



Gen. Richard Myers Leads AFPC Delegation to China

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Between January 7-14, the American Foreign Policy Council (AFPC) sponsored an eight-person delegation to China led by Gen. Richard Myers, former Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.

During their stay in China, delegation members held discussions with a wide range of Chinese leaders, including those in the Foreign Ministry, the International Department of the CPC, and policy experts from China's top think tanks. Meetings were held at the Minister and Vice Minister level permitting access to China's senior leadership. The delegation also traveled to the cities of Haikou and Sanya in Hainan province, China's southernmost point. There, delegates toured a bio-tech company, visited economic development planning centers and met with the Hainan Province Party Secretary (U.S. Governor equivalent).

There were several recurring themes in the delegation meetings. Officials in Beijing were primarily concerned with how to interpret the Obama administration's recently released defense strategy which has a slight shift toward Asia and whether the rhetoric by Republican primary candidates will actually translate to changes in U.S. foreign policy toward China. As usual, U.S. arms sales to Taiwan remained a contentious issue.

AFPC delegates also focused on gaining a better understanding of the territorial disputes between China and several other countries over islands in the South China Sea. Though the U.S. does not lay claim to any islands, the military is concerned with maintaining safe transit for American military vessels in the region passing through China's exclusive economic zone (EEZ)—where a country has limited rights to explore and exploit natural resources. A country's sovereign territory ends 12 nautical miles (nm) from the coast, but their EEZ extends out 200 nm into the sea. China does not believe ships conducting military-related missions should be allowed to transit through the EEZ. The U.S., and most other nations, do not accept this interpretation of the international Law of the Sea. Delegation members also stated the importance of more communication between the U.S. military and China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). Additionally, the trip provided sound insight into the border dispute between China and India.