

China Doubles its Warships Around Taiwan

Taiwan officials confirmed Friday that China has deployed nearly 100 naval and coast guard vessels in and around the South and East China Seas this week, nearly double the typical presence of 50 to 60 ships in the region.

The buildup comes as the United States is focused on the conflict in Iran and as Taiwan's main opposition party leader is visiting Beijing for talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"China is continuously and persistently expanding its military capabilities, and the military threat it poses to us is becoming increasingly severe," Taiwan Defense Minister Wellington Koo told lawmakers Thursday.

Taiwan's defense ministry reported seven Chinese military aircraft operating around the island in the previous 24 hours as of Friday, along with seven warships.

Two Taiwanese security officials told Reuters that the increase in naval activity over the past few weeks was "very rare," particularly because this time of year is not typically busy for Chinese military drills. A second official flagged the timing directly, noting Washington's preoccupation with Iran and the ongoing opposition visit to China.

China declared "reserved" airspace off its eastern coast running from March 27 through May 5, roughly a week before President Donald Trump is scheduled to visit China for talks with Xi.



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Xi met Friday with Kuomintang Chairwoman Cheng Li-wun in Beijing, saying people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait want “peace and cooperation,” while simultaneously warning China will “absolutely not tolerate” Taiwanese independence.

The buildup also comes as Taiwan’s opposition party has blocked a defense spending increase backed by Washington and demanded by Taiwan’s ruling government. Defense Minister Koo warned lawmakers of the stakes.

“But the most frightening scenario is if all of our international allies were to question whether we have such resolve, what would we face? I cannot imagine it,” Koo said.

Kuan Bi-ling, head of Taiwan’s Ocean Affairs Council, took the unusual step of publicly posting the names and locations of Chinese warships on her Facebook account this week, saying transparency was necessary given the opposition leader’s trip to Beijing.

“Because the leader of the main opposition party is planning to meet with Chinese leadership, it is necessary to appropriately disclose to the public and the international community the situation of China’s harassment in our waters,” she wrote.

Two non-Taiwanese security sources confirmed the ship counts to Reuters but characterized the increased presence as a “new normal” from Beijing rather than an immediate crisis signal.

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