy DICs—whose relationships to the PLAN Headquarters DIC remain unclear—have been actively implementing process improvements, indicating continued dissatisfaction with the state of affairs when it comes to discipline in the PLAN. For example, the Northern Theater Command Navy DIC established a full-process supervision system to oversee major projects conducted by the Theater Command’s naval forces. This system included drafting a work plan, selecting experts, monitoring bidding and procurement for the project, and conducting investigations of suspected corruption.⁶³ The same DIC reported conducting online training for more than 200 DIC cadres and 800 other key individuals in not just DIC work and regulations themselves (case trial procedures, for instance), but also in financial management, materials procurement, engineering construction, equipment maintenance, and healthcare.⁶⁴

Policies and Mechanisms for Improving Discipline

The PLAN Headquarters DIC has issued a number of regulations specific to PLAN discipline inspection processes in recent years, including:

- May 21, 2022: “Opinions on Strengthening Supervision of the Main Leaders and Party Committees” (关于加强对主要领导和党委班子监督的意见);
- April 2, 2020: “Implementation Measures for Seriously Investigating and Handling False Accusations and Framing Letters and Visits Reports” (关于严肃查处诬告陷害信访举报实施办法);
- 2017-2022: “Specific Measures for Deepening Case-Based Governance and Promoting System Governance” (深化以案促治、推动体系治理工作的具体措施); and “Interim

⁶⁰ 向健 [Xiang Jian], 完善不敢腐不能腐不想腐的长效机制 [“Improve the Long-Term Mechanisms for Ensuring People Dare Note, Cannot, and Do Not Want to Be Corrupt”], 学习时报 [Study Times], 14 May 2018, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0514/c40531-29985807.html>.

⁶¹ 清风正气润海疆 -- 党的十九大以来海军部队纪检监察工作巡礼 [“A Clean and Upright Atmosphere Nourishes the Seas – A Tour of the Naval Forces’ Discipline Inspection and Supervision Work Since the 19th CPC National Congress”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], 26 September 2022, p. 1.

⁶² “A Clean and Upright Atmosphere Nourishes the Seas – A Tour of the Naval Forces’ Discipline Inspection and Supervision Work Since the 19th CPC National Congress” [清风正气润海疆 -- 党的十九大以来海军部队纪检监察工作巡礼], *People’s Navy* [人民海军], September 26, 2022, p. 1.

⁶³ “The Discipline Inspection Committee of the Navy in the Northern Theater Command Has Established and Improved a Full-Process Supervision System to Focus on Key Points and Make Precise Efforts, Emphasizing Long-Term and Full-Process Follow-Up.”

⁶⁴ 王昶鑫 [Wang Changxin] and 王庆厚 [Wang Qinghou], 抓从严先严思想 强落实先实责任 [“First Grasp the Idea of Strictness and Implement Responsibility”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], 12 April 2020, p. 1.

Measures for Regular Supervision and Inspection of Work Style Construction” (作风建设常态化监督检查工作暂行办法).⁶⁵

In terms of outcomes, disciplinary measures imposed by DICs can, per CMC guidance, include anything from dismissal from the military altogether to warnings, demotions, and records of demerit.⁶⁶

Personnel Management

The PLAN Headquarters DIC is responsible for helping the PLAN to select, train, manage, and supervise new personnel. For instance, it supervises the PLAN’s annual meeting to select non-commissioned officers (NCOs) “in order to ensure objectivity, fairness, openness, and transparency.”⁶⁷ It also selects “grassroots supervision officers” (基层风气监督员) to improve surveillance.⁶⁸ Discipline inspection officers in the PLA Army have highlighted their roles in “regulating and constraining daily behavior” and “improving the research, observation, and conversation capabilities” of leadership. Given that on the basis of CMC regulations DIC missions are supposed to be unified across the PLA and the centralized control the CMC prefers to exert over service branch DICs, it is likely that PLAN DIC personnel at headquarters and in subordinate organizations are pursuing similar goals.⁶⁹ DICs in general, including the PLAN DIC, may play a role in advertising recruitment guidelines and qualifications. In late December of 2023, for example, the Southern Theater Command’s DIC announced requirements for re-enlistment on its WeChat account.⁷⁰

