



China's Defence Ministry said a Chinese naval vessel discovered a piece of "unidentified equipment" and checked it to prevent any navigational safety issues before discovering it was a US drone.

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"China decided to return it to the US side in an appropriate manner, and China and the US have all along been in communication about it," the ministry said on its website.

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"During this process, the US side's unilateral and open hyping up is inappropriate, and is not beneficial to the smooth resolution of this issue. We express regret at this," it added

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Trump, a Republican who takes office on Jan 20, had waded into the dispute on Twitter early on Saturday from his seaside resort club in Florida, where he plans to spend the holidays.

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