

China's ADIZ not connected to sovereignty: Ma

Written by Taipei Times

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President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) yesterday said that China's declaration of an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) over an area of the East China Sea does not involve "air space" or "territorial sovereignty," but that Taiwan will express its "serious" concern to China and other parties.

It is the first time Ma has commented on Beijing's ADIZ move, which was announced on Saturday and has generally been viewed as upping the ante in China's confrontation with Japan over the disputed Diaoyutai Islands (釣台) — known to Japanese as the Senkaku Islands — which Taiwan also claims sovereignty over.

The ADIZ that China has drawn up has a small overlap with Taiwan's own air identification zone, but will have no impact on the ability of Taiwan's armed forces to conduct exercises, Ma said.

Taiwan will express its serious concerns based on his East China Sea peace initiative, he said.

The principles outlined in the initiative include the shelving of territorial disputes, self-restraint from all parties concerned and peaceful resolution of differences.

Ma made the comments at a meeting of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), according to sources who attended the meeting. The president doubles as KMT chairman.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dodged questions as to what the Civil Aeronautics Administration's (CAA) decision to abide by China's new airspace rules means for the nation's sovereignty over the Diaoyutais.

The Chinese Ministry of National Defense said on Saturday that the ADIZ, which went into effect at 10am that day, requires that all aircraft flying through the zone notify China and to obey orders from Chinese officials.

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Taiwanese airlines have begun to comply with the requirement that flight plans be submitted before planes fly through the zone, the CAA said in statement yesterday.

That stance stands in strong contrast to reaction from Japan and South Korea yesterday.

The Japanese government told its domestic carriers to stop providing information to China, while restating that the demarcation of the ADIZ in no way affects Japan.

South Korea, which said that part of China's claimed ADIZ overlaps with its own zone off its southern island of Jeju, said it will not notify China when its planes pass through the area.

Asked whether the CAA's decision to follow China's regulations was tantamount to tacitly acknowledging China's sovereignty over the disputed region, ministry spokesperson Anna Kao (高英) said the agency's decision was "based on professionalism, aviation safety and public interests."

The CAA decision was to accommodate the needs of aircraft companies and in line with practices adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organization, Kao said.

The CAA said it understood that Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines have decided to follow customary practices and forward their civil aviation flight plans to the Civil Aviation Administration of China's Air Traffic Management Bureau.

In related news, the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) demanded that Ma speak to a visiting Chinese official over Beijing's new ADIZ within three days.

"Ma should take the visit of Association of Relations Across the Taiwan Straits Chairman Chen Deming (陳德明) as an opportunity to strongly protest Beijing's move. Chen should be listed as a

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persona non grata

and expelled if he fails to make an appropriate response," TSU Chairman Huang Kun-huei (黃昆輝) told a press conference in Taipei.

If Ma did not meet this demand, the TSU would take action on its own, Huang said.

Huang's statement came one day after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) demanded the Ma administration lodge a protest against Beijing's move and maintain close contact with its allies. The DPP said Taiwan's fighter jets and naval vessels in its own ADIZ must not be affected by China's announcement.

While Ma has boasted about "the best cross-strait relations in decades" during his time in office, Beijing never consulted Taiwan about the ADIZ, Huang said.

Ma's diplomatic strategy of working with China to counter the Japan-US alliance was a mistake, he said.

China's unilateral demarcation was part of a "gradual annexation" that keeps pushing the envelope and should alert the public not to ignore its malicious intentions, he said.

Beijing's redrawing of the ADIZ has jeopardized peaceful development in Asia, regional stability in Northeast Asia as well Taiwan's security and sovereignty, Huang said, adding that as the president, Ma could not afford to sit around and do nothing about China's political maneuvering.

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