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The Japan Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF) and US Marine Corps on 21 August began their first joint amphibious landing exercises in Guam and Tinian in the Northern Mariana Islands, a JGSDF spokesman said.

About 40 JGSDF Western Army troops from the Kyushu region and Okinawa Prefecture joined the Okinawa-based III Marine Expeditionary Force.

"It's the first time that the JGSDF and US Marine Corps from Okinawa have conducted a joint drill to defend offshore islands," the JGSDF spokesman told

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. "It's also the first time we've practiced landings on real islands."

The GSDF Western Army also conducted joint exercises with the I Marine Expeditionary Force in California in January and February.

The joint exercises, which will run until 26 September, are part of ongoing efforts by the Japanese and US militaries to increase interoperability. In April the two countries unveiled a 'Dynamic Defence Co-operation Strategy' that will be achieved through joint exercises, sharing of military facilities and joint patrol and reconnaissance activities.

The latest round of drills is intended to enhance the military response to an attack on remote Japanese islands and could be seen as preparation for possible future Chinese landings on the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyutai islands in the East China Sea.

On 22 August the

People's Daily

newspaper published an editorial criticising the exercise, describing "it just a petty trick to enrage China" and stating that "China cannot





ignore the hostilities of other countries and set aside its core national interests".

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