

USS 'Mustin' transits Taiwan Strait after Japan drill

Written by Taipei Times

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The USS Mustin of the US Seventh Fleet sails southward through the Taiwan Strait on Tuesday.

Photo: Screen grab from Facebook

The Ministry of National Defense and the US Seventh Fleet yesterday confirmed that the USS Mustin sailed through the Taiwan Strait on Tuesday, while a Twitter page that frequently shares military movements said that a US Army Bombardier Challenger 650 passed through Taiwan's eastern airspace.

On Saturday last week, the US Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyer and Japan's JS Suzutsuki conducted joint drills in the East China Sea.

The Mustin sailed through the Strait from north to south and continued southward, the ministry said, while showing an image released by the US of the warship during its passage.

The US warship performed a general navigation mission through the Strait and Taiwan's military, using joint intelligence and surveillance, monitored movements in nearby waters and airspace, it said.

The USS Ronald Reagan strike group on Friday last week entered the South China Sea, and on Saturday neared waters east of the Pratas Islands (Dongsha Islands, 釣魚台).

The next day, a US Air Force B-1B bomber took off from Andersen Air Force Base in Guam and at one point approached China's air defense identification zone over the East China Sea.

The US Seventh Fleet said in a news release that the Mustin of the Yokosuka, Japan-based Destroyer Squadron 15 accompanied the Ronald Reagan strike group to the South China Sea for exercises and on Saturday continued to the East China Sea for drills with the Suzutsuki.

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Against the backdrop of US-China military competition, drills by US warships in the western Pacific and South China Sea, and passage through the Taiwan Strait show Washington's support and commitment to Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and other friendly nations in the Indo-Pacific region, Defence International magazine senior editor Smith Chen (陳世明) said.

However, even if the US military sailed Aegis-equipped destroyers down the Strait to show its commitment, Taiwan's national defense must still rely on its own strength, Chen added.

The number of times that military aircraft from China's People's Liberation Army have entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone has also increased, Chen said.

The Chinese-language Apple Daily yesterday reported that the "Callsign: CANUK78" Twitter account said that a US Army Bombardier Challenger 650 took off from Japan's Kadena Air Base and passed through Taiwan's eastern airspace, before turning back over the Bashi Channel and returning to Kadena.

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