

U.S. Warship Near China May Lead to ‘Dangerous Confrontation’



Washington, October 28 (RHC)-- A decision by the United States to sail a warship past one of China's artificial islands in the South China Sea is an escalation that may lead to a "dangerous confrontation," a political commentator in Washington says.

"The actions of the Obama administration are a dangerous and grave mistake," said Jeff Steinberg, a senior editor for the Executive Intelligence Review. "We're dealing with a situation here where something that should have been a matter to be resolved through diplomacy has taken on the form of a very, very dangerous confrontation that could lead to war," Steinberg told reporters in Washington.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Navy sent the USS Lassen, a guided missile destroyer, within 12 miles of artificial islands under construction by China, a move apparently designed to increase tensions with Beijing.

The White House had approved the movement by the USS Lassen, which sailed around Subi Reef in the Spratly Islands archipelago, a disputed group of hundreds of reefs, islets, atolls and islands in the South China Sea, a U.S. military official said.

"We will fly, sail and operate anywhere in the world that international law allows," another U.S. military official told CNN. The sea maneuvers drew an angry protest from Beijing, which said the move damaged U.S.-China relations and regional peace.

"The actions of the U.S. warship have threatened China's sovereignty and security interests, jeopardized the safety of personnel and facilities on the reefs, and damaged regional peace and stability," China's Foreign Ministry said on its website. "The Chinese side expresses its strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition," the statement added.

China insists it has sovereignty over nearly all of the South China Sea. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims.

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