



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on September 2, 2022

Taiwan Shoots Down “Civilian” Drone off Chinese Mainland

SINGAPORE — On September 1, Taiwanese soldiers shot down an unidentified commercial drone that entered its airspace on a tiny islet just off China’s mainland.

The defense command for Kinmen, a group of Taiwan-controlled islands opposite China’s Xiamen and Quanzhou cities, announced in a statement published by Taiwan’s defense ministry that a civilian drone had trespassed into a “restricted zone” above Shiyu Islet, a small rock that is located between Taiwan’s Kinmen islands and the Chinese mainland.



Andrew Linscott/iStock/Getty Images Plus

As troops on the islet made futile attempts to caution the drone away, they eventually shot it down, with its remains landing in the sea.

“The stationed troops followed procedures to warn off the drone but to no avail. The drone was shot down in defensive fire,” Taiwan’s defense ministry stated.

This civilian drone is just one out of a noticeable series of drone incursions by commercially-available devices in the weeks following Pelosi’s visit, as reported by Taiwan.

On August 30, Taiwan fired warning shots at a Chinese drone hovering over an offshore islet.

Kinmen defense command spokesman Chang Jung-shun said the live rounds were fired at the drone, which had approached Erdan islet just before 6:00 p.m. local time on Tuesday. The drone then returned to China, he said.

Both Taiwanese and Chinese social-media sites have posted videos depicting Taiwanese soldiers hurling rocks at a drone to drive it away.

In a previous warning this week, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen indicated that the military might have no other choice but to use live rounds if the drones disregarded warnings to leave.

Moreover, Taiwan vowed in a statement on August 31 that it would exercise its right to self-defense and “counter-attack” if Chinese armed forces invaded its territory.

“For aircraft and ships that entered our sea and air territory of 12 nautical miles, the national army will exercise the right to self-defense and counter attack without exception,” Lin Wen-Huang, deputy chief of the general staff for operations and planning, indicated to reporters at a news briefing.

The military will exercise the same right to “counter-attack” Chinese drones that do not heed warnings to leave its territory after posing threats, Lin added.

Ma Cheng-Kun, a director from military academy National Defense University, said China might even attempt to deny passage of foreign naval ships through the strait without Taiwan’s permission. He said, “After the new military normal status has been consolidated, then the risk of collision will increase if



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foreign naval ships insist on the rights of navigation and freedom.”

Since U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taipei last month, Beijing has become increasingly pugilistic and has been conducting military drills in response.

Just last month alone, China dispatched warships, missiles, and fighter jets into the waters and skies around Taiwan as part of its bellicosity.

Speculation remains rife as to the identity of operators flying the drones that have lingered around Taiwan.

Taking Kinmen’s close proximity to the Chinese mainland into consideration, it is likely that civilian-operated commercial drones could fly the short distance.

That being said, recent years have seen China intensifying its so-called grey zone tactics — hostile actions by a state that fall short of open conflict — to pressure Taiwan.

For instance, civilian Chinese fishing and sand-dredging vessels have ventured into waters around Taiwan’s outlying islands more frequently.

On the air front, China has also stepped up its warplane incursions into Taiwan’s air defense identification zone to wear out the island’s own fleet of aging fighter jets.

Based on a database compiled by AFP regarding figures released by Taipei’s defense ministry, the island reported a record 446 warplane incursions into its air-defense zone in August alone. To put that into perspective, August’s warplane numbers exceeded the 380 incursions conducted by Chinese planes over the entire year of 2020.

China’s Foreign Ministry this week downplayed complaints from Taiwan about drone harassment as “not worth fussing about,” resulting in Taipei calling officials in Beijing “nothing more than thieves.”

September 1 marks the first time that Taiwanese forces have shot a drone down, amid escalating hostilities with China. Taiwan-China relations have reached their lowest point in decades.

The self-ruled democratic island’s 23 million residents constantly live under a threat of a Chinese military incursion. China alleges that Taiwan is part of its territory to be taken back, via a military invasion if necessary.

For its part, Taipei dismisses Beijing’s sovereignty claims, stating that the Communist People’s Republic of China has never governed the island and that only Taiwan’s people can determine the future of the island.



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