

《Xi calls new PLA branch a key pillar》

President Xi Jinping made his first inspection tour of the People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force on Monday, urging efforts to boost innovation for the force's development.

Xi, also chairman of the Central Military Commission, told commanders of the Strategic Support Force that the service is a new-type combat force and an important pillar of the PLA's joint operation system, according to a news release on the Defense Ministry's website.

The president asked commanders to focus on innovating the force's development modes. He also emphasized the building of various support systems and the coordination of development of civilian and defense sectors.

Xi also inspected the combat command center of an unidentified unit of the force.

The president attaches great importance to and has high hopes for the Strategic Support Force, the news release said.

The force was established on Dec 31 in a key step of the ongoing military reform, which started in November and is overseen by Xi.

According to Senior Colonel Yang Yujun, a spokesman for the Defense Ministry, the founding of the Strategic Support Force will help to improve the PLA's structure and enhance its integrated support capability.

Although the PLA has not disclosed the components or functions of the new branch, the PLA's flagship newspaper, PLA Daily, has reported that researchers with the Strategic Support Force are focusing on cutting-edge technologies such as big data applications, cloud computing, 3-D printing and nanomaterials.

It quoted an unnamed researcher as saying that members of the force should always prepare for "tomorrow's warfare".

PLA Daily also has reported that units of the Strategic Support Force are stationed "from high mountains to distant oceans, and from desolate deserts to the front lines of the nation".

Du Wenlong, a senior researcher at the PLA Academy of Military Science, said the tasks of the Strategic Support Force are to concentrate, coordinate and make plans for the PLA's non-combatant resources.

Yin Zhuo, director of the PLA Navy's Expert Consultation Committee, said the mission of the force is to ensure that the PLA can maintain superiority in military operations taking place in space and involving the electromagnetic field and the internet.

He said that the force's responsibilities include target reconnaissance and tracking, global positioning operations, space assets management and defending against hostile activities in cyberspace and the electromagnetic field.

