

Reinforcing the country's sky net

In the radar force of the PLA (People's Liberation Army) Air Force, some vehicles are mobile – as opposed to fixed stations on mountain tops – and they are called mobile radar forces.

The air force of the PLA Southern Theater Command, has such a mobile radar battalion. Its commander Major Guo Tao said on April 25 that they are “a necessary complement to fixed stations” in that they “patch up, reinforce and extend the colossal sky net” of the country's radar detection ranges.

Established in May, 1991, this battalion was the first-ever modern mobile radar force in the PLA Air Force. Its creation followed the central military authority's call for an effective response to high-intensity regional conflicts in modern warfare.

In modern warfare, combatting parties usually seek to paralyze each other's air defenses first before conducting further operations. Radar installations, which are the eyes of the air force, are among the first and most vulnerable targets for enemy attacks.

Having no self-defense capabilities itself, once a radar is destroyed, it can tear apart the regional defensive monitoring network. Under such circumstances, the mobile radar forces must kick in and patch up the country's defensive sky net of radar monitoring.

Likewise, there may be blind spots in radar detection ranges either affected by terrain or a radar's own limitations, or a new battlefield out of the range of fixed radar stations. As for the solution, deploying a mobile radar unit in such blind-spots will instantly reinforce the PLA's air defenses.

Throughout the 26 years since the battalion's establishment, this mobile radar force has participated in more than 30 major exercises, and their tracks have reached 26 provinces nationwide.

“We stand ready to be deployed anywhere that the country needs,” said Senior Colonel Duan Zhibing, brigade political commissar, which supervises the battalion. He explained that the mobile radar force is also an extension of the country's sky net.