

Su slams PRC's incursions with 38 jets

Written by Taipei Times

Sunday, 03 October 2021 04:41 -



A Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force J-16 fighter jet is pictured in an undated photograph.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of National Defense

Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) yesterday criticized China after 38 of its military aircraft crossed into Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) on Friday, the most in a single day since Taiwan began issuing a tally on such incursions in September last year.

On Friday evening, the Ministry of National Defense reported that 25 Chinese planes had crossed into the nation's southeastern ADIZ, between Taiwan proper and the Pratas Islands (Dongsha Island, 釣魚台).

It identified the planes as 18 J-16 fighter jets, four SU-30 fighters, two H-6 bombers and one Y-8 anti-submarine warfare plane.

Late on Friday night, the ministry reported that 13 Chinese aircraft had entered the southwestern ADIZ, identifying them as 10 J-16 fighter jets, two H-6 bombers and one KJ-500, which is a third-generation airborne early warning and control aircraft.

The J-16 fighters and the H-6 bombers entered the ADIZ from the direction of China's Fujian and Guangdong provinces, crossed the Bashi Channel and returned to China, while the KJ-500 entered the ADIZ from the direction of Guangdong, before returning to China, ministry data showed.

The incursions came on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

In response, Taiwan's air force scrambled planes to monitor the Chinese aircraft, issued radio warnings and mobilized air defense assets, the ministry said.

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Before Friday's incursion, the most Chinese military planes to enter the ADIZ in a single day was 28 on June 15, two days after the G7 issued a statement highlighting the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Later yesterday, the ministry said that another 20 Chinese air force planes had crossed into the ADIZ.

"China has been wantonly engaging in military aggression, damaging regional peace," Su said.

China has used a wide range of bullying tactics against Taiwan, but the actions have increasingly been renounced by other countries, Su said.

Shu Hsiao-huang (舒晓航), a research fellow at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, said that the J-16 is the main fighter jet of China's air force, and mobilizing 16 of them was perhaps aimed at familiarizing its pilots with the air space around Taiwan.

It could be a training exercise to acclimatize pilots to long-range flights, as well as coordinating with bombers, he added.

Taiwan should boost defenses in its southwestern air space, he said, adding that improving its intelligence gathering capabilities in the area could give the military more time to deploy mobile anti-air missile trucks on the east coast.

Retired air force deputy commander lieutenant general Chang Yen-ting (張延廷) said previous assumptions that Taiwan's east coast is relatively safe are no longer true.

The route taken by the Chinese planes demonstrates that the whole of Taiwan is now within bombing range of its air force, and Taiwan's military should begin establishing hardened aircraft

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shelters, Chang said.

Additional reporting by Wu Su-wei and Reuters

Source: [Taipei Times- 2021/10/03](#)