

US adviser arrives in Beijing for talks

By **CHENG GUANGJIN** in Beijing and **TAN YINGZI** in Washington

The United States National Security Adviser Thomas Donilon will meet with Chinese leaders this week in talks analysts are describing as a "fire extinguisher" for the two countries at loggerheads on a range of international issues.

Donilon was scheduled to arrive in Beijing on Monday evening and hold talks on Tuesday with State Councilor Dai Bingguo, one of the highest-ranking figures in Chinese foreign policy, and President Hu Jintao.

On Wednesday, he will meet Vice-Chairman of China's Central Military Commission Xu Caihou, Foreign

Minister Yang Jiechi, Vice-Premier Wang Qishan, who is in charge of economic, energy and financial affairs, and Vice-President Xi Jinping, before continuing his trip to Tokyo.

A statement from the White House said Donilon will discuss "the current and future state of US-China relations" and "cooperation on regional and global challenges of mutual concern including nonproliferation, regional security in Asia and the Middle East, and global economic growth".

Analysts said Iran, Syria, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and China's dispute with Japan over the Diaoyu Islands are also likely to be discussed.

Bonnie Glaser, a Chinese security expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank, said it is important for the US and China to sustain high-level contact. She said these talks are a good opportunity to discuss the bilateral relationship as well as regional and global problems. "As I recall, Donilon was supposed to visit China last year, the trip was announced and then it was canceled," she said.

"Exchanging views on developments inside North Korea, how to forestall another nuclear test or provocations, and how to promote progress toward denuclearization are all important topics," Glaser said.

"After the veto at the UN by Russia and China, there is no international consensus on how to manage the Syrian issue, so what to do next is also a high priority," she said.

Donilon's visit comes as Syria plunges deeper into violence, with rebels pressing ahead in their fight to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, The Associated Press reported.

After visiting China Donilon will then travel to Tokyo to consult with senior Japanese officials on US-Japan security cooperation and other bilateral issues, as well as a range of regional and global challenges, according to the White House statement.

"The dispute between China and

Japan over the Diaoyu Islands will be an unavoidable topic during Donilon's talks with Chinese leaders, as it is one of the common concerns of the two countries on the regional security in Asia," Commentator Guan Yao said in an interview on Shenzhen TV.

The US should clarify its strategic intention in claiming that the Diaoyu Islands are covered by the US security treaty with Japan, Guan said.

Guan, however, noted that Donilon's visit will emphasize "seeking cooperation between the two countries" on the issues about which they are both concerned, rather than simply discussing US concerns.

"The broad range of topics that the

two sides are expected to discuss shows the width and depth of Sino-US relations and proves that the Sino-US relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world," said Guan.

Donilon has been US President Barack Obama's national security adviser since October 2010. He visited China in September 2010 when bilateral relations hit a record low over issues including US arms sale to Taiwan, military drills on the Yellow Sea and claims of national interests on the South China Sea.

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Aquino refuses to back off island claim

By **ZHANG YUNBI** and **LI XIAOKUN**

Philippine President Benigno Aquino on Monday refused to back off his country's claim over China's Huangyan Island, asking his nation to "speak with one voice" on the issue and announcing plans to upgrade military capabilities.

He also said there are no simple solutions to the difficult situation, adding that the Philippine government is consulting experts and leaders to find a resolution "acceptable to all".

Although the president's remarks over Huangyan Island showed resolve and did not rule out the possibility of a diplomatic resolution, analysts said Beijing should beware of Manila's persistent drive to resort to multilateral mechanisms to complicate the situation.

"I ask for solidarity from our people regarding this issue. Let us speak with one voice," Aquino said about Huangyan Island when addressing the joint session of the Philippine Congress for the third time since his election in 2010.

This is also the first time for Aquino

This is about attaining peace. This is about our capability to defend ourselves."

BENIGNO AQUINO
PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT

to give the annual "State of the Nation" speech since tensions between Beijing and Manila sharply escalated in April.

On April 10, a Philippine warship entered the island's territorial waters, sent personnel to harass Chinese fishing boats and attempted to detain Chinese fishermen. Two Chinese patrol ships in the area later came to the fishermen's rescue, and the Philippine warship left.

Beijing lodged protests in Manila over the move, which infringed on China's sovereignty, but the impasse didn't end as Manila continued to send government vessels to the Huangyan Island lagoon.

Aquino's speech on Monday showed the consistency of his stance and his position on Huangyan

Island, said Yang Baoyun, an expert on Southeast Asian studies at Peking University.

Hawkish voices that demand Aquino toughen his stance over the South China Sea issue are resonating in the Philippines, and media reports have placed high expectations over the president's speech. That's why Aquino did not dodge the island issue, said Chen Qinghong, an expert on Southeast Asian studies with the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations.

Although Manila's rival claim over the island has initiated a series of reactions both domestically and from China, Yang said mentioning the island still helps Aquino shift focus in the context of domestic questioning over the legitimacy of his government. During his speech, the Philippine president did not insist on direct confrontation with China on the issue.

"This is not a simple situation, and there can be no simple solutions. Rest assured: We are consulting experts, every leader of our nation, our allies — even those on the other side — to find a resolution that is acceptable to all," Aquino said.

Manila has realized that it may suffer more losses if it persists in provoking China, and it has often resorted to multilateral gatherings, including the ASEAN Regional Forum Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, this month, Chen said.

"China should be fully prepared for the latest strategy of Manila," he said.

In the speech, Aquino also announced plans for a 75 billion peso (\$1.8 billion) military modernization fund to acquire a refurbished frigate, C-130 planes, utility and combat helicopters, communication equipment, rifles and mortars.

"This is not about picking a fight. This is not about bullying. This is about attaining peace. This is about our capability to defend ourselves," he said.

Yet given Manila's tough moves and remarks concerning Huangyan Island in the South China Sea, it is hard for people not to relate the military modernization bill to Manila's island rival claim, Yang said.

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SPAIN FOREST FIRES KILL 4

PHOTO BY **JORDI RIBOT** / REUTERS

A firefighter helicopter drops water during a wildfire in Tarrades, in the northern Spanish province of Girona, on Monday. Forest fires that broke out on Sunday in Girona, a tourist spot bordering with France in Spain's northern Catalonia region, have killed four people and have burnt 13,000 hectares.

