

Current Intelligence Report Circular

CLASSIFICATION: DECLASSIFIED AND APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

Report Topic: Relations between China and Taiwan

Production Date: 21 September 2022

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U.S. warships travel through the Taiwan Strait, trailed by People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) warships

A United States Navy warship, the *USS Higgins*, and a Royal Canadian Navy frigate, the *HCMS Vancouver*, sailed through the Taiwan Strait on 18 SEP. This was the second time a US warship has sailed through the Taiwan Strait in the past month, the most recent prior occasion being on 28 AUG. *Higgins* and *Vancouver* conducted bilateral surface action group operations to strengthen their crews' skills in maritime operations. At least four Chinese warships were spotted trailing the US and Canadian ships. According to a statement released by the Eastern Theatre Command of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA), the PLA monitored *Higgins* and *Vancouver* and always remain on high alert. On Wednesday, 21 SEP, Ma Xiaoguang, a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said that China is willing to make efforts for a peaceful reunification under a "one country, two systems" model which would allow Taiwan to have a different social system than China with the condition that Chinese national sovereignty, security and development interests would be ensured. All the mainstream Taiwanese political parties have rejected this proposal. END

CMCD Note

While with its initial reaction China appears to be backing off from the aggressive rhetoric against Taiwan, it will be important to monitor other statements coming out of the Chinese government. While the PLA is reiterating the hope for a peaceful reunification, it was only a week ago that the rhetoric changed to say that China is not opposed to using military means for the reunification of Taiwan. The tailing of U.S. ships in the Taiwan Strait could suggest that the PLAN is gathering information on U.S. and Canadian ships to plan an invasion of Taiwan. It will be important to monitor the proximity of U.S. and Chinese ships navigating the Taiwan Strait, as accidental conflict could occur, provoking military action from either or both sides.

Sources

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