

# Addressing China's Coercion in the Taiwan Strait

By Congressman Ted Yoho

It's important to be clear about China's January 4<sup>th</sup> declaration of the M503 flight path: it's a unilateral change of the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, and yet another example of China's territorial aggression in its near waters.

This episode is further evidence of China's disregard for bilateral agreements, its subversion of international norms, and of Taiwan's diminished voice in international organizations it rightfully deserves to participate in.

In a particularly embarrassing and transparent display of bias, the Secretary General of the International Civil Aviation Organization visited Beijing a few weeks after China took its provocative action, but didn't even mention the dispute, despite its implications for civil aviation safety. China must stop its territorial aggression throughout the Asia-Pacific before it reaches a level that is intolerable to the other powers in the region, including the United States.

## Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party

Unfortunately, this action indicates that Xi does not plan to do so, especially if it is the prelude to the declaration of an ADIZ or a territorial sea around Taiwan. During his state visit in 2015, Xi Jinping lied to President Obama and the world when he said that China would not militarize the South China Sea. He is gravely mistaken if he thinks any U.S. policymaker will take him at his word again. Xi simply has no credibility when it comes to the altruism of China's regional security objectives.

Xi is committed to replacing the existing global order with one that is more to his liking. He's not

even shy about it—in his work report at the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, Xi said that “the banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics is now flying high and proud for all to see” offering “a new option for other countries and nations.” He stated that the basis for China's international relations would continue to be the so-called “Five Principles for Peaceful Coexistence,” which are a recipe for regional hegemonies, and said that “No one should expect us to swallow anything that undermines our interests.”

*Congress will never allow Taiwan to be used as a “bargaining chip” in some grand geopolitical arrangement....*

## The U.S. Response

Fortunately, the United States has not been bashful in our response. In just the last few months, the Trump administration has released a National Security Strategy, a National Defense Strategy, and on Monday a Defense Department Budget, all of which are focused on “the reemergence of long-term strategic competition with revisionist powers.” The National Security Strategy observes that “China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests. China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor.” We expect the Defense Department to release a new strategy document for the Indo-Pacific soon, which will shed more light on the Administration's plan to meet this challenge.

Congress has a role to play in this new national security vision, and on my Subcommittee, this means meeting China's challenge. To meet this

*Congressman Ted Yoho is the Representative for the state of Florida's 3rd District in the U.S. Congress. He serves as Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific. These remarks source from Congressman Yoho's speech at the Project 2049 Institute event “Under the Radar: China's Coercive Air Power in the Taiwan Strait” held on February 14, 2018.*

challenge, we must defend the prevailing order and the partnerships that have served us so well. The preservation of the U.S.-Taiwan relationship will be a central part of these efforts.

Congress will never allow Taiwan to be used as a “bargaining chip” in some grand geopolitical arrangement, and will continue to take the lead, as it has since the passage of the Taiwan Relations Act in 1979.

In his 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress speech, Xi announced his intention to accomplish reunification with Taiwan under a “one country, two systems” model. Over the last few years, the example of Hong Kong has shown us the true meaning of this term-- that Beijing has the final say, even when autonomy is brokered internationally. Xi is playing for keeps, and the stakes are high. To avert this outcome, we must defend Taiwan’s international presence and our bilateral ties.

China’s declaration of the M503 flight path is just one part of a full court press against Taiwan, encompassing every aspect of its domestic security and international engagement. Beijing has stepped up military pressure and provocative flights around Taiwan, increased efforts to infiltrate Taiwan’s media and political life, driven Taiwan out of even the most innocuous international organizations, and stolen or purchased its diplomatic partners.

### **Future Congressional Action**

My immediate goal in this area is to urge the Senate to move my legislation promoting Taiwan’s observer status in the World Health Organization. The bill passed the House in January, and it’s critical that it becomes law before the World Health Assembly in May. China was successful in ejecting Taiwan from last year’s summit, despite Taiwan’s enormous contributions to global health. This

selfish and insecure move leaves the world at increased risk of infectious diseases which know no borders.

*China’s declaration of the M503 flight path is just one part of a full court press against Taiwan, encompassing every aspect of its domestic security and international engagement.*

I’ll also continue engaging the U.S. administration to prioritize Taiwan. I’m concerned that over the years, the executive branch has institutionalized a norm of avoiding displeasing Beijing. This can be seen at the working level, in the dysfunction of arms sales packages, and the sad decision to purge Taiwan’s flag from all U.S. government websites in the last few months.

We will turn our power to protecting the U.S.-Taiwan relationship and Taiwan’s autonomy, and hold the administration accountable to do the same.

Looking further ahead, as Chairman of the Asia-Pacific Subcommittee, I’ll also be working to support alternative methods of engagement with Taiwan, from the Global Cooperation and Training Framework, to Taiwan’s potential participation in our Red Flag military exercises.

We will convey to the administration that a cabinet-level official must attend the opening of the new AIT facility in Taipei this summer. And we’ll help hold the line among Taiwan’s remaining diplomatic allies, especially as the Vatican pursues an ill-considered bargain with the authoritarians in Beijing.

As we move forward with these efforts, I’m grateful that events like this one bring much-needed attention to these issues.