
JAPANESE DEFENSE MINISTER CALLS FOR PEACEFUL CROSS-STRAIT RESOLUTION

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Japan's Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya said Wednesday in Washington that Japan would like to see cross-strait issues resolved through peaceful discussion and action, indicating that Tokyo and Washington would support such peaceful action.

Iwaya, who is on his first overseas trip to the U.S. since taking office in October 2018, was responding to Taiwanese media inquiries after delivering a speech on Japan's National Defense Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

The minister was asked if his work with other like-minded countries to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific includes Taiwan and whether Japan would come to Taiwan's assistance if China launched an attack.

Iwaya said that securing freedom of navigation in the area, not just on the seas but also in the air, is something that will help all the countries and all the peoples in the Indo-Pacific region.

Although the minister declined to say whether Japan would help defend Taiwan, he added "we would like to see peaceful resolution in the future -- peaceful discussions, peaceful actions. Certainly, with the United States, Japan would support any such peaceful actions."

According to the English text of his speech, Iwaya expressed concern about Chinese actions that seek to unilaterally change the status quo, noting that China engages in unilateral, coercive attempts to alter the status quo based on its own assertions that are incompatible with existing international order.

"In the East China Sea and other waters, China is expanding and intensifying its military activities at sea and in the air," it states.

Iwaya also said that Japan's new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) crystallize three basic principles for national defense, including further strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance and improving its own posture for national defense.

In addition, under the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, Japan will strategically promote international security cooperation with countries sharing universal values and security interests, such as Australia, India, and Southeast Asian countries.

"The Japan-U.S. alliance will be positioned as a cornerstone in promoting such cooperation,"

according to Iwaya.

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