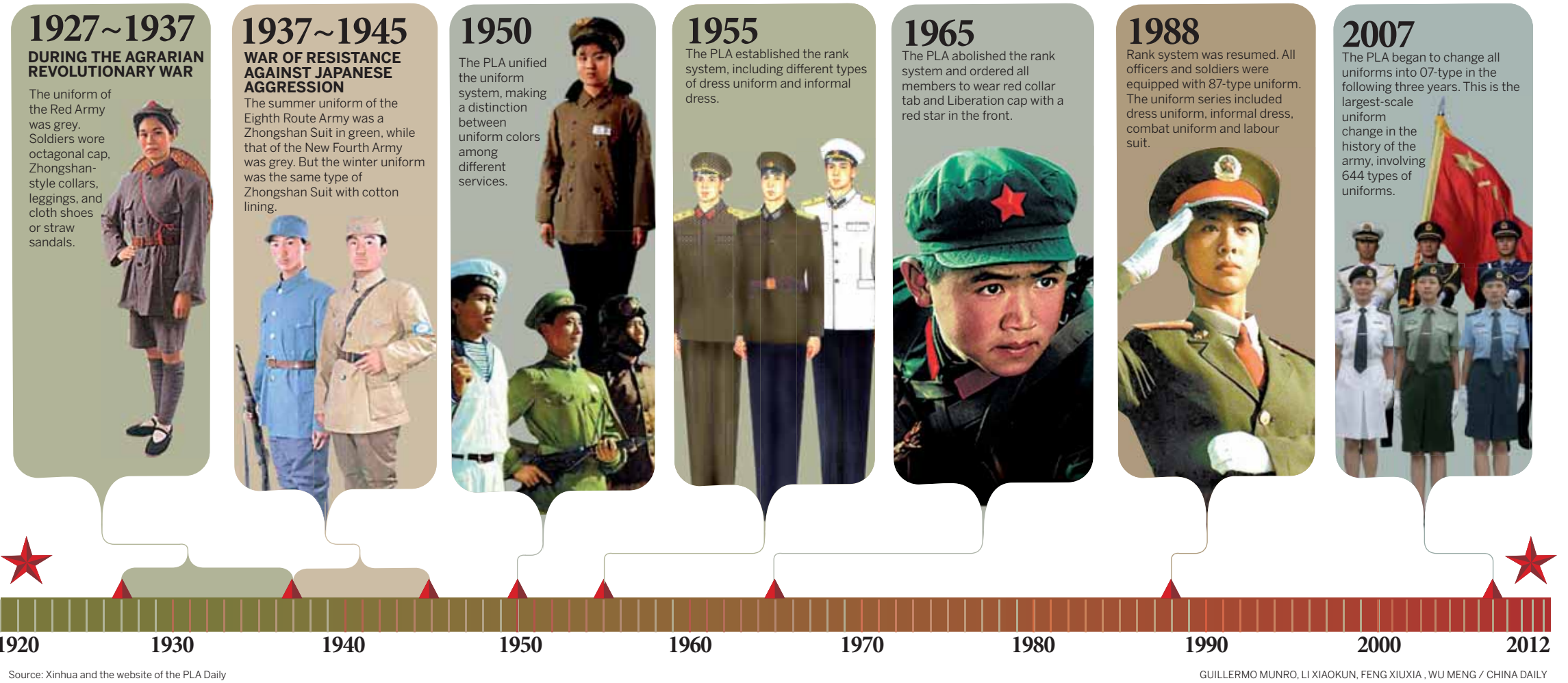


DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLA'S UNIFORM OVER THE YEARS



Navy uniforms inspire retro fashion

By LI XIAOKUN

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As a little boy in the 1970s, Zhang Zhiyuan remembers admiring his father as he donned his work uniform in front of the mirror.

Zhang Xide was a captain in the navy of the People's Liberation Army. In those early days, the uniform consisted of a very simple design with basic cotton materials and blue and white stripes, similar to what the sailors of other countries wore.

Still, for the young Zhang, the navy blue his father wore represented honorable duty to his country, and that deserved the respect of his peers.

And it was a uniform he has always wanted to wear himself.

More than three decades later, Zhang, 35, has chosen a different path from his father and instead wears the shirt and tie of a corporate executive.

But just last month he realized a new online trend could be the chance to revive his childhood dream. The PLA's latest navy uniform, known as *Haihunshan* in Chinese, harks back to Zhang's father's era and sports blue and

white stripes. The classic design has triggered a wave of retro nostalgia on Taobao, the major Chinese online marketplace, with variations of the striped T-shirt being snapped up by buyers nationwide.

"I remembered my father told me that the *Haihunshan* was named after a 1950s Chinese movie about the first generation of the Chinese navy, *Haihun*, which means the soul of the sea," Zhang said.

"In other countries the shirt is just an item of clothing that has been popular for a long time, but for the Chinese, it's more complex."

The navy does not sell or promote its uniforms for civilian use, but that has not stopped variations of the attire from hitting catwalks and boutiques as fashion lovers covet the timeless and elegant design of the navy-blue shirt.

Mo Wenwen, an online retailer who sells a similar kind of white and blue striped T-shirt, said sales last year numbered a few thousand sets. But after the navy revealed its latest uniform this summer, sales in July alone hit 4,000 sets.



