

Unexpected US F/A-18 jet landing sparks discussion

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The unexpected landing of two F/A-18 jets belonging to US Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323 has prompted much discussion and response in public and political circles, with some people suggesting the US government is sending Taiwan a message.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Chiu Chih-wei (邱志偉) said that the jets landing at Tainan Air Force Base showed the ongoing cooperation between the two countries.

“It also indicated that Taiwan is an important ally in the US’ ‘First Island Chain’ defense. As a message for China, it signals the US’ continual support for the Taiwan military’s arms upgrading program,” Chiu said.

DPP Legislator Tsai Huang-liang (蔡煌良), a member of the legislative Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee, said the incident holds an important symbolic meaning: “The US still regards Taiwan as one of its strategic military partners. I hope our government can seize on this opportunity to enhance the bilateral relationship.”

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Lin Yu-fang (林郁方) said the F/A-18 Hornets chose to land in Tainan because Taiwan is a US ally and there was no fear of the jets being detained — as happened in China following a collision between US and Chinese aircraft over Hainan Island in 2001.

“This is the first time that advanced US fighter jets have landed in Taiwan. It shows that the US has trust in Taiwan and that a good relationship exists between the two countries,” Lin said.

News reports of the incident attracted many military buffs to the vicinity of the Tainan Air Force Base, with many using long-lens cameras to catch a glimpse of the F/A-18 Hornets.

There were also enthusiastic discussions online by Taiwanese netizens. Most held positive views of the incident, while some said it meant to rebuke the administration of Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) pro-China policies.

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“The US sees that Ma was catering to China on the M503 flight route issue, so they dispatched two Hornet jets here to assert American military presence in this region,” a commentator named Yu wrote.

“It was staged to remind both sides of the Taiwan Strait that the US is still the big boss in Asia-Pacific,” another netizen named Chang wrote.

Officials and netizens also pointed out that Wednesday’s incident was the first time in 28 years that US fighter jets had landed at an airport in Taiwan.

US military analyst Rick Fisher was quoted in the Washington Times as saying it appears that the Pentagon is sending a political message to China.

“The ‘emergency’ landing for two F/A-18 fighters [sic] at an air base in Taiwan, while perhaps unintended, does give China a significant signal of US resolve, two days after China used its new H-6K nuclear cruise missile bomber in exercises intended to signal a threat to US forces on Guam,” he said.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2015/04/03](#)