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China-US military ties gain pace

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GENERAL Xu Caihou, vice chairman of China's Central Military Commission, was in the spotlight when he visited the United States from October 24 to November 3.

He was the first senior Chinese military leader to visit the country since Barack Obama assumed the presidency in January. Essential background to the visit is the regained momentum in the military relationship since Chinese President Hu Jintao and President Obama reached a consensus in April in London to improve bilateral military ties.

On broader issues, Xu and his US hosts agreed to further the two-way military relationship and cooperation in a stable and healthy way.

While hopeful of the prospects for China-US military ties, Xu expressed China's concerns about several major obstacles that may harm the relationship.

The first and foremost obstacle is the US-Taiwan military relationship. China maintains the United States should stick to the three China-US communiqués and gradually reduce its arms sale to Taiwan, aiming towards total termination.

Second, US military aircraft and ships' intrusions into China's maritime exclusive economic zone should be terminated. Third, there is some US legislation that restricts the development of the China-US military relationship. Most notably is the 2,000 Defense Authorization Act passed in 1999.

Another obstacle is that the US lacks strategic trust in China. China hopes the US would look at China's military power development in a reasonable way, not to stir up the bogus "China Threat" theory.

Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president of the Cato institute in Washington, said Xu's visit is "an important step to rebuild" the military relationship.

(The author is a Xinhua writer.)

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