Two newlyweds pose wearing the *Haihunshan*, the PLA Navy's latest uniform, in Chongqing.

"The T-shirt has always been popular, but it's especially hot this year," Mo said.

"Actually, it is not only hot on the Internet. You can see many movie and TV stars photographed in the T-shirt and more couples are choosing the attire when taking photos before getting married."

The PLA's latest navy uniform

has also incorporated state-of-the-art material, including breathable layers that can absorb perspiration immediately, and looser fitting cuts to reflect the development of the armed forces.

The PLA Daily said in a report on July 4 that the navy has developed many other new uniforms with special functions, alongside the popular new shirt.

It quoted Zhang Fuli, a researcher with the Naval Medical Research Institute, as saying the PLA has recently issued cold protective clothing, an antimicrobial undershirt and cooling vests for soldiers working on military ships.

Chen Jun, head of the Clothing and Accouterments Bureau of Quartermaster, Material and



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MO WENWEN
AN ONLINE RETAILER

POL Department of the General Logistics Department, said that the latest military uniforms were mainly created by military designers, but took submissions from colleges, fashion agencies and relevant companies.

The final design has "adequately reflected the development of a modern military", Chen said.

The revamp has come as the PLA celebrates its 85th anniversary on Aug 1.

The improvements are a far cry from the design and materials of the early days, when soldiers of the Red Army had to make do with clothes or even boots made of grass and rough-hewn uniforms that made no distinction between rank and gender. The design of armed forces' uniforms subsequently went through more than 10 changes.

Tu Ling, a student in Beijing and a strong supporter of the PLA, studied the pictures of the navy's new shirt as soon as it was released in July. Tu often comments on tiexue.net, a website for fans of the Chinese military.

"The design is very trendy. The military uniform is not just attire. It is a mirror of a military, a nation and an era. That is why some military fans are so hot about the PLA uniforms," Tu said.

For Zhang Zhiyuan, the PLA navy's blue and white is also more than just a passing fad.

"I might not be a soldier like my father, but I'm still happy to be able to wear their uniform to show my support for our armed forces," he said.

Wang Yusheng contributed to this story.

Sailing in the wake of Zheng He's voyage

By QIN ZHONGWEI in Beijing and ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian

More than 600 years after Zheng He led seven expeditions as far as the east coast of Africa, a navy training vessel named after him has launched the Chinese navy's second global goodwill voyage.

Having left Dalian in Northeast China's Liaoning province in mid-April, the training vessel *Zheng He* — which so far has visited countries including Vietnam, Malaysia, India, Italy, Spain, and Ecuador — is scheduled to make port calls to altogether 11 countries worldwide. The total distance of the route is expected to cover more than 30,000 nautical miles (55,560 km) in a period of five months.

Designed specifically for long-distance voyage, the training vessel can cruise 10,000 nautical miles without refueling, according to Zu Shuming, who

was the captain of the *Zheng He* from 2000 to 2003.

Since it was built in 1987, the vessel has made extensive long-distance voyages in the past 25 years, including her maiden visit to Hawaii in April 1989.

More than 300 Chinese sailors and cadets joined the expedition this time, including about 110 students from Dalian Naval Academy. The cadets will have the opportunity to improve their competence in mapping and surveying of naval maneuvers, and marine meteorological analysis and prediction.

Recalling his voyage to Russia as *Zheng He's* captain in 2000, Zu still felt it an impressive journey when around 200 cadets from the navy colleges visited the Russian navy colleges and talked face to face with their Russian counterparts.

"The life onboard is not easy. You have to overcome seasickness and bad weather, for example. Sometimes we forecast high

winds and waves that we are going to encounter, but in order to let our cadets learn how to adapt to these future challenges, we did not change our route to avoid them," Zu said.

"But there is also a lot of fun," he added. "It's a perfect chance to put what you've learned at college into practice, and also an exciting opportunity to expand our knowledge about nature and the ocean."

Besides Chinese cadets onboard, there are also midshipmen from other countries involved in parts of the expedition. They practice navigation, and carry out activities like making astronomical and geographical observations together.

A 22-year-old Canadian cadet nicknamed Francis told CCTV that it was a "great" experience to be on the ship.

It took some time to get used to the new environment, but everyone soon got along well as

ROUTE OF ZHENG HE'S VISIT



TIAN CHI / CHINA DAILY

a big family, he said.

The vessel has paid friendly visits to ports in the countries it has visited, some of which were also visited by Zheng He and his fleet centuries ago.

The voyage this time, 10 years after the first global voyage organized by the PLA navy, will play an "active role" in further

promoting exchanges between the PLA navy and the navies of relevant countries, according to Geng Yansheng, the spokesman for the Defense Ministry.

During the vessel's visit to India in May, the Chinese not only held a deck reception and invited Indian navy cadets to visit the ship, their mutual activ-

ities also included a series of events such as a football game, a joint band performance at a local auditorium and Chinese cadets visiting the local maritime museum.

Chinese Ambassador to India Zhang Yan said the visit was an important event in bilateral ties and military exchanges to mark

2012, the "Year of China-India Friendship and Cooperation".

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Wu Meng also contributed to this story.