

US admiral's visit to Taiwan confirmed

Written by Taipei Times

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A US-registered executive jet bearing tail number 375 is parked on the apron at Taipei International Airport yesterday.

Photo: CNA

A two-star US Navy admiral overseeing US military intelligence in the Asia-Pacific region has made an unannounced visit to Taiwan, two sources told Reuters on Sunday.

The sources, who include a Taiwanese official familiar with the situation, said the official was Rear Admiral Michael Studeman. They were speaking on condition of anonymity.

After initially saying on Sunday night that it had no comment about the report, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it welcomed the visit of an “unidentified US official,” but declined to give more details because the trip “has not been made public.”

Presidential Office spokesman Xavier Chang (張中江) yesterday said that due to mutual trust between Taiwan and the US, “we will not confirm nor comment” on related issues.

Studeman is director of the J2, which oversees intelligence, at the Indo-Pacific Command, according to the US Navy Web site.

The Pentagon declined to comment when asked whether Studeman was visiting Taiwan.

The visit is the latest show of support from US President Donald Trump’s administration, which has sold Taiwan billions of US dollars of weapons and sent the highest-level delegation to Taipei in four decades.

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Taiwanese officials have also said that US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler would visit Taipei next month.

In Beijing, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Zhao Lijian (趙立堅) said that China “resolutely opposes” any form of exchanges between US and Taiwanese officials or the two having military relations.

“The Chinese side will, according to how the situation develops, make a legitimate and necessary response,” he said, without elaborating.

In related news, the commanding officer of the USS *Barry*, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer, reiterated on Sunday that its transit through the Taiwan Strait and presence in the South China Sea are vital to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

“The freedom of all nations to navigate in international waters is critically important. Barry’s transit of the Taiwan Strait yesterday [Saturday] ensured the right and instills the confidence of all nations to trade and communicate in the South China Sea,” Commander Chris Gahl said in a US Pacific Fleet news release.

It was the USS *Barry*’s fourth routine transit through the Strait this year, with the mission being to conduct maritime security operations and promote peace and stability in the region, the report said.

The report also cited Lieutenant Commander Timothy Baker, who is the USS *Barry*’s planning and tactics officer, as saying that it conducted a freedom of navigation operation around the Paracel Islands (Xisha Islands, 西沙群島) in April and then rendezvoused with the USS *America* expeditionary strike group for operations in the South China Sea.

“Whether operating independently or as a part of a larger group, *Barry* serves as a highly visible symbol of the overwhelming force the United States can deploy to defeat aggression,” Baker said.

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On Saturday, the Ministry of National Defense confirmed that the US vessel entered the Strait from the north and headed in a southerly direction.

The ministry added that the military was monitoring the situation in the region and did not detect any unusual activities during the maneuver.

The *Barry* is forward-deployed to Yokosuka, Japan, and assigned to Destroyer Squadron 15, according to the US Pacific Fleet.

Additional reporting by Su Yung-yao

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