
CHINA ANGRY AFTER US SAILS WARSHIPS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

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Beijing: China on Monday chided the US for sailing two warships in the disputed South China Sea, a move that comes ahead of the latest round of trade parleys between the countries this week.

As the preparatory lower-level trade talks between the Chinese and US officials were underway on Monday, Washington sailed two guided-missiles within 12 nautical miles of the Spratly Islands as part of the US Navys freedom of navigation operation.

Beijing reacted angrily, saying the US was provoking China and trying to harm its sovereignty and security on the pretext of freedom of navigation.

We firmly oppose this. China urges the US side to stop such provocations and respect our efforts to uphold the stability and peace in the region, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said here.

With the concerted efforts of China and Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, the situation in the South China Sea is peaceful and stable, but now the US is making provocation and creating tensions and trying to harm and peace and stability there.

China has indisputable sovereignty over Nansha islands, Mischief reefs and neighbouring waters. We always respect the freedom of navigation by other countries under the international law but we firmly oppose any countrys action to harm sovereignty and security under this pretext, Hua added.

China claims nearly all of the South China Sea where countries like Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan have competing claims.

The issue has also emerged as a friction point between China and the US after an UN-backed tribunal rejected Beijings territorial claims in the waters in 2016. China rejected the ruling, while Washington wanted Beijing to follow it.

The US keeps sending warships in the resource-rich waters through which \$5.3 trillion worth of goods passes through annually. The US on Monday sailed two warships close to disputed islands in the South China Sea.

The guided-missile destroyers USS Spruance and USS Preble sailed within 12 nautical miles of the Spratly Islands as part of the US Navys freedom of navigation operation, a spokesman for the US Navys 7th Fleet told CNN.

The operation was carried out to challenge excessive maritime claims and preserve access to the waterways as governed by international law, he said.

All operations are designed in accordance with international law and demonstrate that the US will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows, the Commander said, adding that is true in the South China Sea as in other places around the globe. Mondays operation was the second in the South China Sea this year. Asked if Washingtons move could cast a shadow on trade talks in Beijing this week, Hua said: I believe you see through the small tricks by the US side. We believe solving trade issues through dialogue and discussion will meet the aspiration of the whole world and this also in the interest of China and the US.

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