



WORLD NEWS

Updated: 1 Hour Ago

China declares “Customs Inspection Zone” around Taiwan

In an abrupt move, China has cut off the independent democracy from fuel and food, a move many worry could lead to war

Calen McKain (AP News)

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese officials have abruptly declared a “customs inspection zone” around Taiwan, a self-governing democracy which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) claims sovereignty over. The designation, which the nation has never used before, demands that all “significant” maritime vessels and aircraft stop or land for inspection by the China Border Inspection Agency.

The policy has clearly had an effect of maritime traffic with large numbers of commercial ships diverting away from the island rather than attempting to get to ports on Taiwan. Air traffic has also been affected with all four international airports in Taiwan have suspended passenger service and other regional air carriers halting service to Taiwan. However, the dozen passenger planes which were already in flight were not stopped from landing on the island.



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Not a good sign: AIS tracks of commercial shipping are clearly showing diversions due to the blockade. Looks like Taiwan has been cut off from the sea.

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Relations between China and Taiwan have been tense since a first armed conflict in the 1940s, but have come to a head in the last decade amid maritime territorial disputes and growing nationalist sentiment in Beijing, which calls for “reunification” with the smaller democratic country. Experts say Beijing may plan to take the island by force amid the backdrop of Russia’s invasion in Ukraine. “Taiwan has been an irritant to every Chinese nationalist for decades,” said Katie Gardner, director of the Pacific conflict program at Chapman University in California. “If you look west and see Russia getting away with Ukraine and not getting hit back, invasion starts to look tempting ... you’re guaranteed a rally around the flag effect.”

The move, which analysts have compared to a blockade, comes a month after an annual report from the Chinese government said the CCP was committed to “resolving the Taiwan question in the new era.” Pentagon officials with knowledge of the situation, all speaking on the condition of anonymity citing a lack of authority to share information, said they worried the move

was a first step up to invasion. “It’s got every element of blockade,” said one such official. “By not calling it that, it’s not technically an act of war, but it’s hard to imagine another intent.”

The White House has not replied to requests for comment, and federal officials have not yet made a public statement on the matter. Air Force One was seen leaving Des Moines, Iowa where the president had a speaking engagement.

Beijing, for its part, has been cryptic about the inspection zone’s purpose and extent. “We must inspect anything going in or out,” said a spokesperson for the People’s Republic of China. “We will do everything we can to ensure the situation remains secure. We have no wish to hand down problems to the next generation.”

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