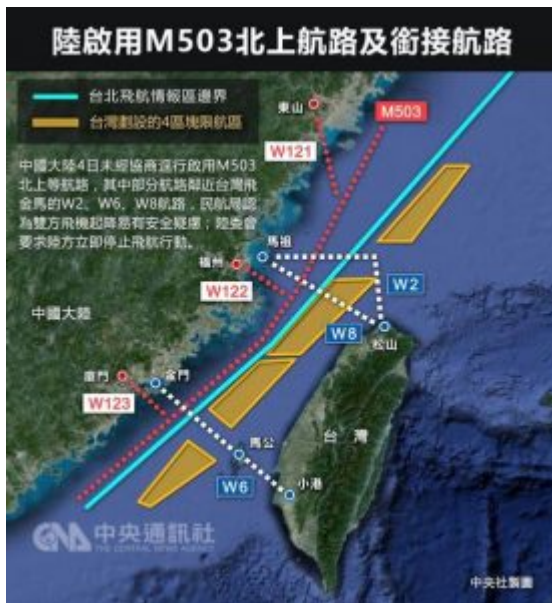


Taiwan calls for talks with China on aviation issues



Taipei, Jan. 7 (CNA) Taiwan is calling for discussions with China on issues related to aviation management in the Taiwan Strait, in the wake of China's recent unilateral activation of four aviation routes close to the median line of the strait.

Last week, China reneged on a 2015 cross-strait agreement with Taiwan and unilaterally activated four new aviation routes in the Taiwan Strait – a northbound path on the M503 route and three east-west extension routes called W121, W122 and W123.

The M503 at its nearest point is only 7.8 km from the centerline of the strait and close to the Taipei Flight Information Region, while the W122 and W123 are close to Taiwan's offshore islands of Matsu and Kinmen, respectively.

China's move to open the four flight routes without prior negotiation with Taiwan has sparked concerns in Taipei about potential intrusions into domestic flight routes to and from Matsu and Kinmen.

Detailing such concerns, Lin Kuo-shian (林國顯), director-general

of Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA), said Xiang'an International Airport, under construction on China's southeast coast, is just 10 kilometers from Kinmen.

The Xiang'an airport in Xiamen, which is being built to ease congestion at Gaoqi International Airport in the same city in Fujian Province, is scheduled to be completed in 2020, he noted.

If the new airport begins operations without prior cross-strait negotiations, it will have a huge impact of air traffic in and out of Shang Yi Airport in Kinmen, as it is even closer than the Gaoqi airport, Lin said.

Expressing similar views, another CAA official Shiue Shao-yi (謝少宜) said it is essential for civil aviation authorities in China and Taiwan hold discussions on flight route controls and other relevant issues before the Xiang'an airport opens.

He declined, however, to comment on aviation experts' speculations that when the new airport opens, a new flight route will be launched from Xiang'an to link with Taiwan's domestic routes to and from Kinmen.

It is not yet clear what routes Xiang'an airport will use, Shiue said.

(By Wang Shu-fen and Evelyn Kao)

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