

US Marines on Taiwan: Major Provocation, but Not News

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When the Wall Street Journal [reported](#) recently that US special forces and Marines have been secretly based in Taiwan to train their Taiwanese counterparts for over a year, it was considered breaking news. It was followed by [headlines](#) like the Guardian’s, “Secret group of US military trainers has been in Taiwan for at least a year,” claiming that the revelations were made after “provocative” moves made by Beijing.

However this is not true. It was actually reported on as soon as it happened late last year.

The Diplomat in a November 2020 [article](#) titled, “US Marine Raiders Arrive in Taiwan to Train Taiwanese Marines,” would cite [Taiwanese media](#) as revealing the US deployment. It was also noted that US forces had not stepped foot on Taiwan since 1979.

Also last year, the Pentagon would deny this deployment. The Marine Corps Times in an [article](#) titled, “Marine Raiders weren’t training in Taiwan, Department of Defense insists,” would note:

“The reports about US Marines on Taiwan are inaccurate,” Pentagon spokesman John Supple told Marine Corps Times in a Tuesday email. “The United States remains committed to our One-China Policy based on the three Joint Communiques, Taiwan Relations Act, and Six Assurances.”

Pentagon spokesman **John Supple**’s reference to the three Joint Communiques, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances relate to the US government’s recognition of the One China Policy.

US troops had fully withdrawn from Taiwan in the 1970s and until now have not returned because it was in the 1970s that the United States along with virtually every other nation on

Earth broke off official recognition of the Republic of China (ROC) government based in Taipei, recognized one single China including Taiwan, and officially recognized one government of China, based in Beijing – that of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

Despite multiple documents published by the US, British, and Australian governments recognizing this official position in regards to Taiwan’s status, the vast majority of the Western public still believe that Taiwan is an independent country that China is “bullying.”

The US State Department’s official website under its Office of the Historian has published the full text of the Shanghai Communiqué, the first of the three Joint Communiqués mentioned by John Supple in his statement last year.

In the [communiqué](#) it states:

The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all US forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes.

The Australian government also officially recognizes the One China Policy.

On the Australian government’s official website on a [page](#) titled, “Australia-Taiwan relationship,” it unambiguously states:

The Australian Government continued to recognise Taipei until the establishment of diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1972. Australia’s Joint Communiqué with the PRC recognised the Government of the PRC as China’s sole legal government, and acknowledged the position of the PRC that Taiwan was a province of the PRC.

Despite these plainly stated facts, the Western media and Western governments themselves have deliberately misled the public into thinking Taiwan is an independent country and that China is “bullying” it.

In one breath, commentators will claim Taiwan is a “democratic country,” while in the next claim that Taiwan declaring its “independence” is imminent. Left unexplained is how an independent democratic country could declare independence, declare independence from whom, and why they would need to in the first place.

At face value the narrative is a contradiction, but like so much of what the West does geopolitically, its narrative regarding Taiwan is based on a multitude of conflicting lies aimed at preying on the public emotionally, diverting attention away from contradictions, and in the case of the One China Policy, simply omitting it from public discussion.

Considering the United States’ official stance on Taiwan, its placement of US forces on Taiwan is essentially a de facto invasion and occupation of Chinese territory. Beijing surely reads Taiwanese as well as Western headlines – if its intelligence apparatus was somehow unaware of last year’s US military deployment – and despite the highly provocative, unprecedented move, Beijing’s response has been infinite patience and geopolitical maturity.

Even its “invasion of Taiwanese airspace” was the product of Western propaganda rather than any genuine act of aggression. Taiwan’s own Ministry of National Defense [admits](#) that Chinese warplanes passed through what Taiwan administrators claim is Taiwan’s air defense identification zone (ADIZ). ADIZs are not recognized under international law, are unilaterally declared, and are established outside a nation’s recognized sovereign airspace, not in it.

In Taiwan’s case, it has no sovereign airspace of its own, but even if it did, Chinese warplanes were far from it even according to Taiwan’s own admissions, operating in what is internationally recognized as international airspace.

Thus the highly reserved actions and words of Beijing came after, not before revelations of America’s provocative military deployment.

US Troops on Taiwan: Checkmate?

Jacob Helberg, an “adjunct fellow” of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), who includes among its sponsors the [governments](#) of the US, Taiwan, and Japan as well as [corporations](#) including arms manufacturers, revealed online during an [interview](#) with Breaking Points the reasoning behind the positioning of US troops in Taiwan despite Washington’s obvious recognition of the One China Policy.

Helberg would claim it was to prevent China from using force without creating a more convincing pretext for the US to militarily intervene.

The presence of US troops would create less favorable conditions for China to act. Helberg also noted the prospect of the current Democratic Progressive Party-led government in Taiwan declaring “independence” despite simultaneously claiming Taiwan was already a “democratic country.” This would hardly be a decision made without US consultation and approval along with assurances of protection.

The chess pieces have certainly been put in place ahead of any potential “declaration of independence,” but whether this happens still depends on what countermoves are made by Beijing as well as other external factors that may still enter into US calculus.

The Economic Reality of Integration vs. the Fevered Dreams of “Independence”

An argument often floated by the Western media in defense of the collective encouragement of Taiwan’s pursuit of independence and its current posture of belligerence toward Beijing is; if the people of Taiwan choose independence, why should anyone stop them?

Omitted are all the arguments the West made when Crimea voted to rejoin Russia in 2014 involving claims of external coercion and influence.

In Taiwan’s case, the US actually is clearly involved in shaping the opinions of the Taiwanese population as well as directing the moves of the current government. The Taiwanese are not arriving at the decision to pursue independence on their own nor as a result of pursuing their own best interests. Quite the contrary.

Taiwan’s economy is dependent on and partially integrated with the Chinese mainland. Over 40% of all Taiwanese exports go to either mainland China or Hong Kong and the vast majority of its trade resides in the wider Asian region. The Chinese mainland also accounts

for most of Taiwan's imports at 21% as of 2019 with Japan in second place at 16%.

Investments across the strait are also significant. Despite the stance of Taipei regarding Beijing, Taiwan's business community is still heavily invested in mainland China and vice versa.

A "declaration of independence" by Taiwan would at the very least cause China to constrict economic flow to and from Taiwan, strangling the economy and undermining the government responsible for provoking Beijing in ways a military assault on the island could never achieve. The United States has neither the means nor the time to create alternatives for Taiwan's economy and markets in the quickly closing window of opportunity left before China irreversibly surpasses the US economically and militarily, rendering whatever military presence the US has on the island moot, and allowing Beijing wide leeway for action to reintegrate the wayward province.

US provocations including the now unprecedented deployment of US troops in Taiwan and those within the Taiwanese administration aiding and abetting them threaten the current status quo which includes the smooth, incremental integration of Taiwan into a growing, prosperous mainland China. The current status quo represents the "peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question" as agreed to by the US government itself with Beijing in its communiqués.

The issue is not that this settlement stands in contradiction of Taiwan's best interest or Beijing's, but rather Washington's. And it is based on this actual pretext that the US has involved itself in China's internal political affairs in this highly provocative and dangerous manner, threatening war where the prospect of war did not exist, and inching the entire Indo-Pacific region toward conflict and instability - the same conflict and instability the US claims it is protecting the region and the world from.

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