

Chinese provocations will not win any hearts: Bolton

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John Bolton, national security advisor, adjusts his glasses while speaking during a White House briefing in Washington, D.C., U.S., on Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2018.

Photo: Bloomberg

Chinese provocations will not win Taiwanese hearts, but will only bring people around the world that cherish democracy closer, White House National Security Adviser John Bolton said in a tweet yesterday.

“Chinese military provocations won’t win any hearts or minds in Taiwan, but they will strengthen the resolve of people everywhere who value democracy. The Taiwan Relations Act [TRA] and our commitment are clear,” Bolton wrote.

Bolton did not elaborate on the US’ commitment to Taiwan.

According to the TRA, which serves as the basis of unofficial relations between Taiwan and the US, Washington is obliged to provide Taiwan with defensive weapons.

It must also “maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of Taiwan’s people,” the act says.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳敦義) thanked Bolton for his “unwavering friendship and support” in a tweet.

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"We're determined to deal with any reckless military adventure by the bully across the #Taiwan Strait. Provocation only makes us stronger & as you said: 'Surrender is not an option,'" Wu wrote.

Bolton's comments came after two Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force fighter jets crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait on Sunday, a rare move that breached a long-held tacit agreement between the two sides.

Military sources said it was the first time since 1999 that the Chinese military had intentionally crossed the median line that separates Taiwan and China.

Commenting on the incident, Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Dave Eastburn said the US opposes unilateral actions by any party aimed at altering the cross-strait "status quo," including "any resort to force or other forms of coercion."

"Consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States considers any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, of grave concern to the United States," he said.

The Ministry of National Defense said that the air force scrambled five fighter jets to intercept two Chinese J-11 fighter planes that crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's southwestern airspace at 11am on Sunday.

The J-11 aircraft eventually returned to the Chinese side of the median line after receiving multiple radio warnings.

Ian Easton, a research fellow with the US-based think tank Project 2049 Institute, said the provocation was "further evidence that [Chinese President] Xi Jinping (习近平) is an aggressive and ambitious militarist."

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He said it was a good sign that Washington is beginning to realize Beijing's threat to Taiwan and to the whole Indo-Pacific region.

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