**China and the U.S. restore senior level military communications.**

As one major agreement from the APEC 2023 meeting between President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, Air Force General CQ Brown, Jr, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General Liu Zhenli, of the People’s Liberation Army’s Joint Staff department connected by telephone and discussed global and regional security issues, including Taiwan and the South China Sea.

It was reported that China has also begun moving to stop illicit traders of Fentanyl precursor chemicals.

The 2023 APEC meeting got some meaningful and constructive results.

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**SOURCE:**

**Pentagon, China Restore Military Dialogue**

**Gordon Lubold, *The Wall Street Journal* | Page A001, 22 December 2023**

WASHINGTON—The Pentagon’s top officer spoke with his Chinese counterpart, restoring dialogue between the militaries after a 16-month rupture during which the U.S. said China’s forces conducted dangerous intercepts of American and allied planes and ships.

In a videoconference Thursday, Air Force Gen. CQ Brown Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. Liu Zhenli of the People’s Liberation Army’s Joint Staff Department discussed global and regional security issues as well as other matters, the Pentagon said. China’s Defense Ministry cited Taiwan and the South China Sea as central topics.

Their call came together a little more than a month after President Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping agreed to resume military contacts at a summit meeting outside San Francisco that succeeded in moderating the contentious tone in U.S.-China relations.

The resumption of military dialogue is another sign that Washington and Beijing are trying to sustain the positive momentum. Beijing, following up on another Biden-Xi agreement, has also moved against some illicit traders in the chemicals used to make fentanyl, U.S. officials said.

After several years of increasing tensions, however, the rapprochement is tentative, with strains over the wars in Gaza and Ukraine and a host of other issues from trade to technology. Officials on both sides expect the tensions to stay, making it imperative that Washington and Beijing find a way to manage disagreements.

The Biden administration is discussing raising already high tariffs on imports of Chinese electric vehicles, people familiar with the matter said.

Other disputes are looming. Beijing is warily watching next month’s presidential election in Taiwan, urging the U.S. to tone down its support for the island. Washington has also warned China to stop harassing Philippine vessels in the South China Sea.

The U.S. and Chinese militaries are frequently operating close to each other around Taiwan and in the South China Sea. Both governments have grown concerned about a possible mishap and the potential for it to spin out into a wider confrontation that neither side wants.

In Thursday’s call, “Gen. Brown discussed the importance of working together to responsibly manage competition, avoid miscalculations, and maintain open and direct lines of communication,” a Pentagon statement said.

Pentagon officials in October accused China’s military of a pattern of dangerous and provocative actions in the East and South China seas that was intended to elevate risks for U.S. forces in the re-gion. During the two years from the fall of 2021, the Pentagon documented more than 180 instances of what it termed “coercive and risky air intercepts” targeting U.S. military aircraft in the region.

PLA jet fighters have also been cited by U.S. officials for releasing debris in the flight paths of Canadian and Australian aircraft.

Thursday’s call between the generals was the first substantive exchange between the militaries since Beijing broke off those and other dialogues in response to then- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in August 2022. Attempts in the intervening months to restore dialogue had foundered on China’s refusal, including an attempt soon after Brown became chairman in October.

Beijing and Wa s h i n g ton have often seen military contacts differently. In past decades, China has routinely cut off dialogue at times of tension, while the Biden administration has said those channels are crucial to crisis management.

“You don’t want a situation in the event of a mistake or an accident where the two militaries can’t intervene at a senior level to defuse the situation and separate whoever has collided,” Nicholas Burns, the U.S. ambassador to China, said last week at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

China’s Defense Ministry, in its account of the call, said Gen. Liu put the onus for continuing military dialogue on the U.S. “The key to developing a healthy, stable, and sustainable military-to-military relationship is that the United States must have a correct understanding of China,” the ministry cited Liu as saying.

Liu urged the U.S. to respect China’s interests, warning Washington not to interfere on Taiwan and to be “cautious in its words and deeds” in the South China Sea.

Since the Biden-Xi meeting, provocative maneuvers by the Chinese military have all but stopped, according to Adm. John Aquilino, the commander of U.S. Indo-Pacom, the military command that oversees the region.

“We’ve been clear about the importance of opening up the lines of communication with the PRC at the senior most levels,” a senior military official said in advance of the call, using the initials for the People’s Republic of China. “However, it’s just one step, an important step, but it’s not the last step.” As part of the agreement by Biden and Xi, the restored military dialogue would take place at several points on the chain of command, including channels between Aquilino and the commander of the People’s Liberation Army’s Eastern Theater Command. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin would take part as well once China names a defense minister following the removal of Gen. Li Shangfu from the position this summer for unexplained reasons.

Pentagon officials are discussing with the Chinese side re-establishing a “deconfliction line” that typically operates at a lower, staff level, to mitigate the chances of mishaps between Chinese and American aircraft and ships in Asia.

Also on the table are plans for bilateral defense policy coordination talks and, separately, for consultations in the spring on military and maritime issues, the Pentagon officials said.