

More senators blast PRC pressure

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A dozen more US senators on Thursday criticized Beijing's demand that 44 international airlines label Taiwan as part of China on their Web sites and warned that there were more offensives to come.

Following other international airlines, three leading US carriers — American Airlines, United Airlines and Delta Air Lines — on Tuesday conformed with China's request ahead of a Wednesday deadline by leaving only "Taipei" and "TPE" on their destination lists and removing "Taiwan."

"This bullying of the airlines is really just one small piece of a much larger puzzle, and one that we need to continue to be vigilant about," US Senate Assistant Majority Leader John Cornyn said.

US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations member Chris Coons also expressed his opposition to Beijing's move.

"I object to China's attempt to intimidate companies and wash away Taiwan's existence as a democracy committed to human rights and the rule of law. I stand with the State Department and my Congressional colleagues in supporting Taiwan's correct designation on websites," he said on Twitter.

Washington Post columnist and CNN analyst Josh Rogin also said that the US should be prepared for more to come from China.

"The United States lost an important early skirmish this week over whether American companies must comply with the Chinese government's political demands, but the greater conflict is just beginning, which means the Trump administration must now prepare to help US corporations fight Chinese coercion in future rounds," he wrote.

Airline representatives told him that the US government did not offer any tangible protection in

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the recent dispute and even endorsed the compromise of simply eliminating “Taiwan” in lists of cities and airports, Rogin said.

However, the half-concession appears to have only emboldened Beijing, as the Chinese Civil Aviation Administration called the US airlines’ actions incomplete and demanded total capitulation, Rogin said.

Chinese officials are threatening to damage the airlines’ business in China, in contravention of international trade laws, he said.

“The reality is American corporations can’t be expected to be guided by purely moral considerations, and the US government can’t tell American companies what to do,” he wrote. “That’s an asymmetric advantage for Beijing.”

If US airlines and the US government could work together, it would be a model for other industries facing Chinese pressure, Rogin said.

“Beijing wants to divide and conquer. By uniting, setting clear principles and coordinating responses, foreign firms have greater power to fight back,” he added.

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