US, Canada warships pass through Taiwan Strait

AFP – A US and a Canadian warship have passed through waters separating Taiwan and China, a week after Beijing held large-scale military drills in the sensitive passage.
The United States and its allies regularly cross through the 180-kilometre (112-mile) Taiwan Strait to reinforce its status as an international waterway, angering Beijing.

China's Communist Party has never ruled Taiwan, but it claims the island as part of its territory and has said it will not renounce the use of force to bring it under its control.

"The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins (DDG 76) and Royal Canadian Navy Halifax-class frigate HMCS Vancouver (FFH 331) conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit on Oct. 20," the US Navy's 7th Fleet said in a statement.

"Higgins and Vancouver's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrated the United States' and Canada's commitment to upholding freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle."

China said Monday that the US and Canadian actions had disrupted "peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait".

"The PLA Eastern Theater Command organised naval and air forces to monitor and remain on alert throughout the transit, handling the situation according to laws and regulations," military spokesperson Captain Li Xi said in a statement.

Taiwan's defence ministry said Monday the US and Canadian ships travelled "from south to north" of the strait and the situation in the surrounding sea and airspace "remained normal".

Beijing sent a record number of military aircraft as well as

warships and coast guard vessels to encircle Taiwan on October 14 in the fourth round of major drills in just over two years.

Taiwan deployed “appropriate forces” and put outlying islands on heightened alert in response to the exercises, which Beijing said were a “stern warning to the separatist acts of ‘Taiwan Independence’ forces”.

Beijing has ramped up military pressure on Taipei in recent years, deploying on a near-daily basis warplanes and other military aircraft as well as ships around the island.

Taiwan’s defence ministry said Monday it had detected 14 Chinese military aircraft and 12 navy vessels in the 24 hours to 6:00 am.

AFP