

US-South Korea military drills. China opposes any military acts in exclusive economic zone without permission

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BEIJING: China opposes any military acts in its exclusive economic zone without permission, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Friday, days before a joint military exercise between United States and Republic of Korea (ROK) on the Yellow Sea.

“We hold a consistent and clear-cut stance on the issue. We oppose any party to take any military acts in our exclusive economic zone without permission,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said in a statement Friday.

Under the international law of the sea, an exclusive economic zone is a sea zone over which a state has special rights over the exploration and use of marine resources. It stretches from the seaward edge of the state’s territorial sea out to 200 nautical miles from its coast.

Hong’s comment came as the United States and the ROK planned to hold joint military exercises in waters off the west coast of the Korean Peninsula starting from Nov. 28.

The United States will send the aircraft carrier USS George Washington to join ROK’s naval forces in a four-day drill.

The military drill was announced after the ROK and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) exchanged artillery fire Tuesday in waters off the west coast of the Korean Peninsula, leaving two marines and two civilians dead — all from the ROK.

“As the Korean Peninsula situation is highly complicated and sensitive, all parties concerned should stay calm and exercise restraint,” Hong said.

Hong urged all parties to help ease tension, safeguard peace and stability in Korean Peninsula and the region.

Some Chinese scholars echoed the government’s views, blasting the U.S.-ROK joint drill.

“The United States and ROK should not take sensitive and provocative military actions at such a sensitive time and place,” said Major General Luo Yuan, a researcher with the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s Military Science Academy.

With the participation of the USS George Washington, the exercise is aimed at deterring the DPRK but would not help resolve the conflict, said Da Wei, a scholar of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations.

“Just like pouring oil onto flames, the U.S.-ROK action will heighten tension in the Korean Peninsula,” Luo said.

It was not the first time China opposed foreign military exercises in the Yellow Sea.

From June to August this year, China’s Foreign Ministry and the Defense Ministry repeatedly issued statements, warning against the scheduled U.S.-ROK naval drills in the Yellow Sea.

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