

US analyst urges Japan to sell Taiwan submarines

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A US defense expert is urging Japan to sell Soryu-class submarines equipped with US communications and weapons systems to Taiwan.

“Washington should make Taiwan’s submarine program a priority for the bilateral security relationship,” American Enterprise Institute defense policy analyst Michael Mazza said.

In a study published this week by the institute, Mazza said US President Barack Obama’s administration should directly inform Beijing that it views China’s military modernization “with great concern.”

He said the nature of the buildup makes it a central national security concern for the US.

The buildup, Mazza said, is largely focused on enabling the Chinese People’s Liberation Army to defeat the US military in battle, to subjugate democratic neighbors like Taiwan and to deny the US free access to the Western Pacific and Asian waters.

“Chinese military modernization threatens to undermine an Asian order that has been key to prosperity and security in both Asia and the US,” he said.

Mazza said he believes China is threatening the peace in the South China Sea on which US economic and security interests depend.

In the East China Sea, Mazza said, China is showing a “reckless disregard” for the maintenance of peace and is challenging the US’ most important regional alliance.

Mazza said the US must adopt a more robust regional posture and contain the Chinese military within the first island chain.

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“Doing so will minimize the Chinese military’s ability to pose a direct threat to the US and effectively threaten the US’ allies,” he said.

Mazza made the case for two strategies in particular that he considers worth pursuing.

First, he said that US partners South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Australia and India all want to upgrade their submarine fleets.

US strategists, Mazza said, should consider the value of an allied submarine “picket line” that would allow for enhanced tracking of Chinese subs exiting and re-entering the South China Sea, and position the allies to more easily close strategic chokepoints in the event of conflict.

“Partner nations could divide geographic responsibilities, with Taiwan taking primary responsibility for patrolling waters in and around the Taiwan Strait and the US doing so in the South China Sea itself,” he said.

To encourage greater interoperability, Mazza said the US should support Japan’s efforts to sell its submarines abroad and lobby for US industrial participation in indigenous submarine programs.

In particular, he said, Washington should assist Taiwan with its indigenous production plans or push Tokyo to sell Soryu-class submarines to Taipei.

“Where direct cooperation might be too sensitive — between Southeast Asians and Taiwan for example — the US can abet implicit coordination,” Mazza said.

Mazza’s study followed testimony by US Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Frank Kendall before a hearing of the US House Armed Services

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Committee that China's military modernization had undermined US superiority.

"We're at risk and the situation is getting worse," Kendall said.

Earlier this week, the former intelligence chief of the US Navy's Pacific Fleet, Captain James Fanell, said in Honolulu that Beijing was "rejuvenating" and preparing for a military conflict.

"China's rise, if left unchecked or undeterred, will necessarily disrupt the peace and stability of our friends, partners and allies," Fanell told the Washington Free Beacon Web site.

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