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White House pledges to defend US “interests” against China “to the hilt”

Against the backdrop of a deepening military standoff over Taiwan, the Biden administration doubled down on Trump’s trade war policies against China on Monday.



HMAS Parramatta, left, sails with USS America, USS Bunker Hill and USS Barry in the South China Sea. (Image Credit: U.S. Navy/MC3 Nicholas Huynh)

In a belligerent and warmongering speech, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said the Biden administration would continue Trump’s tariffs against China, pledging that the Biden Administration will defend US “economic interests... to the hilt.”

In all substantive points, Tai’s speech continued and developed the themes of US Vice President Mike Pence’s 2018 China speech, which was hailed as launching a new “cold

war” between the US and China, and advocated the “decoupling” of the two largest economies in the world.

“For too long, China’s lack of adherence to global trading norms has undercut the prosperity of Americans and others around the world,” Tai said Monday.

Pence’s speech accused China of trying to seize the “commanding heights” of the world economy, a theme that Tai echoed. “In 2014, China issued an industrial plan to announce the goal of establishing a world-leading semiconductor industry by 2030,” Tai said. “Reportedly, China has already spent at least \$150 billion on this effort, with more on the way. Its intentions are clear, just as they were with steel and solar.”

In response to this new peril, Tai pledged, “We must defend to the hilt our economic interests.”

Asked if she supported “decoupling” from China, Tai replied that US trade with China would be permitted to the extent that “we are occupying strong and robust positions within the supply chain.” She then added, “This administration will engage from a position of strength.”

The bullying and aggressive statements took place against the backdrop of simmering military tensions. In response to a series of US moves undermining the one China policy—which Chinese officials say would lead to war—China has dramatically stepped-up air patrols over Taiwan in recent days.

Since Friday, nearly 150 Chinese aircraft have flown into Taiwan’s air defense zone—the largest number in living memory.

“Engaging in Taiwan independence is a dead end. China will take all steps needed and firmly smash any Taiwan independence plots,” the ministry said. “China’s determination and will to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity is unwavering.”

In response, Taiwan scrambled aircraft and tracked Chinese jets with its missile systems.

According to the *Financial Times*, the Chinese military exercises over Taiwan were aimed at simulating an attack on a US fleet currently carrying out exercises in Okinawa, just north of Taiwan. The FT wrote:

According to Japan's Maritime Self Defense Force, the navies of the US, Japan, the UK, Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand conducted a large exercise, involving three aircraft carriers and 14 other warships, on Saturday and Sunday south-west of Okinawa.

Two people familiar with the situation said the Chinese aircraft were simulating attacks on some of the naval vessels that had participated in the joint drill, and were on their way home or to new missions.

"This is getting close to the brink of conflict," a senior Taiwanese official told the FT.

White House spokesperson Jen Psaki declared, "We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability," adding, "We urge Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure and coercion against Taiwan."

The US military exercises near Taiwan are only the latest in a series of threatening moves by the United States targeting China.

Last week, the United States tested a new Raytheon hypersonic missile, as part of a deepening arms race with Russia and China.

"As a nation, we've taken a substantive early lead and turned that into a national effort to get back catch up and drive forward across the industrial base and the services," Gen. John M. Olson, the Air Force's acting Chief Technology and Innovation officer, told Defense One.

Olson added, "The Chinese and the Russians both have invested significant amounts and made significant progress in this arena."

On Monday, Lockheed Martin opened a new hypersonic weapons manufacturing site in Northern Alabama to build weapons for the US military, in the third major factory opened by the weapons maker this year.

Last month, the United States shocked its allies by announcing a new military alliance with Australia and the United Kingdom, targeting China, involving the production by Australia of nuclear-powered submarines. The White House plans to double US spending in the Asia/Pacific region, and is, behind the scenes, in discussions with the governments of Taiwan and Japan about stationing offensive missiles, previously banned under the INF treaty, on their shores.

Behind the backs of the American public, the United States is carrying out a series of actions with potentially lethal consequences for millions of people, not only in the Asia/Pacific region, but in North America.

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