



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 1, 2024

China Cautions Asian Nations About U.S. Military Expansion

On December 28, China's Defense Ministry urged Asia-Pacific nations to be vigilant against U.S. military deployments in the region, quoting the Pentagon's plan to rebuild a World War II-era airfield on a small island north of Guam.

During a press conference, military spokesman Wu Qian said the American airfield scheme was only a means for Washington to "maintain its hegemony," a move that would "stoke confrontation."

"The Chinese military is paying close attention to moves by the United States, and will firmly safeguard China's maritime rights, security and sovereignty in the region," he said.



AP Images
Wu Qian

Moreover, Wu proceeded to condemn such deployments as reflective of a "Cold War mindset," reinforcing prior denunciations of U.S. military activity across the region, including regular transits of the disputed Taiwan Strait by American naval vessels.

Earlier in December, U.S. Air Force General Kenneth Wilsbach told Japanese media that the Pentagon would soon make huge strides in reclaiming the abandoned Tinian airfield — which was used for the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War, but has since fallen into disrepair.

The general pointed out that the renovation project was part of a wider plan to station American warplanes across the region.

"If you pay attention in the next few months, you will see significant progress," Wilsbach elaborated, without providing a precise timeframe for when the installation would be ready for use.

Left decrepit after World War Two, the Tinian airbase is situated on a small islet in the Northern Mariana Islands, a US territory north of Guam and about 1,800 miles east of the Chinese mainland.

During his New Year's address on Sunday, December 31, Chinese President Xi Jinping proclaimed that the reunification of Taiwan and the Chinese mainland was a "historical inevitability," as per Reuters. Xi made these remarks as Taiwan prepares to hold controversial parliamentary and presidential elections in this month.

"The reunification of the motherland is a historical inevitability," Xi said, according to a translation by a news agency. "Compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait should be bound by a common sense of purpose and share in the glory of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," he continued.

An official translation by CCP (Chinese Communist Party) propaganda mouthpiece Xinhua employed simpler phrasing, quoting Xi as saying "China will surely be reunified, and all Chinese on both sides of



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the Taiwan Strait should be bound by a common sense of purpose.”

Xi made a brief allusion to unification during last year’s message, stating only that people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait were “members of one and the same family.” Nonetheless, Taiwan is scheduled to conduct presidential and parliamentary elections in mid-January, and opinion polls presently depict Vice President Lai Ching-te of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in the lead for the presidency.

Lai has portrayed himself as a “worker for Taiwanese independence,” while Beijing regards him as a “destroyer of peace across the Taiwan Strait,” based on China’s Taiwan Affairs Office.

The January 13 Taiwanese presidential and parliamentary elections are occurring amid frosty ties between Beijing and Taipei. China has been increasing its military pugilism to stake its sovereignty claims over Taiwan.

Responding late on December 30 to Lai’s remarks during a live televised presidential debate earlier in the day, China’s Taiwan Affairs Office said Lai had “exposed his true face as a stubborn ‘worker for Taiwan independence’ and destroyer of peace across the Taiwan Strait.”

“His words were full of confrontational thinking,” spokesperson Chen Binhua lashed out in a statement. On his end, Lai reiterated in a pre-election debate televised live that he was open to talks with China, which has repeatedly declined his offers of dialogue as it regards him as a separatist.

“On so-called Taiwan independence, Taiwan’s basic position is that Taiwan’s sovereignty and independence belong to its 23 million people, not the People’s Republic of China,” Lai said.

“The Republic of China and People’s Republic of China are not subordinate to each other — this is the definition of Taiwan independence,” he added, alluding to Taiwan’s formal name.

On January 1, Xi added that he was willing to work with the United States to boost stable bilateral ties, exchanging congratulations with his U.S. counterpart on the anniversary of diplomatic relations, state media said.

Xi [met U.S. President Joe Biden in San Francisco in November](#) last year, in a summit that saw both sides vow to boost communication to [stop competition from leading to conflict](#).

To commemorate the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Xi added that both sides should “take practical actions to promote the stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations.”

Xi stated that “adhering to mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation is the correct way for China and the United States to interact,” CCTV said.

Besides, the Chinese leader also [exchanged New Year’s messages with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un](#), with both declaring 2024 to be a “friendship year” for both countries, launching a series of activities for that, according to Xinhua news agency.

On New Year’s Eve, the Chinese leader exchanged New Year’s greetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin as well. 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of China and Russia establishing diplomatic relations.

Xi said China and Russia should “continuously consolidate” and build ties “featuring permanent good-neighborly friendship,” along with extensive strategic coordination and mutually beneficial cooperation that would benefit both countries.



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This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China by Mao Zedong.

Mao declared the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, while Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist government fled to Taiwan in December of that year. No peace treaty has ever been inked to formally end the war, and the Republic of China remains Taiwan's formal name.

Beijing's official stance is that while it will try to peacefully reunify the island with the mainland, it does not rule out the use of military force if necessary. In 2023, the Chinese government posited that a declaration of independence by Taipei "means war."

In 1971, the UN acknowledged the government in Beijing as the legitimate government of China, causing many countries to cease recognizing Taiwan. Since 1972, the United States has accepted, but not publicly promoted, Beijing's stance that "there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China."



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