

## **CCTV-7 'Defense Review Week' on Sino-U.S. Ties In Wake of Dispute Over 'Impeccable'**

The 21 March 2009 edition of CCTV-7 "Defense Review Week" [fang wu xin guan cha], a 30-minute panel discussion program on national defense issues that is broadcast on Saturdays and Sundays at 2003-2033 local time [ 1203-1233 GMT], features a discussion about China-US relations after the disputes over the passage rights of the USNS Impeccable through the South Sea. Program host Tang Jian talks with military expert Zhang Zhaozhong and Li Li, associate professor of the National Defense University.

Zhang Zhaozhong says the fact that Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the United States had the right to enter China's exclusive economic zone one day after Secretary of State Clinton assured China that there would be no similar incident gives him the feeling that the US military is testing the baseline of Obama's policy toward China. Zhang says the US military probably has worries about its future business if the United States develops a friendly relationship with China as President Barack Obama said.

Li Li says the US reaction after meeting protests in China's exclusive economic zone is a reflection of its hegemonic ego, regarding the whole globe as its own turf, and a reflection of an imbalanced ego.

Zhang says the USNS Impeccable is in actuality a spy ship, that it uses sonar to detect submarines, and that it also measures topography under the sea. Li adds that the Impeccable collects omni-directional magnetic frequencies in seas off China and therefore the information it collects can be applied for military purposes.

Zhang briefly sums up the history of China's claim to the Spratly Islands, saying that the incident did take place in China's exclusive economic zone.

Li says the dispute between China and the United States is that the US side stresses absolute freedom in passage through the exclusive economic zone, whereas China has its own laws regarding scientific survey in its seas and demands prior application. She adds that given the activities conducted by the Impeccable, it does not even meet the definition of innocent passage as laid down in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Li predicts that similar incidents will happen again and she calls for setting up a reaction mechanism, beefing up actual administration of territorial waters and propagating relevant Chinese laws to foreign ships and military vessels. Li says expanding China's naval participation in multinational maritime drills and exercises will also help promote understanding of Chinese laws. On the US decision to send a destroyer to escort the Impeccable, Zhang says if the United States sends a destroyer, China has to "accord it" with, say, three destroyers, which will lead to more similar incidents, and as such arouse tensions in the region.

On the implication of the incident on China-U.S. relations, Li says it shows that temporary disputes and local conflicts will still arise as relations between China and the United States develop in the positive direction. Li says Barack Obama has said that China is not a friend, nor a foe, but a competitor for the United States, and that it is natural that struggles and conflicts exist side by side with cooperation and negotiation between competitors. She says conflicts can be

controlled if both sides recognize the general trend of interdependence and take a rational approach. Zhang says China ought to strengthen the buildup of vessels and aircraft for its maritime law enforcement agencies in order to protect its fishing boats and to uphold the integrity of state laws regarding China's territorial waters. Li says that not only should the Navy and coastal patrol departments demonstrate their capability to defend important maritime resources, the whole nation should also get more education about the importance of China's rights at sea.

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