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Chinese Fleet Circumnavigates Japan, Passing between Senkaku and Sakishima Islands for the First Time

- Possible integrated military operations linked to politics and diplomacy against Japan, the host country of the G7 Summit -

- Between May 1st and May 17th, the Joint Staff of the Self-Defense Forces sequentially announced the following operation*₁ regarding the Chinese Navy's circumnavigation of Japan*₂.
 - After April 30th, five ships, including the Renhai-class guided-missile destroyer and the Luyang III-class guided-missile destroyer*₃, sailed between Tsushima and the Soya Strait, as well as between Sumisu Island and Tori-shima. On the 16th, three ships, including two Luyang III-class vessels*₄, sailed between the Senkaku Islands and the Sakishima Islands, while two ships, including one Renhai-class vessel*₅, sailed between Okinawa and Miyako Island.
 - On April 11th, President Xi Jinping inspected the Southern Theater Command of the PLA Navy after the "Joint Sword" military exercises*₆. He emphasized the need to approach military issues from a political perspective, conduct military operations flexibly, and enhance the ability to respond rapidly and appropriately to complex situations.
 - ⇒ It is likely that circumnavigation around Japan by a group of combat vessels just before the G7 is a deterrent*₇ to Japan, the host country of the G7. It is possible that the first-ever passage of combat vessels between the Senkaku Islands and Sakishima was a display of intent*₈ to the effect that it was normal navigation, taking advantage of the Japan-China defense ministers' meeting via the hotline on the same day.
 - ⇒ It is possible that the current series of operations*₉ are a comprehensive response that combines military and other means of "thinking and processing from a political high perspective." Given the observed trends in the "Joint Sword" military exercises as well, it is possible that there will be an increase in military activities linked to political and diplomatic actions in the future.

*₂: There was no official announcement by the Chinese side regarding the activities of Chinese naval vessels this time. *₃: The Renhai-class guided-missile destroyer refers to one ship with hull number 102, while the Luyang III-class guided-missile destroyers include two ships with hull numbers 119 and 121. Additionally, there was one Jiangkai-class frigate with hull number 542 and one Fuchi-class replenishment ship with hull number 889, making a total of five ships. *₄: Along with two Luyang III-class guided-missile destroyers, there is one Fuchi-class replenishment ship, totaling three ships. *₅: Consisting of one Renhai-class guided-missile destroyer and one Jiangkai-class frigate, totaling two ships. *₆: The joint exercises took place in the waters around Taiwan from April 8th to 10th. *₇: On May 18, the Chinese official media "Global Times" introduced an expert's view that "if Japan interferes in China's internal affairs and provokes China's core interests, China has the necessary means to counteract" *₈: This is the first-ever communication between Japan and China since the establishment of a hotline between the defense authorities of the two countries at the end of March of this year. During the conversation, the Japanese side stated the existence of security concerns between Japan and China, such as the situation in the East China Sea. It is possible that China's navigation near the Senkaku Islands was intended to convey the message that this is a normal navigation and does not pose a concern to Japan.

*1: Overview of activities of Chinese naval vessels

[Legend]
← : route of fleet

April 28
Departure (presumed)

May 19
Arrival (presumed)

(1) Soya Strait
May 5-6

April 30
Tushima Strait
Yokosuka

(3) May 11-13
Sumisu Island
Tori-shima

May 16 (2)
First-ever passage between the Senkaku and Sakishima Islands

Senkaku Islands
Yonaguni Island
Miyako Island
Okinawa
- Separated into two groups and sailed

[Chinese naval vessels that circumnavigated Japan]

- Renhai-class guided-missile destroyer (hull number 102)
- Luyang III-class guided-missile destroyer (hull number 121)
- Luyang III-class guided-missile destroyer (hull number 119)
- Jankai-class frigate (hull number 542)
- Fuchi-class replenishment ship (hull number 889)

(Compiled from May 1 to May 17 based on released information by the Joint Staff (including presumptions.))

		*9: Conditions and circumnavigation before the G7 summit						
		April			May			
Circumstances		(1)	28th			(2)	(3)	
Circumvention of Japan			Departure (presumed)	Passage through the Tsushima Strait	Passage through the Soya Strait	Sailing between Sumisu Island and Tori-shima	19th - 22nd G7 Summit	Arrival (presumed)
			28th	30th	5th - 6th	11th - 13th	16th	

If Japan linked Taiwan to its own security, the Japanese people "would be dragged into the fire." (April 28)



Wu, Ambassador to Japan



Mao Ning, Spokesperson

(April 28 Japan Press Club press conference report, May 10 Yomiuri Shimbun website, May 22 Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website press conference, May 1-17 Joint Staff press release, etc. (including presumptions))