

Chinese Boats Encroach on Taiwan's Waters



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20230203113422065/>

Now Chinese President Xi Jinping has expressed a strong desire to reunify Taiwan with the mainland by force if necessary. Taipei is on high alert as Beijing steps up military pressure. It's also making its presence felt through non-military means, such as frequently sailing Chinese boats in Taiwan's waters.

This footage was filmed off the coast of central Taiwan in November. A fishing boat from China's Fujian province was operating illegally in waters under Taiwan's jurisdiction. Taiwanese authorities detained its 14 crew members. Such incidents have become common in recent years. More than 1,000 Chinese fishing boats are either seized by Taiwan's coastguard or ordered to leave the waters.

This remote island is about 20 kilometers away from the mainland. Chinese fishing boats are often spotted around here. Island residents suspect some are not fishing boats. Wu Hung-kuan works in the travel business. He saw a suspicious vessel during a boat tour in May last year.

There were 2 highspeed boats around that island.

He says its crew members wore facemasks and the boat was not loaded with fishing nets. He says the vessel was equipped with multiple engines and it left at highspeed after seeing Wu's boat. Taiwanese coastguard ships pursued the vessel, but it sped away. Taiwanese authorities reported the incident to the Chinese side. It responded that it had charged the boat's crew on suspicion of smuggling, but Wu says sightings of similar highspeed boats have continued.

I'm worried whether we can safely navigate the waters around here with tourists onboard.

Anxiety is also spreading among fishermen.

They come every day. It's a problem. It's harder to catch fish.

A Taiwanese expert says the growing frequency of Chinese ships sailing in Taiwan's waters may be part of China's gray zone tactics. Including provocations by paramilitary vessels.

More and more China vessels or government-based vessels trespass. The status-quo of Taiwan strait has been changed and this kind of situation brings lots of pressure on the Taiwan government.

The real intentions of the Chinese side are unknown, but the situation increasingly worries Chinese authorities. They plan to deploy about 140 new patrol vessels by 2027 to track the suspicious boats and step-up their patrols around remote islands.

Source: (NHK World News)

Now discuss the questions with a partner.

1. Have you heard any other news about Chinese vessels?
2. What do you think China's intentions are?
3. If the Chinese fishing boats will be seized by Taiwan's coastguards, why do they trespass?
4. Can you think of any other strategies to prevent Chinese boats from trespassing?
5. What do you think the purpose of the highspeed boats are? If they are not fishermen, who are they?