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Taiwan

China ratchets up pressure on Taiwan after US congressional visit

Fresh military manoeuvres announced following US lawmakers' meeting with president Tsai Ing-wen



US senator Ed Markey and Taiwan's foreign minister Joseph Wu shake hands, centre, accompanied by other members of the US delegation in Taipei © MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS/AFP via Getty Images

Kathrin Hille in Taipei AN HOUR AGO

China announced a fresh round of military manoeuvres around Taiwan in reaction to the visit of a US congressional delegation, a move that ratchets up Beijing's efforts to isolate the island nation.

“This is a stern deterrence measure against the US and Taiwan continuing to play political tricks and undermining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait,” a Chinese military official said.

The announcement came after Democratic senator Ed Markey and four members of the US House of Representatives from both sides of the aisle landed in [Taiwan](#) on Sunday night and met president Tsai Ing-wen on Monday morning.

The Chinese defence ministry said the visit flagrantly violated previous agreements and China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

“[It] sends a wrong signal to the ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces, and fully exposes the true face of the US as a disrupter and destroyer of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait,” the ministry said.

Lawmakers from the US and other democracies often visit Taiwan and Taipei also less frequently receives government officials from those countries.

Beijing's fierce reaction to the latest US delegation is raising concerns in Taiwan and elsewhere that the Chinese leadership is trying to impose a new status quo under which foreign politicians and officials are dissuaded from engaging with the island's government.

The People's Liberation Army's new "multiple services joint combat-readiness patrols and exercises" come barely five days after it completed week-long drills that followed US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. China said last week those drills had succeeded in "obliterating" the median line in the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial buffer zone, and that the PLA would from now on regularly patrol around the island.

Since then, PLA aircraft and warships have been conducting daily manoeuvres around Taiwan in numbers far exceeding those prior to Pelosi's visit and in areas close to Taiwan where they were not frequently active before the current crisis.

According to the Taiwanese defence ministry, 96 Chinese military aircraft were active around the island between last Thursday and Sunday — after Beijing had said its exercises were over, but that it would keep a "close eye" on Taiwan and the US and conduct frequent patrols in the area.

"That they are now announcing another exercise suggests that those numbers may go up further and their behaviour may become more aggressive," said a senior Taiwanese government official.

Kurt Campbell, White House co-ordinator for Indo-Pacific affairs, on Friday said China had used Pelosi's visit as a "pretext to launch an intensified pressure campaign against Taiwan and to try to change the status quo, jeopardising peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and in the broader region".

Washington and Taipei handled the Markey congressional delegation in a low-key manner. It was only announced when the group was about to land in Taipei on Sunday night. Counter to previous practice, the beginning of the delegation's meeting with Tsai was not televised or livestreamed.

The American Institute in Taiwan, Washington's de facto embassy, said in a brief statement at the end of the visit that the group also met foreign minister Joseph Wu and members of the Taiwanese legislature's foreign affairs and defence committee.

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