The PLAN DIC system, under the supervision of the PLAN headquarters DIC, is likely responsible for implementing the “Indicator System” (指标体系), a CMC-created index that provides a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of party committees across the entire PLA and groups their performance into excellent, good, average, and ineffective.⁷¹

Personnel management for the PLAN headquarters DIC involves educating and indoctrinating sailors, and in recent years that education and propaganda has focused broadly on corruption. It has, for instance, produced films for the sailors such as *The Original Intention of Transformation* and *The*

⁶⁵ 党的十九大以来海军部队纪检监察工作巡礼 [“A Review of Disciplinary and Supervision Work in the Naval Forces since the 19th National Party Congress”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], 25 September 2022, p. 3.

⁶⁶ China Law Translate, “Regulations on the Discipline of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army,” November 16, 2023, <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/regulations-on-the-discipline-of-the-chinese-peoples-liberation-army-chapter-iii/>.

⁶⁷ 万新伟 [Wan Xinwei], 海军 2020 年高级士官选取专家评审会议召开 为海军转型发展选拔高素质士官人才 [“The Navy Held an Expert Review Meeting for the Selection of Senior Non-Commissioned Officers in 2020 to Select High-Quality NCOs for the Transformation and Development of the Navy”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], 30 December 2020, p. 1.

⁶⁸ 基层风气监督员 | 站好风气监督的“前沿哨” [“Grassroots Atmosphere Supervisors | Stand at the ‘Front Line’ of Atmosphere Supervision”], 澎湃 [The Paper], 13 August 2021, https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_14040758.

⁶⁹ Xue, Lu, and Zhu, “In Order to Build a Professional Team for Supervising Grassroots Work Styles, what Practical Measures Has This Brigade Come Up With?”

⁷⁰ “Chinese Military Activities Report, 22 December 2023,” *U.S. Army Asian Studies Detachment*, December 22, 2023.

⁷¹ Cao Hongpan [曹洪攀] and Deng Dongrui [邓东睿], 压实军队各级党委管党治党政治责任 持续推进全面从严治党 全面从严治军 [“Reinforce the Political Responsibility of Party Committees at All Levels within the Military for Managing and Governing the Party, and Continuously Advance the Comprehensive and Strict Governance of Both the Party and the Military”], 解放军报 [PLA Daily], 28 September 2023, <http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/qwfb/jwzzgz/16255039.html>.

Disaster of Wounded Soldiers; provided lectures on “the promotion of rectification and governance in key industries”;⁷² and organized special study sessions and educational opportunities on current priorities.⁷³ Some such priorities are evident in the propaganda content the PLAN headquarters DIC produces. In 2021, for instance, it produced a film called *The Disaster of Greed* (贪欲之祸), which tells the story of how a formerly capable Party member “abused power arbitrarily, coveted money and official positions, and had inflated private desires.”⁷⁴ Other public reports issued by PLAN DIC personnel have highlighted, for instance, the need to combat “ideological haze” (思想雾霾),⁷⁵ to encourage absolute obedience,⁷⁶ and to discourage the abuse of welfare systems, public funds, and flexible expenses.⁷⁷

Impact of the PLAN Headquarters DIC and its Subordinate DICs

Very little direct reporting on the isolated impact of the PLAN headquarters DIC was found in publicly available sources. However, two takeaways about its influence on the PLAN are clear based on its organization and activities.

First, PLAN DIC activities—like those of other service branch DICs—have been extended from a focus on top officers, to now include a focus on the “grassroots” of the PLAN. While this has generated widely reported opportunities for lower-ranked volunteers from outside the DIC system to help monitor their units for discipline infractions, it has also generated a “system of public disclosure of grassroots affairs.” In other words, it is likely that a wide range of PLAN personnel who previously had limited interaction with DICs are now much more restricted in their activities.⁷⁸ As Wu Wei (吴伟), a director in one of the PLAN DIC’s offices, put it in a 2022 interview, “We have tightened the institutional cage, leaving no windows or back doors, and the political ecology has fundamentally improved.”⁷⁹

⁷² 大事摘记 [“Major Events”], 人民海军 [*People’s Navy*], 25 September 2022, p. 3.

