

Taiwan among nations targeted by US exercises

Written by Taiwan Tati Cultural & Educational Foundation
Wednesday, 27 April 2016 08:07 -



A US FA-18 jet lands on the USS John C. Stennis aircraft carrier in the South China Sea on April 15.

Photo: AP

The US military conducted “freedom of navigation” operations against 13 countries last year, including Taiwan, and several to challenge China’s claims in the South and East China seas, according to an annual Pentagon report released on Monday.

Multiple operations were against China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Libya, Malaysia, the Maldives, Oman, the Philippines and Vietnam, the report said.

It did not specify how many such operations were conducted against each of those countries.

The US military carried out single operations against Taiwan, Nicaragua and Argentina, the department said in the report.

The freedom of navigation operations involve sending US Navy ships and military aircraft into areas where other nations have tried to limit access. The aim is to demonstrate that the international community does not accept such restrictions.

The US has repeatedly conducted operations disputing China’s maritime claims in the past few years and did so again in last year, a year in which Beijing’s land reclamation efforts in the resource-rich areas of the South China Sea led to rising tensions in the region.

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A US guided-missile destroyer conducted a freedom of navigation patrol near one of China's artificial islands in the Spratly Islands (Nansha Islands, 南沙群岛) in October last year. Taiwan also claims the Spratly chain.

US military flights near the islands have been warned off.

US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter said the navy would continue to operate in the region despite China's protests.

The Chinese Ministry of National Defense late on Monday said in a statement on its Web site that it was deeply concerned by such operations.

"The United States carries out militarization in the South China Sea in the name of freedom of navigation and overflight, threatens coastal nations' sovereignty and security and destroys regional peace and stability," the ministry said.

It made the comment in response to what it said were reports of recent US military flights near the Scarborough Shoal (Huangyan Island, 黄岩岛), an area China seized control of after a stand-off with the Philippine coast guard in 2012. Taiwan also claims the shoal.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2016/04/27](#)