

Experts: US missions 'root cause of accidents' in S. China Sea

The United States conducting frequent and large-scale reconnaissance missions in the South China Sea is the root cause of accidents between US and Chinese militaries, experts said.

Therefore, China and US militaries should enhance communication and strengthen mutual trust to nip potential accidents in the bud, they added.

A US Navy plane approached a Chinese military aircraft on Wednesday in the airspace near Huangyan Island, one of China's islands in the South China Sea, an official close to China's Defense Ministry said on Friday. The Chinese plane, which was conducting routine training in the region, reacted professionally and adhered to law.

"We hope the US will take the big picture of Sino-US military relations into account, and take practical measures to remove the root cause of accidents between the two countries in air and on sea," the official added.

This was the first time US and Chinese military planes met in 2017. The last two incidents were on May 17 and June 7. A US official told Reuters that the incident was rare and inadvertent.

Ma Gang, a professor from the People's Liberation Army National Defense University, said the US has been conducting frequent and large-scale reconnaissance missions in the South China Sea for decades, and "this is the root cause for the accidents."

"If the US still views China as an obstacle, then similar accidents are still likely to occur," he said. "Accident prevention requires the US to keep an open mind about China and remain honest in dialogue."

The US government will remain committed to the one-China policy, and develop "a constructive relationship that benefits both the US and China," according to a White House news release on US President Donald Trump's first phone call with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Thursday, which described the call as "extremely cordial"

Last week, US Defense Secretary James Mattis suggested that diplomacy should be the priority in the South China Sea, and the US saw no need for "dramatic military moves" at this time.

Fu Mengzi, the vice-president of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said it is a good sign that China and the US are having positive interactions, and the US should build mutual trust and respect China's stance on principle issues like national sovereignty and territorial integrity.