

RELEASE IN FULL

**From:** Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>  
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**Subject:** Fw: U.S. military says won't halt spy flights near China (Reuters)

**From:** OpsNewsTicker  
**Sent:** Monday, July 25, 2011 06:26 PM  
**To:** NEWS-Mahogany  
**Cc:** SES-O  
**Subject:** U.S. military says won't halt spy flights near China (Reuters)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. military vowed Monday to press ahead with surveillance flights near China despite opposition from Beijing, after reports Chinese jets crossed a boundary with Taiwan to pursue a U.S. spy plane.

Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked about a June 29 incident in which two Chinese Sukhoi-27 fighters briefly crossed a line in the center of the Taiwan Strait that is considered an unofficial air boundary between both countries.

Asian media reported the Chinese jets were attempting to intercept a U.S. U-2 reconnaissance plane.

"We won't be deterred from flying in international airspace," Mullen told reporters in Washington in response.

"The Chinese would see us move out of there. ... We're not going to do that, from my perspective. These reconnaissance flights are important."

His spokesman later told Reuters that Mullen did not have specific knowledge of the reported incursion and was only speaking generally about the U.S. right to conduct surveillance flights in international airspace in the region.

The Pentagon did not immediately confirm or deny details about the incident. Chinese jets regularly attempt to intercept U.S. reconnaissance aircraft to show they are aware of the U.S. presence.

Still, Mullen said it was important not to repeat what happened in 2001, when a U.S. Navy surveillance plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet trying to intercept it over the South China Sea. The U.S. aircraft made an emergency landing on a Chinese island and its crew were briefly detained.

"These are lives that are at stake up there, in addition to creating an incident ... that escalates the tension over there and could put countries in a position to miscalculate," he said.

#### FIGHTER JETS FOR TAIWAN?

The comments follow a trip by Mullen to China, part of a broader effort to improve ties with the People's Liberation Army, whose rapid buildup and territorial disputes in the South China Sea have set off alarms in the

region.

Self-ruled Taiwan, claimed by China as part of its sovereign territory, has been at the center of Sino-U.S. military friction.

China severed military ties with the United States for most of 2010, furious about a package of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan worth up to \$6.4 billion.

For U.S.-China watchers, the big question is when the United States might resume arms sales to Taiwan.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has told Sen. John Cornyn that she will announce on Oct. 1 whether the United States will answer a call from Taiwan for more F-16 fighter jets, an aide to the senator told Reuters.

Cornyn had delayed Senate confirmation of a senior State Department appointment in a tactic to force Clinton to review a request from Taiwan for the aircraft.

At the State Department, spokeswoman Victoria Nuland declined on Monday to offer a timeline, saying: "We'll let you know when we do have something to report."

When he visited Washington in May, Chinese General Chen Bingde warned that new U.S. weapons sales would damage ties.

Mullen noted that the United States was obligated under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act to help the island defend itself.

"We have a relationship (with Taiwan) and responsibilities and there are legal responsibilities in my country to support the Taiwan Relations Act," Mullen said.

"So when we have another bump in the road, should that occur, I hope we work our way through that with the Chinese military."

Taiwan is also still waiting for an upgrade to its existing U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets, six new cargo aircraft and an overhaul to a fleet of Lafayette frigates.

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