

China warns of US-led “provocative” military actions in South and East China Seas

Mike Head
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Chinese authorities this week warned the US and its close allies, Canada and Australia, of serious dangers of armed conflict arising from confrontational actions by their military aircraft in the East China Sea near Taiwan and close to Chinese facilities in the South China Sea.

China accused the Canadian and Australian governments of acting in concert with the Biden administration, and of propagating disinformation and incendiary allegations over recent incidents that led to potentially serious aerial face-offs.

Chinese data pointed to a pattern of deliberately intrusive US, Canadian and Australian surveillance flights that could easily trigger military clashes with China, which Washington has designated as a threat to its global hegemony.

This pattern indicates moves by the US and its partners to goad China into military reactions that could provide a pretext for a US-led war, even as Washington ramps up its proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, also regarded as an obstacle to US dominance over the resource-rich and strategically critical Eurasian landmass.

One of Beijing’s state-run outlets, the *Global Times*, reported on June 7: “Data has shown that from February 24 to March 11, Australian military aircraft have visited the East China Sea north of the island of Taiwan six times this year to conduct close-in reconnaissance activities; Canadian military aircraft, on the other hand, were approached on several occasions by PLA [Chinese] warplanes from April to May 26 during their so-called missions to carry out UN Security Council resolutions in the East China Sea, according to a Reuters report on Thursday.

“This comes in addition to the US’ frequent close-in reconnaissance operations near China. Last month, at least 41 large spy planes of the US military were sent to the South China Sea for such operations, plus other

reconnaissance activities including those on the PLA Navy’s Liaoning aircraft carrier group, according to a report by the South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, a Beijing-based think tank, on Thursday.”

This information sheds further light on the murky accusations of Chinese “aggression” issued by the recently-installed Australian Labor government and the corporate media this week, belatedly alleging that a Chinese jet “intercepted” an Australian surveillance plane over the South China Sea on May 26.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese personally levelled this serious charge against China while he was visiting Indonesia this week. “We regard the actions of China in this area as being an act of aggression,” Albanese said from Jakarta on Monday.

Albanese was in Indonesia on a three-day mission to urge its government to step up its military ties with Australia and other US allies, and to counter Jakarta’s publicly-stated concerns over a regional arms race triggered by last September’s anti-China AUKUS military pact between the US, UK and Australia.

Not accidentally, the May 26 incident occurred just two days after Albanese travelled to Tokyo, as his first act in office, to join US President Joe Biden at a summit of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), another anti-China coalition, this one with Japan and India.

At that summit Biden clearly told Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong to move fast to combat China’s developing economic and diplomatic influence in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

In a detailed response to Canberra’s “intercept” accusation, China’s Ministry of Defence said the Australian air force plane was identified as a “serious threat to China’s sovereignty and security.”

Spokesman Tan Kefei provided the first information about the location of the incident, which had not been disclosed by the Albanese government. He said the

Australian P-8 anti-submarine patrol aircraft entered airspace near the disputed Paracel Islands, also known as the Xisha Islands, “despite repeated warnings from the Chinese side.”

In a Chinese-language statement posted on the department’s website, Tan said: “The People’s Liberation Army Southern Theatre Command organised air and sea forces to identify and verify the Australian military aircraft and warned it to drive away.”

Tan said “the response measures taken by the Chinese military were professional, safe, reasonable and legal,” and accused Australia of “repeatedly spreading false information” and “advocating confrontation.”

“China urges Australia to stop such dangerous and provocative actions and strictly restrict the actions of its naval and air forces; otherwise grave consequences will be borne by the Australia side.”

China made a similar warning to Canada, after Ottawa complained that Chinese warplanes were harassing its aircraft monitoring North Korea. Like Albanese, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sweepingly denounced Beijing’s “irresponsible and provocative” actions.

As the WSWS noted two days ago, neither the Albanese government nor a single corporate media has asked any of the obvious questions about their “intercept” allegations: “Where exactly did this intercept occur? What was the Australian aircraft doing? Why was the incident announced ten days after it occurred? And where is the proof for the Australian version of events, including video footage?”

All these questions still remain unanswered. That, plus the context and details provided by China, further points to the conclusion drawn by the WSWS: “The absence of even a shred of evidence, combined with the concerted government-media barrage, brands the interception story as a politically-motivated provocation. Whatever occurred on May 26, the frenzied response is aimed at ramping up tensions with China and justifying Australia’s increasingly aggressive role in the Indo-Pacific.”

On Monday, another indication came of a concerted US-orchestrated drive to trigger conflicts with China in the flashpoints off the Chinese coast. The Australian navy announced that the HMAS Parramatta Anzac-class frigate had completed a “transit” of the South China Sea.

According to the navy, the warship was undertaking a two-month “regional presence deployment” to Southeast and north Asia until late July. Last week, the vessel conducted joint maritime security drills with Indonesia’s

military in the strategic Makassar Strait, off southern Sulawesi—a location that also featured on Albanese’s Indonesian itinerary. The frigate and an Australian air force P-8 spy plane participated alongside an Indonesian aircraft in the exercises, which involved tracking and identifying passing ships.

The Biden administration’s hand in this heightening confrontation with China was further indicated this week. A *Washington Post* report, citing an unnamed Chinese official, claimed Beijing was secretly building a naval base in Cambodia. Both Cambodia and China immediately denied the claim, but that did not stop Albanese voicing concern over the media report.

“We’ve been aware of Beijing’s activity at Ream [Naval Base] for some time, and we encourage Beijing to be transparent about its intent and to ensure its activities support regional security and stability,” Albanese said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian on Monday rejected the *Washington Post* story. He accused the US of spreading disinformation about other countries while maintaining about 800 military bases around the globe and spending more on its military than the total of the next nine top-spending countries combined.

The Cambodian Embassy in Washington also refuted the newspaper’s “baseless accusation.” It said Cambodia “firmly adheres” to the nation’s constitution, which does not permit foreign military bases or presence on Cambodian soil. “The renovation of the base serves solely to strengthen the Cambodian naval capacities to protect its maritime integrity and combat maritime crimes including illegal fishing,” the statement said.

On every front, Australia’s Labor government, together with Trudeau’s Liberal government in Canada, has lined up behind Washington’s unsubstantiated claims and preparations for a catastrophic war against China. The allegations of aerial “near misses” are a warning that these war plans have already created the conditions where a miscalculation or error, even by a single pilot, could start such a war.



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