

China Summons U.S. Ambassador Over Vessel Patrol in South China Sea



Beijing, October 28 (RHC)-- China has summoned the United States ambassador to protest against a U.S. ship patrol near a group of man-made islands in the South China Sea.

Chinese state television said Tuesday that Max Baucus was summoned to China's Foreign Ministry to hear Beijing's strong criticism of the naval patrol close to its man-made islands.

China's Deputy Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui called the ship's presence in the vicinity of the islands "extremely irresponsible," and urged Washington to refrain from actions that harm China's sovereignty and security interests.

The ministry had earlier issued a harsh statement over the patrol, saying it is strongly opposed to the sailing of the military ships in the 12-mile (21-kilometer) territorial limit around Subi Reef in the Spratly Islands archipelago.

Meanwhile, Lu Kang, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, also condemned the patrol of U.S. warship in South China Sea. "China's relevant department has been monitoring, tracking and warning the

U.S. warship according to the law. The actions of the U.S. warship threaten China's sovereignty and security interests, endanger the safety of personnel and facilities on the reef, and harm regional peace and stability," said Lu Kang.

Lu Kang said: "We strongly urge the U.S. side to treat seriously China's protests, immediately correct its wrongdoing, not adopt any dangerous and provocative acts, threatening China's sovereignty and security interests, and keep its commitment of not taking sides in sovereignty disputes to avoid further harms to China-U.S. ties and regional peace and stability," said Lu Kang.

Officials in Washington reject China's claims about the islands, saying the artificial reefs and islets cannot be considered sovereign territory.

According to international law permits, military vessels have the right of "innocent passage" in transiting other countries' seas without notification. China says it respects the right of navigation but insists that actions such as the Tuesday entry of USS Lassen destroyer into territorial limits are illegal.

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