

China faced a barrage of complaints from the United States, Japan and South Korea on Monday, following its creation of an air 'defense' zone over disputed waters in the East China Sea.

Beijing reacted angrily, filing its own formal protests over the criticism.

China declared the air defense identification zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea on Saturday, saying all civilian and military aircraft flying within it must identify themselves and obey all commands from Beijing.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Monday that China's move was "unnecessarily inflammatory." Earnest told reporters that disputes in the region should be resolved diplomatically.

Pentagon spokesman Steve Warren said U.S. military aircraft operating in the disputed aerial zone will not register a flight plan or identify their transponder, radio frequency or logo to Chinese authorities.

The new Chinese zone overlaps with a Japanese aerial zone above a group of uninhabited East China Sea islands claimed by both countries. Japan, a U.S. ally, administers the islands and calls them Senkaku, while China refers to them as Diaoyu.

Destabilizing

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe denounced the creation of the Chinese zone as "dangerous." In remarks to a parliamentary session on Monday, he said China's action is unenforceable, has no validity in Japan and should be revoked. Mr. Abe's government also summoned the Chinese ambassador in Tokyo, Cheng Yonghua, for a formal protest.

China's zone also overlaps with a South Korean aerial zone above a submerged rock where Seoul established a research facility in 2003 despite Chinese objections.

The rock is known internationally as Socotra, but is called leodo by South Korea and Suyan by China.

South Korea summoned a Chinese diplomat on Monday to protest the new zone. South Korean Defense Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said Seoul also will permit aircraft to pass through the disputed area without notifying China.

The United States recognizes Japan's control of the East China Sea islands but says it takes no position on their "ultimate" sovereignty. In a statement on Saturday, U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel criticized the Chinese zone as "a destabilizing attempt to alter the status quo" in

China Hit with Complaints Over Maritime Air 'Defense' Zone

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the maritime region.

China responded to the criticism by insisting it is acting within its rights to defend Chinese national sovereignty and airspace.

Beijing officials also lodged diplomatic protests with U.S. ambassador Gary Locke on Sunday and Japanese ambassador Kitera Masato on Monday. The officials called on Washington and Tokyo to "correct their mistakes" and stop making "irresponsible remarks," as China sees them.