

## Your guide to a disrupted world

*Only available to new subscribers*

**Save 33%**

### Taiwan

## Nancy Pelosi vows US support for Taiwan as officials warn of China military blockade

Beijing plans live-fire military drills near island's largest ports in unprecedented escalation of tensions



US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, left, meets Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-wen in Taipei on Wednesday. Beijing has promised a military response to the trip © Chien Chih-Hung/Office of The President/Getty Images

**Kathrin Hille** in Taipei 2 HOURS AGO

---

Nancy Pelosi pledged an “ironclad” US commitment to Taiwan during a historic visit to the country on Wednesday that has infuriated China and raised warnings that military manoeuvres Beijing announced in retaliation would amount to a blockade of the island.

The comments from the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, made during a meeting with Taiwan’s president Tsai Ing-wen, heartened Taiwanese hoping for firmer support from Washington but were set to further raise tensions with China.

“America made a bedrock promise to always stand with Taiwan, and this visit is a reminder of that,” Pelosi said at the presidential office in Taipei on Wednesday. “Today, our delegation came to Taiwan to make unequivocally clear we are not going to abandon Taiwan.”

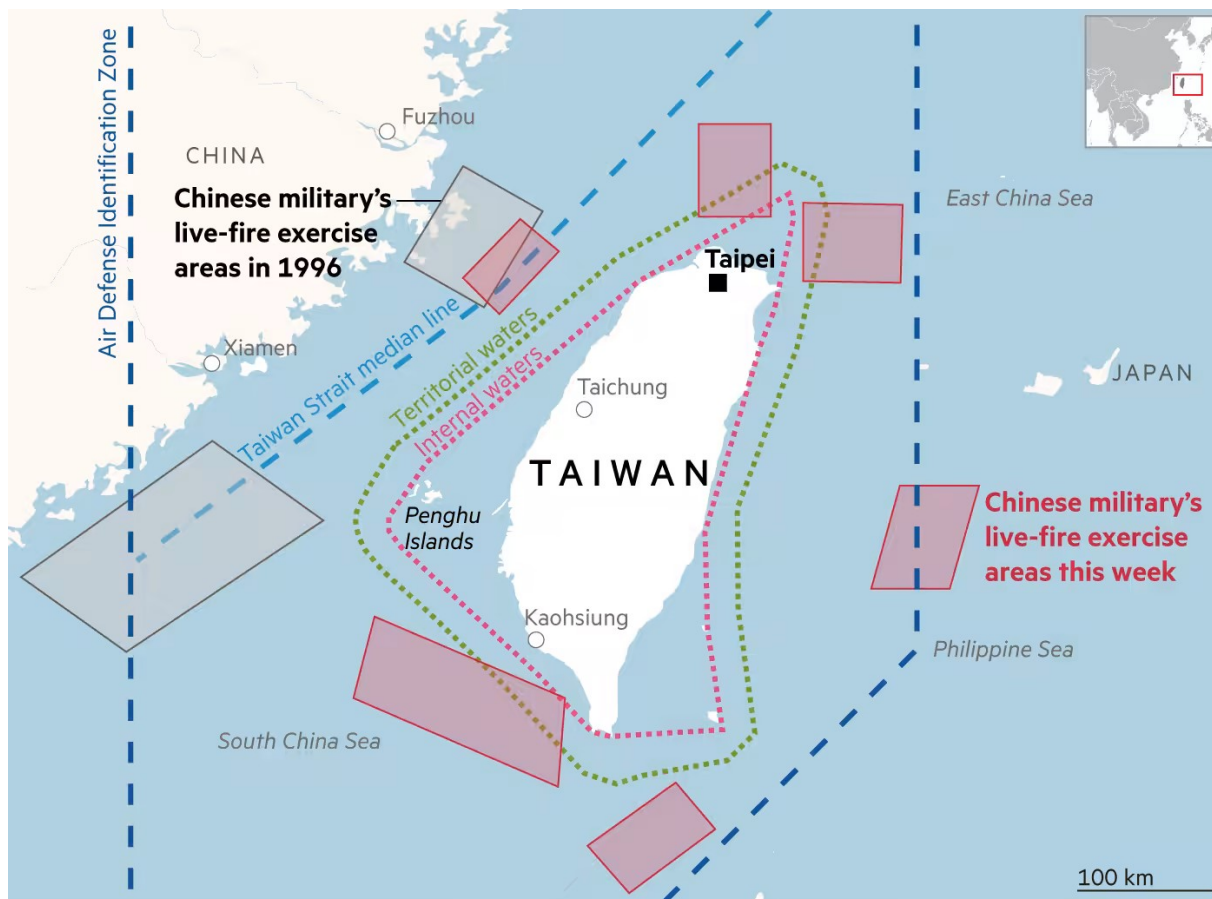
The visit by Pelosi, part of a wider trip to Asia, comes at a [time of escalating friction](#) between Beijing and Washington and represents a test of how far China is prepared to go to deter foreign expressions of support for Taipei. Pelosi left Taiwan on Wednesday, heading for South Korea, and is due to end her tour in Japan on Saturday.

