

US warships sail through Taiwan Strait four weeks after Pelosi trip

Kevin Reed
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On Sunday, two US warships sailed through the Taiwan Strait, the first time American war vessels have done so since the visit to Taipei by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on August 2. The voyage of two guided-missile cruisers was confirmed by both US and Taiwan defense officials.

The US Navy said the USS Antietam and USS Chancellorsville of the Seventh Fleet based in Japan were “conducting a routine transit” and that the cruisers passed through “a corridor in the strait that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal state.”

The naval command also said the passage in the Taiwan Strait “demonstrates the United States’ commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific,” and that the US military “flies, sails, and operates anywhere international law allows.”

Fully aware that the US military operates anywhere it wants in blatant violation of international law, the Chinese military said that the US had publicly “hyped” the operation. Senior Colonel Shi Yi, spokesperson for the Chinese People’s Liberation Army Eastern Theater Command issued a statement which said the warships were being tracked and monitored and that its troops would “stay on high alert,” ready to “thwart any provocation.”

Meanwhile, Taiwan reported that eight Chinese military vessels and 23 aircraft were detected in the region Sunday. On Thursday, China announced plans for live-fire military drills on Friday and Saturday off the coast of Fujian, the southeastern province closest to Taiwan.

The Taiwan Strait is an approximately 110-mile-wide strait separating the island of Taiwan from continental Asia. At its narrowest point, the strait separates Taiwan from China by 81 miles of ocean in the South China Sea. By comparison, at its closest point, Taiwan is

approximately the same distance from China as Cuba is from south Florida.

While the US has sailed through the straits in the past, the present provocation takes place amid an intensifying military standoff instigated by Speaker Pelosi’s visit as well as trips to Taiwan by other US congressional figures over the past four weeks.

Further inflaming the situation, a five-member delegation led by Democratic Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts met with Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen and other officials, as well as private business representatives on August 16. Then, last Friday, Senator Marsha Blackburn, Republican from Tennessee, also traveled to Taiwan to meet with the President Tsai Ing-wen to push the anti-China agenda of US imperialism.

Prior to her arrival, Blackburn tweeted that she would never “kowtow to the Chinese Communist Party,” and hoped her trip would ensure that Taiwan could combat China and the “New Axis of Evil.”

With each of these visits combined with the aggressive military moves, the Democrats and Republicans have come together to undermine the One China policy that had been the foundation of US-China relations going back to 1979. At that time, the US ended diplomatic and military ties with Taiwan and, in effect, acknowledged that China included the island of Taiwan.

The breakup of this relationship began during the Trump administration, when all restrictions on diplomatic and military contact between Washington and Taipei were lifted. Aside from minor adjustments, this changed orientation has been continued by the Biden administration and the congressional trips by Pelosi and the others are part of a wider US effort at goading China into a war over Taiwan.

As we reported previously, the voyage had been planned for weeks and the US Naval Institute revealed one week after Pelosi's trip to Taiwan that US war ships would be sent through the strait in a so-called "freedom of navigation exercise."

The two warships sent through the Taiwan Strait are Ticonderoga-class guided-missile destroyers that each have 80 SM-2 surface-to-air missiles, 16 ASROC anti-submarine rockets and 26 Tomahawk cruise missiles with 330 service people on board.

One week prior to the naval operation, Chinese Ambassador to Washington Qin Gang said the plan to send the cruisers through the strait would only intensify tensions. "I do call on American colleagues to exercise restraint, not to do anything to escalate the tension." Qin told the press. "If there's any move damaging China's territorial integrity and sovereignty, China will respond."

The corporate media dutifully repeated US propaganda put out by the Pentagon and State Department that China and not US imperialism is responsible for the threat of war. The *Wall Street Journal*, for example, said that China "has never ruled Taiwan" and that Beijing "claims the island as part of its territory and has vowed to take control of it, by force if necessary."



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