

Bold action on air routes urged

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SOURCE: CAA

Legislators across party lines yesterday said new flight routes announced by China are testing the nation's bottom line and that peace across the Taiwan Strait will be difficult to keep if the government does not confront Beijing head on over the matter.

On Monday, China announced via the International Civil Aviation Organization new commercial flight routes just to the west of the median line of the Taiwan Strait, an act said to pose risks to Taiwan's air safety and defense.

While, the Ministry of National Defense and the Civil Aeronautics Administration on Tuesday took a firm stand against the move, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) has made relatively soft remarks on it, merely calling it "unacceptable" and urging China to engage in further negotiations.

MAC Vice Minister Wu Mei-hung (吳美紅) yesterday said that the two sides should maintain friendly and positive interactions, and that cross-strait talks should continue.

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Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) Legislator Chou Ni-an (周尼安) yesterday lambasted the council, saying its attitude is soft, since the routes should have been decided after sufficient communication between the two nations.

The council should make its objections plain, or it would be tantamount to forfeiting national sovereignty, Chou said.

Chou said the council should suspend the issuing of landing visas in Kinmen County for Chinese visitors and the “small three links” (小三通) until cross-strait negotiations are held to deal with Beijing’s announcement.

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Lin Yu-fang (林育方) said that with China carrying out reclamation projects in the South China Sea and having its military vessels sail through disputed waters to flex its military muscles and showcase its ambitions, it will become more difficult for the government to keep cross-strait peace if it does not demonstrate its strong discontent over the routes.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Chen Chi-mai (陳其邁) said Beijing unilaterally established the new routes in the face of the President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) administration because it has become impatient with obstructions to cross-strait negotiations and the KMT’s drubbing in last year’s nine-in-one elections.

DPP Legislator Tsai Huang-liang (蔡煌良) criticized the council, accusing it of trying to avoid the problem.

Future cross-strait negotiations might be held under the “one China” regime if the government does not toughen up this time, Tsai said.

Meanwhile, TSU chairman Huang Kun-huei (黃昆輝) said China is pressing aggressively toward Taiwan, not only in terms of its missiles targeting the nation, but now in the civil aviation arena.

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DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said during a meeting of the party's Central Standing Committee that China's action would have great impact on cross-strait flight safety, national security and sovereignty, adding that the move is extremely disrespectful to Taiwan and in violation of the spirit of the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

It also risks incurring changes to the cross-strait "status quo" and peace, Tsai Ing-wen added.

It is unacceptable to Taiwanese that while the Ma administration has been touting its efforts in cross-strait relations, it failed to see this coming, she said, adding that the DPP demands that the government lodge a firm protest with Beijing.

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