

▶ Reported delegation to the island 'destructive, sends wrong signal'

Washington urged to keep promise on Taiwan question

By Wang Qi

China's Foreign Ministry on Thursday urged the US to abide by the one-China principle, stop sending wrong signals to Taiwan secessionists, and refrain from interfering in the Taiwan's regional leader election in any form, after reports disclosed that the Biden administration will dispatch a delegation comprised of former senior officials to the island of Taiwan shortly after the island's regional leader election to be held on Saturday.

Chinese experts noted that the US' scheme would be destructive to China-US relations, and is highly likely to trigger countermeasures from the Chinese side.

Citing people familiar with the plan, the Financial Times (FT) reported that the White House has tapped James Steinberg, a former Democratic deputy secretary of state, and Stephen Hadley, a

former Republican national security adviser, to lead the bipartisan delegation to Taiwan island.

The FT report said that the purpose of sending the delegation is to ensure Washington was "communicating clearly" with the winning and losing candidates about US policy and the "uniqueness of the unofficial relationship" between the US and Taiwan island.

Lü Xiang, an expert on US studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that the US releasing such a message a few days before the Taiwan regional election is a move apparently aimed at appeasing secessionists on the island, and encouraging voters "not to be afraid to support secessionists."

"China stays focused and will make all kinds of contingency plans. If the US crosses the red line, China will definitely take firm countermeasures," he said.

Diao Daming, an expert on US stud-

ies at the Renmin University of China in Beijing, said on Thursday that disclosing the planning of the trip ahead of the Taiwan regional leader election may suggest that the US believes that whoever takes office can be used to implement the US' "Indo-Pacific" strategy.

"If secessionist Lai Ching-te is elected, it will carry out more risk management, and if KMT's Hou Yu-ih is elected, the US will hold him back from getting too close with the mainland," he explained.

But Washington should be aware that if there is any reaction from the Chinese side, it is the result of US actions, said Diao.

China hopes to maintain stability in the Taiwan Straits and does not want to see a conflict between China and the US over the Taiwan question, but the premise is that the US cannot cross the red line, otherwise China will definitely respond in a "tit for tat" manner, Lü said

China abstains UNSC resolution over Red Sea crisis, concerned over 'fueling tensions'

By Zhang Han

China, along with Algeria, Mozambique and Russia, abstained on a US-backed UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution demanding Houthi militia stop attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea, which was adopted on Wednesday with 11 voting for and zero against.

Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the UN, explained China's abstention as certain revisions proposed by UNSC members were not incorporated into the text.

Defeated amendments included adding "the text's provisions should not be seen to create precedent or new norms of international law," changes to language regarding the defense of vessels and contents relating to the conflict in the Gaza Strip, according to a press release by the UN.

The text remains ambiguous on several key issues and Zhang expressed concern that the resolution might not achieve its intended effect, or might even lead to negative consequences and further escalate regional tensions.

Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, told the Global Times on Thursday that a major flaw of the resolution lay in the fact that it treated the Red Sea crisis as a separate issue while it was obviously a spillover of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Targeting Houthi militia without substantial efforts to de-escalate the Gaza war is like putting the cart before the horse, he said.

Liu raised concerns that the US and its coalition may use the resolution to justify expanded strikes on Houthi group. The US may not intend to get deeply involved in the Red Sea crisis as it is not "cost-efficient," but its approach is aggravating tensions.

The prolonged Gaza war has led to not only the Red Sea crisis but also an Israel-Lebanon conflict at the borders, among other regional sporadic conflicts.

Liu said US pressure on Houthi group and diplomatic posturing to media in the Gaza war without substantial efforts will only cause the intertwined conflicts in the region to last longer and become more complicated.

▶ Disaster of extreme severity



Police officers conduct on January 11, 2024 a search for missing people at the Wajima Morning Market site which was destroyed by a massive fire that broke out after an earthquake in Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture on New Year's Day. The Japanese government on Thursday designated the powerful earthquake that rocked Ishikawa Prefecture and other parts of central Japan as a "disaster of extreme severity."

Photo: VCG

FM continues traditional 'New Year visit' to Africa with heightened attention to devt, cooperation

By GT staff reporters

Continuing a tradition that has lasted for 34 years, China's foreign minister has once again chosen Africa as the first foreign visit destination for the new year, and this time the visit will cover two countries in North Africa – Egypt and Tunisia – and two in West Africa – Togo, and Cote d'Ivoire – per the announcement of the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Thursday.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's first overseas trip in 2024 will take place between January 13 to 18 at the invitation of the four African countries, Mao Ning, the spokesperson, said on Thursday.

After his visit to Africa, Wang will visit Brazil and Jamaica from January 18 to 22, Mao said.

Experts said this year's visit to the four countries highlighted China's heightened attention to the security situation in

North Africa against the background of a potential spillover of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as China's willingness to cooperate with African countries despite its level of development.

The tradition of the Chinese Foreign Minister's annual first trip to Africa has highlighted China's emphasis on consolidating friendship with Africa. The relationship sets an example of what can truly be called "the establishment of a com-

munity with a shared future," said Song Wei, a professor from the School of International Relations at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

For the North Africa leg, the visit to Egypt highlights China's welcoming gesture to its officially joining the BRICS family. BRICS inducted five new countries in January this year, which are Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Iran, and Ethiopia.

Wang Youming, director

of the Institute of Developing Countries at the China Institute of International Studies in Beijing, said China-Latin America relations have steadily progressed in the past few years, with a significant increase in trade volume, thanks to the structural advantage of a mutually beneficial economic complementarity.

