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## President Xi Continues Purges With Removal of General Zhang Youxia

*Prepared by Tal Shirar Directorate of Intelligence, 26 January 2026*

President Xi Jinping's removal of General Zhang Youxia and other top military officials is primarily motivated by a drive to eliminate perceived threats to his absolute authority, rooted in suspicions of disloyalty, corruption, and potential espionage. This purge, extending to lifelong allies, underscores Xi's deepening paranoia and commitment to ideological purity within the People's Liberation Army (PLA). President Xi will continue to replace senior leaders with his loyalists to ensuring no rival power centers emerge that can threaten his rule.

- General Zhang Youxia, 75, was ousted on January 24, 2026, and placed under investigation for "serious violations of discipline and law," including alleged bribery and leaking nuclear secrets to the CIA. This move degrades the Central Military Commission (CMC) upper echelons, leaving President Xi as the sole dominant figure in military command.



- General Zhang was born in Beijing, the son of General Zhang Zongxun, a prominent revolutionary commander who fought in the Chinese Civil War and served under Mao Zedong. This gave him strong connections within the Communist Party elite. His family ties also link him closely to President Xi, their fathers were comrades from Shaanxi Province and worked together during the revolution.

- General Zhang served as one of the two vice chairmen of the CMC since 2017. In this role, he was effectively the second-highest-ranking military official in the country, ranking just below President Xi (who chairs the CMC). Zhang had been a close ally of Xi and was known for his hardline views on national security and military modernization.



### Broader Implications for PLA Stability and Regional Security

Beyond surface-level corruption claims, Xi's purges are driven by a quest for unchallenged dominance amid economic strains and external pressures, targeting even inner-circle figures to prevent factionalism. If one more key insight is needed, it's that this strategy risks institutional atrophy in the PLA, hollowing out experienced leadership and potentially delaying modernization goals while signaling to global actors a more unpredictable Beijing. With these senior officials replaced with loyalists, there will be little push back or opposition to President Xi's orders such as a potential operation against Taiwan.

- Since mid-2025, over a dozen senior generals have been purged, including those in strategic forces, underscoring systemic rot that Xi attributes to disloyalty and foreign influence. This wave has targeted allies and rivals alike, centralizing power but risking morale and expertise loss.

- The ouster raises succession questions, as Zhang was positioned as a potential bridge to future leaders; his fall could accelerate internal factionalism or force Xi to appoint untested figures. This dynamic might influence party congress preparations and long-term stability.
- Regionally, the purge could reassure or alarm neighbors like Russia and Taiwan; weakened command might deter aggressive actions but invite probes of Chinese resolve in disputed areas.

## Conclusion

Xi's removal of General Zhang Youxia consolidates his personal authority over the PLA but at the cost of institutional trust and operational efficacy. This assessment points to a more unpredictable Chinese military posture in the near term, with heightened risks of internal discord that could spill into foreign policy adventurism or restraint, depending on Xi's perceived vulnerabilities.



Tal Shiar was founded by Nadeem Iqbal, a national security expert who served over 16 years as an intelligence officer for the Department of Defense from 2006-2022. His career began as a counter-insurgency analyst on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force (2006–2013), followed by 9 years as a military analyst in the Syria Branch (2013–2022). He deployed five times in support of combat operations (3× Afghanistan, 2× Iraq), including two rotations with

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