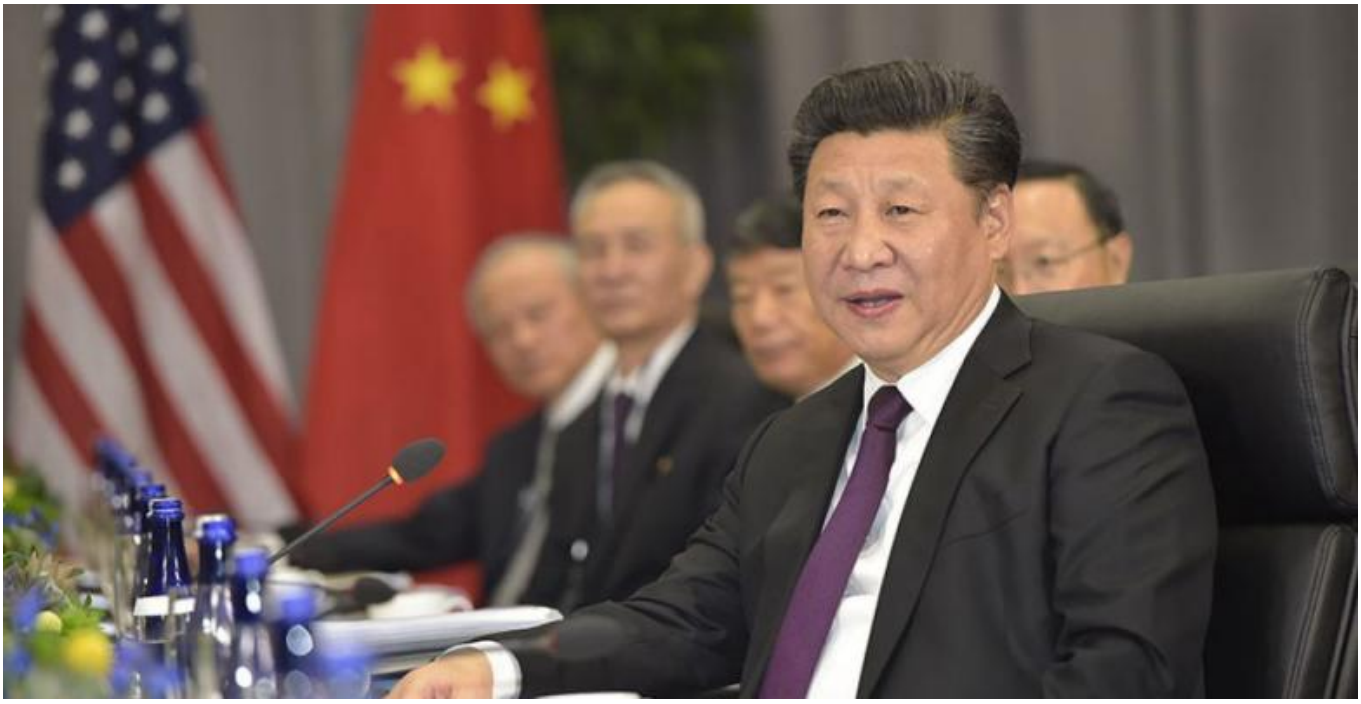
Xi warns Obama against threatening China’s sovereignty & national interests

01/04/2016



In a meeting with US President Barack Obama at the fourth Nuclear Security Summit in Washington DC, his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping said that while he believes in the peaceful resolution of conflicts through direct talks, China will take steps to protect its national interests and sovereignty.

“China will firmly safeguard the sovereignty and related rights in the South China Sea,” Xi said in a meeting, according to Xinhua news.

While acknowledging that Beijing *“respects and safeguards the freedom of navigation and overflight other countries are entitled to under international law,”* Xi stressed that China will *“not accept any freedom of navigation as an excuse to undermine China's sovereignty and national security interests.”*

Read more US Navy deploys small armada headed by USS Stennis to South China Sea



The US has been taking steps to counter China’s growing influence in the region and has increased its regular naval patrols in the South China Sea as part of *“freedom of navigation”* drills near the disputed islands chain. Washington has also increased air surveillance in addition to stepping up US-led war games with its Asian allies. In response China deployed its surface-to-air missile systems on Woody Island earlier this year, in addition to military aircraft.

Woody Island is the biggest island in the Paracel chain in the South China Sea. China laid claim to the island in the 1950s, but the rights to the area, which is at the heart of economically important shipping routes in the South China Sea, are being contested by Taiwan, Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam.

In addition to perceived US intrusion into the South China Sea affair, China is apprehensive about the installation of an advanced anti-missile Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system on the Korean peninsula.

According to Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zheng Zeguang, during the meeting Xi told Obama that China was *“firmly opposed”* to the US’ deployment of THAAD.

In February, the United States and South Korea agreed to start talks about deploying the THAAD system to counter the threat from North Korea which recently boasted about its growing nuclear capabilities. North Korea’s nuclear test on January 6 and a satellite launch on February 7 were violations of existing UN sanctions.

While no official decision has been made to place THAAD in South Korea, China has repeatedly over the past few months continued to stress that the US’ deployment of an anti-ballistic missile complex, designed to destroy short to intermediate-range ballistic missiles, could jeopardize its national security.

Ahead of the Nuclear Security Summit, Tony Blinken, Deputy Secretary of Defense, urged China to side with the US on the deployment of THAAD.
Read more Beijing deploys 'necessary defenses' on disputed South China Sea Islands, says in line with intl law



“If China is looking to assure that we are not required to take additional steps for our own security and that of our partners and allies that it won’t like, the best thing it can do is to engage with us in dealing with North Korea,” Blinken said Tuesday at the Brookings Institution.

*“We realize China may not believe us and also proposed to go through the technology and specifications with them ... and we are prepared to explain [about] what the technology does and what it doesn’t do and hopefully they will take us up on that proposal,” B*linken added.

The Chinese foreign ministry on Wednesday replied to Blinken’s comments once again reiterating that the missile defense system would harm China’s security.

“Installing the THAAD system has extended far beyond the defense need against North Korea, and will cause direct harm to China’s strategic and security interests, as well as the regional balance,” said Hong Lei, the ministry’s spokesman.

Russia has also warned against THAAD’s deployment on the Korean Peninsula. In late March Russian Ambassador to China Andrey Denisov stated that THAAD *“creates considerable challenges to the security of other countries, including Russia...[which] cannot be considered other than the creation of a certain threat to China and Russia.”*

At the summit on Thursday Obama and Xi Jinping agreed to work together on the North Korean threat and have called for Pyongyang to give up its nuclear arsenal. China also agreed to implement in full the latest economic restrictions imposed by the Security Council against the North.

The two leaders also released joint statements vowing to improve nuclear security, implement a global climate change deal, and fight cyber security threats.