

2 US Navy Ships Sail Through Taiwan Strait, 1st Transit Since Trump Inauguration

Observers say the actions serve to deter the Chinese regime's aggression toward Taiwan and maintain freedom of navigation in the strait.

28

20

Save



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ralph Johnson (DDG 114) conducts routine underway operations in the Taiwan Strait, on Sept. 9, 2023. Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jamaal Liddell/U.S. Navy via AP

By Alex Wu

2/15/2025

Updated: 2/15/2025

Print

Two U.S. navy ships sailed through the Taiwan Strait this week for the first time since President Donald Trump took office in January. Observers have said that it shows the continuity of U.S. policy in the Taiwan Strait.

The U.S. Navy said that Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ralph Johnson and Pathfinder-class oceanographic survey ship USNS Bowditch sailed through the Taiwan Strait from north to south from Feb. 10 to 12.

“The transit occurred through a corridor in the Taiwan Strait that is beyond any coastal state’s territorial seas,” Navy Commander Matthew Comer, a spokesperson at the U.S. military’s Indo-Pacific Command, said in a statement. “Within this corridor all nations enjoy high-seas freedom of navigation, overflight, and other internationally lawful uses of the sea related to these freedoms.”

Although U.S. ships pass through the Taiwan Strait several times a year, “it’s a statement that two warships instead of one” were present, according to Ou Si-Fu, research fellow and director of Division of Chinese Politics, Military and Warfighting Concepts at Taiwan’s Institute for National Defense and Security Research.

“The Chinese regime already considers the Taiwan Strait its territorial sea. But the international community recognizes it as an international water,” Ou told The Epoch Times on Feb. 12.

It shows that “Trump wanted to concentrate U.S. forces to deal with China and the United States attaches great importance to the security of the Taiwan Strait,” he said.

“In addition, it’s to defend the right of free navigation and to maintain stability in the Taiwan Strait, which is an important interest of the United States.”

It’s also why China reacted strongly this time, Ou said.

The Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese regime’s military—the People’s Liberation Army (PLA)—issued a statement earlier on Feb. 12, saying that it “deployed naval and air forces to monitor the entire passage of the US vessels,” and that the U.S. action “sent the wrong signals and increased security risks.”

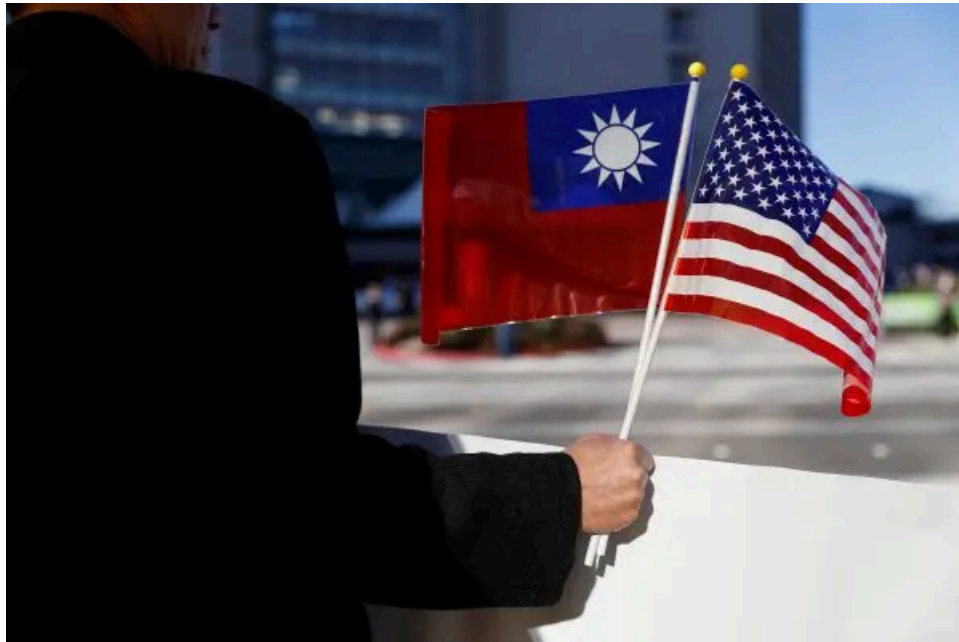
Zhu Fenglian, a spokesperson for the Chinese regime’s Taiwan Affairs Office, said that China “firmly opposed” the U.S. action.

Taiwan Defense Ministry spokesperson Sun Li-fang said of the U.S. navy ships’ passing at a press briefing that friendly allies are concerned about regional peace in the Taiwan Strait and are demonstrating freedom of navigation in the Taiwan Strait, and the ministry expressed its agreement.

Taiwan, which has the official name of the Republic of China (ROC), is the last territory of the republic established in 1911 in China. The ROC's nationalist government retreated to Taiwan in 1949 after being defeated by the communists in China's civil war. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) then established a communist regime in mainland China known as the People's Republic of China (PRC). The CCP has never ruled Taiwan, but it claims sovereignty over the island and has never ruled out annexation of it by force.

The Chinese regime also claims the strategically valuable Taiwan Strait belongs to it. In recent years, its military PLA operates almost daily in the Taiwan Strait to intimidate Taiwan.

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te has rejected Beijing's sovereignty claims, stressing that Taiwan's future can only be decided by the Taiwanese people.



A demonstrator holds flags of Taiwan and the United States in support of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen during a stop-over after her visit to Latin America in Burlingame, Calif., on Jan. 14, 2017. Stephen Lam/Reuters

The U.S. military actions followed a resolution [introduced](#) by 24 U.S. lawmakers on Feb. 7, which calls for the abolition of the “outdated, counterproductive and dishonest” One China policy and to restore formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan (ROC).

Chung Chih-tung, assistant research fellow at Taiwan's Institute for National Defense and Security Research, supports the resolution, saying “it called out the absurdity of the unfair and unjust treatment that the Republic of China (Taiwan), as a sovereign and independent country, is receiving in the international community because of the CCP's suppression.”

Luo Ya and Reuters contributed to this report.

Sign up for the Morning Brief newsletter. Join 200,000+ Canadians who receive truthful news without bias or agenda, investigative reporting that matters, and important stories other media ignore. [Sign up with 1-click >>](#)



Alex Wu

Author

Alex Wu is a U.S.-based writer for The Epoch Times focusing on Chinese society, Chinese culture, human rights, and international relations.

Author's Selected Articles

Marriages in China Plunge to a Record Low

Feb 14, 2025



China a Leading Perpetrator of Transnational Repression in 2024: Freedom House

Feb 10, 2025



China Tightens Control Over Distribution of Micro Dramas

Feb 08, 2025



China EV Sales Stumble in January: Data

Feb 05, 2025

