
China promises 'firm response' if Japan interferes in South China Sea

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China pledged to have a “firm response” if Japan further fans regional tensions and “threatens China’s sovereignty and security.” The statement comes after a Reuters report that Japan will send its largest warship to the disputed South China Sea.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying [said](#) at a press briefing on Thursday that based on its own interests, Japan has recently been compromising stability in the South China Sea, “*causing strong dissatisfaction and opposition from the Chinese people.*”

“If Japan persists in taking wrong actions, and even considers military interventions that threaten China’s sovereignty and security... then China will inevitably take firm responsive measures,” she said.

Hua’s comments come after Reuters reported earlier this week that Japan plans to dispatch its Izumo helicopter carrier to the disputed waters of the South China Sea for a three-month tour starting in May, citing three separate sources.

The anti-submarine Izumo, which measures 249 meters (816 feet) long and can operate up to nine helicopters, will reportedly make stops in Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka before joining the Malabar 2017 trilateral naval exercise with Indian and US naval vessels in the Indian Ocean in July, marking Tokyo’s biggest show of naval force since World War II.

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Hua already commented on the report this Tuesday, stating that China was waiting for an official

word on whether the report is correct, and why Japan plans to send the warship on the tour through the South China Sea.

Hua did not say on Thursday if China had received any official confirmation of Japan's plan, but said that the South China Sea issue "*did not concern*" Japan and warned the country to "*reflect deeply*" on its "*disgraceful*" past invasion of the Paracel and Spratly Islands which China claims as its own.

Read more ['If & why?' Beijing wants to hear from Tokyo on sending largest warship to disputed S. China Sea](#)

Japan controlled the islands during World War II, until it surrendered in 1945. China lays claim to almost all of the South China Sea, which has rich fishing grounds, oil and gas deposits, and through which around \$5 trillion of global sea-borne trade passes each year, despite competing claims from Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei.

Japan does not have any claim to the waters, but has a separate maritime dispute with Beijing in the East China Sea. It has also repeatedly angered Beijing by criticizing its actions regarding the South China Sea disputes.

Both Japan and its ally the United States have been concerned with China's growing military presence in the waterway, which prompted Washington to hold regular air and naval patrols in the region, allegedly to ensure freedom of navigation. China, however, has regularly stated that all local disputes should be resolved without interference from non-claimants.

Earlier this month, China's ambassador to Japan accused Tokyo and Washington of portraying Beijing as an enemy to strengthen their security alliance. The statement came after the Trump administration vowed to maintain Washington's long-standing security alliance with Japan, especially when it comes to the East China Sea. Beijing has repeatedly warned Washington and Tokyo against direct interference in the region, either with military drills or freedom of navigation patrols. It has vowed to do everything in its power to protect China's sovereignty claims.