⁷³ 海纪党委 [Inspection Bureau of the PLA Navy Party Committee], 搞好深化转化坚决履职尽责 [“Carry Out In-Depth Transformation and Resolutely Perform Duties”], 人民海军 [*People’s Navy*], 14 January 2020, p. 2.

⁷⁴ 吴绪和 [Wu Xuhe], 市发改委集中收看警示教育片《贪欲之祸》 [“The Municipal Development and Reform Commission Watched the Warning Education Film, ‘The Disaster of Greed’”], 安康市发展和改革委员会 [*Ankang Development and Reform Commission*], 18 September 2019, <https://fgw.ankang.gov.cn/Content-423314.html>.

⁷⁵ 邵薇 [Shao Wei], 会客厅|人大代表谈形成风清气正的政治生态 [“Reception Room | People’s Congress Representatives Talk about Forming a Clean and Upright Political Ecology”], 中国军网综合 [*China Military Network Comprehensive*], 13 March 2018, http://www.81.cn/2018zt/2018-03/13/content_7969707.htm.

⁷⁶ 郑祖 [Zheng Zu], 牛涛 [Niu Tao], and 王汉唐 [Wang Hantang], 高举习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想伟大旗帜 奋进全面建成世界一流海军新征程 中国共产党建军第十三次代表大会隆重开幕 [“Hold High the Great Banner of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and Forge Ahead to Fully Build a World: The New Journey of the World’s First-Class Navy – The 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on the Founding of the Military Opens Grandly”], 人民海军 [*People’s Navy*], 15 June 2022, p. 1.

⁷⁷ 吴伟 [Wu Wei], 聚力正体清源勇作忠诚卫士 [“Focus on the Righteousness and Purity of the Source and Be a Loyal Defender”], 人民海军 [*People’s Navy*], 21 June 2023, p. 3.

⁷⁸ 新京报政事 [Beijing News Political Affairs], 军报：党内不能有腐败分子的藏身之地，军队是拿枪杆子的，更不能有腐败分子的藏身之地！ [“Military News: There Can Be No Hiding Place for Corrupt Elements in the Party. The Military Holds Guns, So There Can Be No Hiding Place for Corrupt Elements!”], 网易 [*NetEase*], 21 October 2022, <https://www.163.com/dy/article/HK6ULHB20530M570.html>.

⁷⁹ “Look at the Historic Achievements Made in the Military’s Building of Clean and Honest Party Conduct and in the Fight Against Corruption!”

The extent to which this “institutional cage” improves or degrades morale depends on how PLAN sailors feel about corruption within the service. While little evidence is available with which to answer to this question, given the previous scale of corruption in the PLA generally, even though political work officials have been working hard in recent years to improve the lived experiences of PLA personnel via increasing benefits and streamlining procedures, annoyance with discipline inspection officials seems likely to be substantial.⁸⁰ According to some PLA accounts, this annoyance has translated into passive resistance. In 2024, for instance, an unnamed member of the Shenyang Garrison wrote in the *PLA Daily* that “some units display a lukewarm approach to rectification, characterized by superficial efforts and delays.”⁸¹ In early 2024, *People’s Navy* noted that in one frigate detachment, two cadres insufficiently dedicated to their work and nine cadres who violated regulations had been transferred to other work.⁸²

Second, the activities of the PLAN DIC and its subordinate DICs may have resulted in a higher degree of professionalism among PLAN personnel, although the magnitude of the change is not clear based on publicly available information. This inference rests in part on the evidently increased pace of PLAN DIC activity in terms of offering training sessions, producing educational and propaganda materials, clarifying regulations, increasing surveillance, and offering opportunities for ambitious discipline-minded personnel. On balance, the force is likely to be better educated, if only about the PLA’s regulations themselves, which PLA leaders clearly hope will reduce disciplinary violations. The cooperation with civilian and local government organizations, too, indicates more opportunities for effective learning and professionalization for the PLA’s sailors.

Conclusions

This report investigated the activities of the PLAN headquarters DIC, which supervises a system of subordinate PLAN DIC organizations located in major units across the navy. Broadly speaking, that system is designed to enforce party discipline among PLAN personnel, and while the party’s specific priorities for discipline in the PLAN have shifted over the years, they currently center on failure to adhere to (or succeed in implementing) political priorities, lax training, financial impropriety, and abuse of military benefits. In other words, corruption in the PLAN DIC context is much broader than commonly thought and includes not only financial corruption but also political and moral concerns.

