



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on December 14, 2022

China Dispatches Unprecedented Number of Bombers to Taiwan Defense Zone

China dispatched an unprecedented 18 nuclear-capable bombers into Taiwan's air-defense zone, according to Taipei on Tuesday, just days after Beijing forbade more Taiwanese imports in the latest episode of worsening relations.

China views self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory, to be reunified with the mainland by force if necessary.

Beijing has increased military, diplomatic, and economic pressure on the island since the 2016 election of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who dismisses the mainland Chinese stance that Taiwan is part of China.



Alert5/Wikimedia Commons
Xian H-6 bomber

Taiwan's defense ministry announced on Tuesday that 21 aircraft, including 18 nuclear-capable H-6 bombers, entered the island's south-west air defense identification zone (ADIZ) over the last 24 hours. This figure indicates the largest daily sortie by H-6 bombers since Taipei first began announcing daily incursion data in September 2020, based on AFP reports.

The H-6 is China's main long-distance bomber, and can carry nuclear payloads.

Observers have noted that it is uncommon for China to dispatch more than five H-6 bombers in one day. However, recent weeks have seen a huge increase in Chinese-operated sorties.

Until recently, October 2021 was the month with the largest number of H-6 flights on record, at 16.

Last month, China sent 21 of the bombers into Taiwan's ADIZ. The current tally for December is at 23.

Taiwan's defense ministry also stated that three Chinese naval vessels were identified, along with the H-6 bombers.

The Taiwanese regime said it deployed its fighter aircraft, land-based missile systems, and naval vessels to track Beijing's jets.

The sorties came after China imposed new import bans on Taiwanese fishery products, food, beverages, and alcohol last week. In response, Taiwanese Premier Su Tseng-chang lambasted Beijing for breaching international trade rules and "discriminating" against Taiwan.

Many nations, including the United States, Canada, South Korea, Japan, and China, have their own ADIZ. An ADIZ is not the same as a country's airspace.

Instead, it includes a much broader area, in which any foreign aircraft is supposed to declare itself to the local aviation authorities.

Taiwan's ADIZ is much larger than its airspace, and overlaps with part of China's ADIZ, including some of the mainland.



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China's recent bellicosity comes in the wake of a visit to Taiwan on Sunday by a senior official from Western ally Japan. Koichi Hagiuda is the most senior member of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to visit the island in 19 years.

Tokyo on Monday said fighters were hastily assembled to deal with "a suspected intrusion into Japan's airspace over the East China Sea" without elaborating on further details.

After a meeting with Hagiuda, Taiwan's Tsai vowed to enhance security cooperation with Japan to ensure "freedom in the Indo-Pacific."

"We have seen in recent years that Taiwan-Japan relations have become ever closer," Tsai said.

"In the future, Taiwan will continue to deepen cooperation with Japan in various fields such as security and work together to ensure the freedom, openness and stability of the Indo-Pacific region."

Hagiuda said Taiwan was an "extremely important partner" with shared values such as "liberal democracy, basic human rights, and the rule of law."

"In this context, our help and cooperation with one another has built up over time," he added.

The Japanese official said Beijing should avoid using force to alter the status quo in the Taiwan Strait and highlighted that Tokyo was determined to "bolster strike capabilities in an effort to strengthen deterrence."

China also deployed a sortie of 46 warplanes toward Taiwan, in retaliation to British trade minister Greg Hands' visit to the island last month.

Taiwanese foreign minister Joseph Wu insinuated in an interview with *The Guardian* that China is preparing to find another "pretext for practising their future attack" on the island following a historic number of military aggressions in 2022.

Besides increasing military activities around Taiwan, Beijing has been using a "combination of pressures," including economic coercion, cyberattacks, and cognitive and legal warfare to alienate Taiwan.

In November, a senior Pentagon official said that the United States expects China to persist in its aggressiveness toward Taiwan after a visit by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

China has spearheaded many naval operations and invasive air activities around Taiwan in an apparent attempt to threaten and isolate Taiwan's leaders, the official, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity, remarked.

That activity includes trespassing what is considered unofficially to be the median line of the Taiwan Strait between the island and China's mainland. The United States believes that China wants to have the ability, at least, to launch an invasion of the island by 2027, as part of a wider effort to make the Chinese military the world's most powerful military by 2049, the official said.

China has not returned to its lesser levels of intrusive air and sea actions since Pelosi's trip in August, indicating a new normal in unsafe behavior, the official commented.

Such Chinese pugilism could result in another incident like the collision of a U.S. EP-3 reconnaissance plane with a Chinese fighter in April 2001, the official said. The 2001 incident was widely considered to be President George W. Bush's first major foreign-policy crisis.

Additionally, China "could conduct a range of options for military campaigns against Taiwan, with



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varying degrees of feasibility and associated risks,” according to the report.

“These options may range from an air and/or maritime blockade to a full-scale amphibious invasion to seize and occupy some of its offshore islands or all of Taiwan.”

China has probably considered Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the United Arab Emirates, Kenya, Equatorial Guinea, Seychelles, Tanzania, Angola, and Tajikistan as venues for military logistics facilities, the U.S. report on Chinese military might said.

The report also pointed out the widespread U.S. worry about China’s expanding possession of ground, air, and sea-launched nuclear weapons; its conventional air force, which is “rapidly catching up to western air forces”; a non-nuclear rocket force that launched 135 test weapons last year — more than any other nation — and an enhanced logistics support force for extended land operations.



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