

TAIWAN – INTERNATIONAL REALTIONS

NEWS: The U.S. State Department’s Taiwan page removed a previous statement about not supporting Taiwan’s independence last week.

WHAT’S IN THE NEWS?

U.S. State Department’s Website Update on Taiwan

- The **U.S. State Department** recently made a **significant update** to the Taiwan section of its official website, removing a previously included statement that explicitly said, **“We do not support Taiwan’s independence.”**
- According to the U.S. government, this update was **part of a routine revision** to align the language with its evolving diplomatic approach.
- The removal of this statement was **welcomed by Taiwan**, as it indicated a **subtle but significant shift** in how Washington presents its stance on the issue.
- However, the **updated fact sheet retains Washington’s opposition** to any **unilateral attempts** to alter Taiwan’s status, whether by Taiwan itself or by China, which continues to claim the island as its own territory.
- The revised document now **includes a reference to Taiwan’s participation in a U.S. Pentagon-led technology and semiconductor development project**, indicating stronger defense and technological ties between Washington and Taipei.
- Additionally, the update clarifies that the **U.S. will support Taiwan’s membership in international organizations** “where applicable,” signaling an effort to increase Taiwan’s global presence despite China’s opposition.
- While the U.S. **does not have formal diplomatic ties** with Taiwan, it remains the island’s **most powerful international ally**, with legal obligations under the **Taiwan Relations Act (1979)** to **help Taiwan maintain its self-defense capabilities**.
- The **U.S. State Department reaffirmed its commitment to the One China Policy**, emphasizing that Washington **acknowledges Beijing’s claim over Taiwan** but does **not officially endorse it**.

China’s Response to the U.S. Policy Update

- **China strongly condemned the United States** for modifying its official stance on Taiwan, calling it a **diplomatic mistake** and urging Washington to **correct its course immediately**.
- Beijing has long considered **any form of U.S. support** for Taiwan as a **violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity**.
- The Chinese government sees **the removal of the “no support for independence” statement** as a **strategic shift toward recognizing Taiwan’s independence**, which it **vows to prevent at all costs**.
- China has consistently maintained that **Taiwan is a breakaway province** that must eventually be **reunified with the mainland, by force if necessary**.
- Beijing’s officials warned that **any U.S. moves to deepen military or diplomatic engagement** with Taiwan could result in **serious geopolitical consequences**.



China's Military Condemnation of Canada's Actions in the Taiwan Strait

- On February 17, 2025, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China issued a statement criticizing Canada for sailing a Canadian warship through the Taiwan Strait.
- The Chinese military revealed that both air and naval forces closely monitored the Canadian vessel and issued warnings as it passed through what China considers its territorial waters.
- China has consistently opposed the presence of foreign military forces in the Taiwan Strait, which Beijing claims as part of its sovereign maritime zone.

- However, **Western nations, including the U.S. and Canada, regard the Taiwan Strait as international waters**, where ships from any country should have the right to operate freely.
- The PLA's statement emphasized that **China remains highly vigilant** against what it calls "**provocative actions**" by **foreign military forces** near Taiwan.

Notable Geographical Aspects of Taiwan

a) Location and Size

- Taiwan, officially known as the **Republic of China (RoC)**, is an island located in the **western Pacific Ocean**.
- It is separated from **mainland China by the Taiwan Strait**, which is approximately **180 kilometers wide** at its narrowest point.
- The total land area of Taiwan is **approximately 36,000 square kilometers**, making it **slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Maryland** but densely populated.
- Taiwan is **strategically positioned in East Asia**, with:
 - **Japan to the northeast,**
 - **The Philippines to the south,**
 - **Mainland China to the west.**

b) Surrounding Water Bodies

- Taiwan is bordered by several key bodies of water:
 - **The East China Sea** to the north.
 - **The Philippine Sea** to the east.
 - **The Luzon Strait** directly to the south, connecting the Pacific Ocean with the South China Sea.
 - **The South China Sea** to the southwest.

c) Climate and Natural Disasters

- The island experiences a **subtropical climate in the north** and a **tropical climate in the south**, leading to **hot and humid summers and mild winters**.
- Taiwan is located along the **Pacific "Ring of Fire,"** making it **highly susceptible to earthquakes and typhoons**.
- Since 1980, Taiwan and its surrounding waters have experienced:
 - **Over 2,000 earthquakes with a magnitude of 4.0 or higher.**
 - **More than 100 earthquakes with a magnitude above 5.5, according to data from the United States Geological Survey (USGS).**

Historical Background of Taiwan

a) Indigenous Inhabitants and Early Colonization

- Taiwan has been **inhabited by indigenous Austronesian peoples for thousands of years**.
- During the **17th century**, Taiwan was briefly ruled by **Dutch (1624–1662) and Spanish (1626–1642) colonizers**.
- In **1684, the Qing Dynasty annexed Taiwan**, incorporating it into **Fujian province** and later making it a **separate province in 1885**.

b) Japanese Rule (1895–1945)

- Following China's defeat in the **First Sino-Japanese War (1895)**, Taiwan was **ceded to Japan** under the **Treaty of Shimonoseki**.
- Japan ruled Taiwan as a **colony for 50 years**, modernizing its infrastructure and economy.
- In **1945**, after Japan's defeat in **World War II**, Taiwan was **handed over to the Republic of China (ROC)**.

c) ROC's Relocation to Taiwan (1949)

- In **1949**, after losing the **Chinese Civil War**, the **Kuomintang-led Republic of China (ROC) government fled to Taiwan**, making it their new base.
- **Mao Zedong's Communist forces established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Beijing**, claiming to be the **only legitimate government** of all of China, including Taiwan.

d) Taiwan's Current Political Status

- **Taiwan functions as a self-governing democracy**, with its own **government, military, economy, and passport system**.
- Despite this, China continues to claim Taiwan and **pressures countries not to recognize it as an independent state**.
- Currently, only **12 countries officially recognize Taiwan**, most of them being **small island nations or developing countries**.

India-Taiwan Relations

a) India's Stance on Taiwan

- **India does not officially recognize Taiwan as an independent country**, as it follows the **One-China policy**.
- However, unlike other countries, India does not **explicitly reaffirm** this policy in recent diplomatic statements.

b) Unofficial Diplomatic Engagements

- India has an **India-Taipei Association (ITA) in Taipei**, functioning as a **de facto embassy** to handle trade, cultural, and diplomatic affairs.
- Similarly, Taiwan operates the **Taipei Economic and Cultural Center (TECC) in New Delhi**, established in **1995**, which serves a similar role.
- Despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties, **India and Taiwan maintain strong economic, trade, and technological cooperation**.

Key Takeaways

- The U.S. **adjusted its language on Taiwan**, removing its **previous opposition to Taiwan's independence**, which **China strongly criticized**.
- **China condemned Canada's naval activity in the Taiwan Strait**, calling it a **provocative move**.
- **Taiwan remains a geopolitical hotspot**, balancing between **de facto independence and Beijing's sovereignty claims**.

- **India continues to engage with Taiwan unofficially**, strengthening trade and technological ties while **adhering to the One-China Policy** diplomatically.

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