In order to enforce discipline in the PLAN, the headquarters DIC issues policy guidance for lower-level PLAN DICs, conducts inspections and supervision of a variety of PLAN activities, processes disciplinary cases, and trains and helps to manage PLAN personnel. In addition to implementing Xi’s guidance and focusing on the disciplinary priorities above, in recent years the PLAN DIC—like in many other PLA organizations—has shifted from a focus on high-level individual cases of corruption to improving the “grassroots atmosphere” and improving behaviors among the much larger group of lower-level personnel in the organization.

Until recently, the PLA and party leadership had prioritized professionalizing the DIC system. National-level regulations state that DIC procedures and structures should be consistent across the

⁸⁰ On changing personnel policies, see Eric Hundman, “Gaining the Upper Hand in Future Wars? Developing the Personnel of the PLA,” prepared for the National Bureau of Asian Research Annual PLA Conference, June 2024.

⁸¹ “Chinese Military Activities Report, 10 April 2024,” *U.S. Army Asian Studies Detachment*, 10 April 2024.

⁸² 向着如期实现建军一百年奋斗目标冲锋——写在人民海军成立七十五周年之际 [“Charge Towards Achieving the Goal of the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the PLA as Scheduled—Written on the Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Navy”], 人民海军 [*People’s Navy*], 23 April 2024, <http://www.csic.com.cn/n135/n171/n183/c29367/content.html>.

force, including the PLAN, although a number of PLAN DIC personnel have noted publicly that coming into full compliance with those regulations will take time. Processing disciplinary cases, for instance, still probably takes much longer than PLA regulations allow. The PLAN DIC itself has also issued a number of regulations in recent years aimed at professionalizing the force further, including clarifying standards, improving sailors' familiarity with PLAN regulations, and more effectively indoctrinating PLAN personnel. However, recent removals of two PLAN DIC secretaries with extensive professional experience in PLA disciplinary organs, individuals with long experience targeting corruption, raises questions about whether Xi Jinping's priorities have shifted. It is possible that he simply views professionals in this system as having been insufficiently effective at reducing corruption in the force. Yet, it is also possible that his priorities have shifted away from professionalization and reducing corruption towards emphasizing political loyalty.

Nevertheless, to the degree ongoing attempts to regularize the PLAN DIC system and extend its influence further down towards the "grassroots" of the organization have been successful, a move to install loyalists personal to Xi at the top of that system would likely give him improved personal control over the force regardless of whether his goals had shifted. PRC analysts argue that political loyalty ("redness") is a crucial prerequisite to military effectiveness, so the distinction may be moot in this case.⁸³ It is increasingly clear that for the PLAN, as well as the rest of the PLA, "redness" in contemporary China means personal control by and loyalty to Xi Jinping himself.

About the Authors:

DR. ERIC HUNDMAN is Director of Research at BluePath Labs. He has over 15 years of experience managing and conducting a wide variety of research projects for defense, business, and academic customers. He is a globally recognized expert on China's military and foreign policy who, more broadly, specializes in defense policy, military organizations, emerging technologies, and research methods. His research, analysis, and commentary have been published in peer-reviewed journals such as *International Security*, *Journal of Global Security Studies*, and *Journal of Contemporary China*, as well as in public-facing outlets such as *Foreign Policy*, *ChinaFile*, *Wired*, and *Political Violence at a Glance*. He is fluent in Mandarin Chinese and spent eight years living in China and Taiwan. He received a Ph.D. and M.A. in political science from the University of Chicago and a B.S. in physics and political science from Yale University.

CONNOR AKIYAMA currently works as a civilian analyst for the Department of the Navy where he covers PLA military capabilities and leadership. Connor grew up in the California Bay Area and holds a bachelor's degree in international relations and economics from Tufts University.

The opinions and views expressed in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. Government, U.S. Department of War or its components, to include the Department of the Navy or the U.S. Naval War College.

⁸³ 习近平强军思想学习问答⑧ [Xi Jinping's Thought on Strengthening the Military Study Q&A 8], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 28 August 2023, https://tyjrswj.beijing.gov.cn/ztl/ztyhd/xxfw/xxwd/202308/%20t20230828_3231976.html.