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### **US-China relations**

## Nancy Pelosi to meet Taiwan's president on Wednesday

Controversial visit by US House Speaker triggers concern about possible Chinese retaliation



China has issued strong warnings to the Biden administration suggesting that the People's Liberation Army could take action if Nancy Pelosi, pictured, went ahead with her planned visit to Taiwan © AP

**Demetri Sevastopulo** in Washington and **Kathrin Hille** in Taipei AN HOUR AGO

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Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, plans to meet Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-wen on Wednesday, in a controversial visit that has triggered concern about a possible military response from China.

Three people familiar with the situation said Pelosi would meet Tsai in Taipei as part of a wider visit to Asia that began in Singapore on Sunday.

Pelosi did not include Taiwan on her official itinerary because of security concerns, but the [Financial Times has reported](#) she would be the first Speaker to visit Taiwan in 25 years.

China has issued strong warnings to the Biden administration suggesting that the [People's Liberation Army](#) could take action if the 82-year-old Democrat went ahead with her planned visit.

President Joe Biden dispatched senior officials, including national security adviser Jake Sullivan, to lay out the risks to Pelosi, but people familiar with the situation said she had decided to press ahead with the landmark trip.

Many Republicans, and a few Democrats, have urged Pelosi to proceed, arguing that any decision to postpone or cancel would be capitulating to China. But the White House is worried it could trigger a crisis across the Taiwan Strait, where tensions have

spiked over the past year.

A longtime critic of China, particularly over human rights, Pelosi would be the most senior lawmaker to visit Taiwan since then Speaker Newt Gingrich went in 1997.

Beijing opposes all visits by US lawmakers to Taiwan, over which it claims sovereignty. But it is particularly sensitive to Pelosi's visit because she is second in succession to the presidency after the vice-president, and belongs to the same party as Biden.

Her visit will also come just months ahead of the Chinese Communist party's 20th Congress, at which president Xi Jinping is expected to receive an unprecedented third term as leader.

Beijing has accused the US of diluting the "one China" policy, under which Washington recognises Beijing as the sole government of China while acknowledging, but not endorsing, Beijing's stance that Taiwan is part of China.

The US military has been preparing to protect Pelosi, who is flying on a US Air Force aircraft. Few experts believe China would try to shoot down her aircraft, but Chinese fighter jets could attempt to intercept her plane. This could trigger a dangerous situation because the US military would be compelled to intervene to protect Pelosi and her delegation.

"If there's a decision made that Speaker Pelosi or anyone else is going to travel and they ask for military support, [we will do what is necessary](#) to ensure a safe conduct of their visit," General Mark Milley, chair of the joint chiefs, said last week in response to a question from the FT.

Beijing on Monday stepped up its threats. After its PLA conducted live-fire drills on Pingtan, an island in the Taiwan Strait, and other drills in the South China Sea last week, the China Maritime Safety Administration said there would be more exercises from Tuesday to Saturday in the area.

"The Chinese People's Liberation Army will not sit back," China's foreign minister spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters on Monday.

One senior Taiwanese official said Taipei had not seen a marked increase in PLA activity in its vicinity over the past week, but China's military had stepped up its movements around Taiwan in previous weeks, said people familiar with the situation.

"They have been raising the pressure a lot recently," said a second senior Taiwanese

official. “They are sending both larger numbers of aircraft and ships and getting closer.”

According to data from Taiwanese national security authorities, on July 24 the PLA conducted joint air and sea manoeuvres on three sides around Taiwan. These included an attack drone and a destroyer off its east coast, an anti-submarine warfare aircraft flying around its southern tip, and two fighter jets and a reconnaissance aircraft flying an incursion into the south-western edge of its “air defence identification zone”.

The day after those movements — some of which have not been made public — Japan’s military said another type of Chinese attack drone had flown between Yonaguni, a Japanese island near Taiwan’s east coast.

Data published by Japan’s military and Taiwan’s defence ministry also show that the PLA has stepped up activity around the southernmost islands of Japan and in Taiwan’s ADIZ since the second half of June.

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