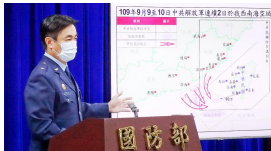


Defense, foreign ministries criticize China after second day of PLA drills

Written by Taipei Times

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Office of Deputy Chief of the General Staff for Intelligence Deputy Chief Yang Ching gives a briefing at the Ministry of National Defense in Taipei last night.

Photo: Chu Pei-hsiung, Taipei Times

The Ministry of National Defense yesterday criticized the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for holding a joint naval-air exercise 90 nautical miles (166km) off the coast of Taiwan, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the global community to squarely face up to the threat posed by China.

Both ministries held rare impromptu news conferences yesterday evening to denounce China's action.

The defense ministry had earlier issued an English-language statement on Twitter calling on the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) to exercise restraint and for the CCP to be a peacemaker and maintain regional stability.

It said it had detected multiple waves of PLA Air Force (PLAAF) aircraft crossing into Taiwan's southwestern air defense identification zone yesterday morning, the second consecutive day that PLAAF aircraft entered the zone.

Between 7am and noon, SU-30s, J-10s and Y-8 jets, accompanied by PLA Navy (PLAN) vessels, conducted a joint naval-air exercise, it said.

More PLA units were involved, although it could not determine if they were the artillery corps, the marine corps, or other units, it said.

Maps shown to the media during the defense ministry's 8pm press conference showed that PLA forces were seen off the coast of China's Fujian and Guangdong provinces, while the PLAN was detected north of the Pratas Islands (Dongsha Islands, 釣魚台).

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The Chinese exercise was closely monitored from start to finish, the defense ministry said.

Deputy Minister of National Defense Chang Che-ping (張哲平) said that the consecutive incursions into Taiwan's air defense identification zone posed a severe threat to Taiwan's air defenses and regional stability.

PLA fighter jets are operating in the vicinity of international flight paths and could pose a threat to international civilian flights, he said.

Beijing should show restraint, he said, adding that its actions only created more animosity to it among Taiwanese.

At the foreign ministry's news conference later in the evening, spokeswoman Joanne Ou (歐陽) condemned China for provoking tensions and urged the international community to squarely face up to the threat posed by China.

"Today, the PLA has chosen to conduct exercises near Taiwan. Tomorrow, it may engage in similar threats near other countries," Ou said, first in Mandarin and then English, a rare gesture to the international media.

"Taiwan does not seek confrontation, but neither will it back down," she said.

Taiwanese can rest assured that the Republic of China military will staunchly defend national security, she said.

The foreign ministry has informed key friendly nations of China's actions yesterday, she said, calling on peace-loving nations to recognize the serious threat that the Chinese government poses to the region and jointly tackle the situation.

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Additional reporting by Lin Chia-nan and CNA

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