

Get used to air force drills: China

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A Taiwanese F-16, bottom, follows a Chinese H-6 bomber in an undated photograph.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of National Defense

Taiwanese will gradually get used to Chinese air force drills that encircle the nation, China said yesterday, while Premier William Lai (賴清德) reiterated the nation's desire for peaceful relations with Beijing.

China has taken an increasingly hostile stance toward Taiwan since President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), last year won the presidential election, and has stepped up its rhetoric and military exercises.

Beijing suspects Tsai of pushing for Taiwanese independence, a red line for China.

Tsai said she wants peace with China, but also that she would defend Taiwan's security and way of life.

Chinese state media has given broad coverage to "encirclement" exercises near Taiwan this month, including showing photographs of Chinese bombers with what they said was Taiwan's highest peak, Yushan (玉山), visible in the background.

Asked about the continuing drills and the footage released by the air force, China's Taiwan Affairs Office said it and the Chinese Ministry of National Defense had repeatedly described the

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exercises as routine.

“Everyone will slowly get used it,” office spokesman An Fengshan (安鳳山) told a routine news briefing, without elaborating.

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has carried out 16 rounds of exercises close to Taiwan in the past year or so, the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense said in a white paper this week.

China’s military threat was growing by the day, it added.

The government has accused Beijing of not understanding democracy when it criticizes Taipei.

The US, Japan and South Korea are paying close attention to the PLA’s activities, Lai said at an end of year news conference in Taipei.

“Under the president’s leadership, the Executive Yuan pushes forward government affairs, stabilizing cross-strait relations toward peaceful development,” Lai said.

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