

Taiwan slams Russia over incursion

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Ukrainians wave Ukrainian and EU flags, and hold banners as they protest outside the Russian embassy in Kyiv yesterday after Moscow's decision to formally recognize two Russian-backed regions of eastern Ukraine as independent.

Photo: Reuters

Taiwan condemns Russia for undermining Ukraine's sovereignty and calls for peaceful means to resolve the dispute, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said yesterday.

Taipei "condemns Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty," Tsai wrote on Facebook shortly after she was briefed on the latest situation in Ukraine by a National Security Council task force.

The government calls on all sides to use peaceful means to resolve disputes, Tsai said, adding that Taiwan is willing to contribute to de-escalation efforts, although she did not elaborate on what those efforts might be.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday officially recognized Ukraine's breakaway Donetsk and Luhansk regions as sovereign entities.

He also ordered Russian troops into the regions on a "peacekeeping" mission, drawing condemnation from Western governments and international organizations such as the UN and NATO.

The government would continue ensuring the security of Taiwan while keeping an eye on the situation in Ukraine, Tsai said.

National security officials and armed forces have been instructed to more closely monitor the situation across the Taiwan Strait and continue to refine their defense readiness, she said.

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All government agencies must be on the alert for potential influence operations perpetrated by overseas powers and their local partners that might attempt to use the Ukraine crisis to sway public opinion in Taiwan, Tsai said.

They should step up efforts to clarify false information and prevent its spread, she added.

Tsai also asked the government to prepare for possible short and long-term effects the Ukraine crisis might have on the global and domestic economy, and devise plans to ensure the supply of strategic goods and stabilize commodity prices and the financial market.

On Tuesday, a national security official told the Central News Agency that the nation should be wary of “cognitive warfare” waged by China.

Beijing could use information about Ukraine to plant the idea in Taiwan that the US would not honor its commitment to ensure Taiwan’s security, the official said on condition of anonymity.

Apart from sowing division between Taiwan and the US, such efforts are designed to promote unification with China, the official said.

The situations in Taiwan and Ukraine are not comparable, and the US’ commitment to Taiwan’s security remains firm, the official said, adding that Taiwan occupies a strategic location in East Asia and plays a key role in global supply chains.

A senior Taiwanese official familiar with the government’s security planning told Reuters that the chances of a sudden uptick of military tension are “not high,” but that Taipei has been watching closely for any unusual Chinese activities.

The person pointed to the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s joint military drills in areas

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between Taiwan's northeast and near the Miyako Strait close to Japan's southern islands, which have become more frequent in the past month or so.

In Beijing, China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman Ma Xiaoguang (马晓光) yesterday said that Taipei, in concert with the West, was using Ukraine to "maliciously hype up" military threats and whip up anti-China sentiment.

One Western security official familiar with policy planning toward China said that Beijing was most likely looking at how the Ukraine situation developed in terms of sanctions on Russia.

"It's probably seen as a laboratory by China, on what they might face in a Taiwan contingency," the official said, referring to how Western countries might react to a Chinese attack on Taiwan.

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