

China sees Taiwan as key security threat: US report

Written by Taipei Times

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China now believes that the most important threat to its security interests might come from Taiwan, a new US congressional report said.

“The most salient challenge to Chinese interests perceived by leaders in Beijing relates to sovereignty vis-a-vis Taiwan,” said the report, released on Tuesday by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

Following its fears that Taiwan might move toward independence, the situation in the East and South China seas top Beijing’s concerns.

“China is seeking to become the dominant power in Asia and a counter or balancing power to the presence of the US in the Asia Pacific,” said the report on China’s efforts to counter the US’ forward presence.

“Should Chinese leaders decide to employ military force to address these sovereignty concerns, it would destabilize the region, put pressure on the US to respond and would affect American allies,” the report said.

The commission, created by US Congress to monitor Chinese military developments, produces a series of staff research reports each year to help keep Capitol Hill informed.

“While China benefits from the security and stability the US and US allies bring to Asia, China is seeking to reduce the People’s Liberation Army’s [PLA] vulnerability to US forces in the region should a conflict occur,” the report said.

China continues to build anti-access and area denial capabilities to deter or delay a US military response to a conflict, the report said.

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“China conducts activities intended to drive a wedge between US allies and partners to undermine the development of a unified, US-led security architecture in the Asia-Pacific and hinder US presence and force projection capability,” it said.

The reality of the situation is that because of its own assertive and aggressive actions, Beijing has has been the primary driver of instability in the Asia-Pacific region, the report said.

Beijing’s concerns about the US military presence in the region and the ability of the US to intervene in areas considered core interests — such as Taiwan — have led China to pursue capabilities that would enable the PLA to deny US intervention or to complicate US intervention during a conflict “should denial efforts fail,” the report said.

China uses psychological, media and legal warfare to help it control and shape its security environment, the report said.

“China’s espionage campaign against Taiwan could constitute, among other things, a form of psychological warfare,” the report said.

In addition to the traditional reasons for espionage, Beijing also seeks to weaken the morale of the Taiwanese military, the report said.

“Each spy case uncovered and revealed by Taiwan has the potential to achieve psychological benefits for Beijing, creating an environment where China’s capture of Taiwan’s defense secrets could be perceived as an inevitability,” the report said.

“China’s efforts to erode US influence in the Asia Pacific almost certainly will continue. The US and its allies must be aware of these efforts and be prepared to counter them,” it said.

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