[Pelosi](#) is the most senior US official in a quarter of a century to travel to Taiwan, over which China claims sovereignty. Beijing has denounced her trip as a violation of US

which China claims sovereignty. Beijing has denounced her trip as a violation of US “One China” policy, under which Washington recognises Beijing as the sole government of China and acknowledges, but does not accept, its claim to Taiwan.

As Pelosi landed in Taipei on Tuesday night, the People’s Liberation Army announced plans for extensive joint air and naval drills and long-range live fire shooting exercises in six large areas around Taiwan, which extend into the country’s territorial waters and airspace near Kaohsiung and Keelung, its largest and third-largest ports. The PLA is planning to conduct the drills from Thursday until Sunday, after Pelosi has left.

An editorial in China’s PLA Daily newspaper said the visit sent the “wrong message” to Taiwanese “separatists” and that “any countermeasures taken by China are justified, reasonable and necessary”.



Taiwan’s defence ministry warned that the drills “violate Taiwan’s territorial and contiguous waters and airspace and have threatened international shipping and flight routes”.

The exercises “are tantamount to an air and sea blockade of Taiwan”, said General Yu Chien-chang, a senior official at the ministry’s legal department. “They overlap with our territorial waters and airspace and severely violate our sovereignty.”

In her remarks at the presidential office, Pelosi was referring to the Taiwan Relations Act, which requires Washington to help Taiwan defend itself even after the US switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing in 1979.

The Taiwan Relations Act does not include a clear US commitment to militarily intervene against a Chinese attack. Washington has long maintained a stance of “strategic ambiguity” over whether it would do so. But some argue US president Joe Biden has eroded this stance with remarks that [the US would come to Taiwan’s aid](#) in such a scenario.

“We are supporters of the status quo, we don’t want anything to happen to Taiwan by force,” Pelosi said.

Commenting that China had not “made much of a fuss” when other members of Congress visited Taiwan, she added: “I hope that it’s really clear that while China has stood in the way of Taiwan participating and going to certain meetings, they understand that they will not stand in the way of people coming to Taiwan.”

The Taiwanese government said it was studying whether air and sea routes needed to be adjusted because of the PLA drills to ensure safety. There have not been any announcements of flight or cargo ship cancellations.

Tsai praised Pelosi’s visit “under such challenging circumstances as a demonstration of unwavering support for Taiwan” and said it boosted public confidence in the strength of the country’s democracy.

Before meeting Tsai on Wednesday morning, Pelosi held talks with Taiwanese lawmakers including Tsai Chi-chang, vice-president of the legislature. Pelosi said she wanted to boost inter-parliamentary co-operation and to work with [Taiwan](#) to help implement the Biden administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy, which US officials say is designed to counter China.

“Now more than ever, America’s solidarity with Taiwan is crucial,” Pelosi said at the presidential office. “Today the world faces a choice between democracy and autocracy. America’s determination to retain democracy in Taiwan remains ironclad.”

Wang Ting-yu, a member of the legislature’s foreign affairs and defence committee from the ruling Democratic Progressive party, said Pelosi’s decision to stay in Taiwan overnight and undertake a full day of public meetings reflected “a level seen between friends and allies”.

Russia echoed China's condemnation of the trip, in apparent reciprocity for Beijing's tacit approval of its war in Ukraine.

Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, said Pelosi's trip showed a US "determination to show everyone how they can get away with everything and do whatever they want", according to Interfax. "I don't see any other reason to create an irritant like this basically out of thin air in full knowledge of what it means for China," he added.

North Korea also denounced Pelosi's visit. "The current situation clearly shows the impudent interference of the US," Pyongyang's foreign ministry was reported as saying by North Korean state media.

*Additional reporting by Demetri Sevastopulo in Washington and Christian Davies in Seoul*

---

[Copyright](#) The Financial Times Limited 2022. All rights reserved.

---