

# Congressional China Panel Preps Proposals to Rapidly Arm Taiwan

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*The House committee dedicated to countering China is preparing bipartisan proposals for the fiscal 2024 defense authorization bill that would accelerate U.S. munitions production and arms transfers to Taiwan, its chairman told Defense News in an exclusive interview.*

The committee is drawing on lessons learned from the Taiwan tabletop wargame it held last week as it drafts its proposals, which aim to ramp up production of high-priority munitions, help clear the \$19 billion [arms sale backlog to Taipei](#) and bolster Pentagon cybersecurity cooperation with the island nation.

"We're hoping to get consensus on a series of proposals that the committee can endorse that would be tailor-made for insertion into this year's [National Defense Authorization Act]," [Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wis.](#), said Thursday.

He's also using his position as a subcommittee chairman on the Armed Services Committee to introduce those Taiwan recommendations as amendments when the House marks up the FY24 NDAA in early June.

Gallagher discussed lessons from the wargame on Wednesday with members of three external groups: retired Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Stacie Pettyjohn from the Center for a New American Security and Jimmy Goodrich from the Semiconductor Industry Association. In addition to shattering the global economy and potentially killing many people, the wargame found that a U.S.-China conflict over Taiwan would rapidly deplete long-range missile stockpiles.

Beijing considers the island a rogue province, and has threatened to take it back by force.

"Whatever we do to deter the war has to happen before the war," Gallagher told Defense News. "We need to jump-start industry now if we want to actually stockpile

munitions that give us a chance of preserving the peace, which means in my opinion that you need multiyear appropriations for critical munitions like the long-range anti-ship missile.”

“We need about 1,000 to 1,200 [long-range anti-ship missiles] if you believe the unclassified wargames,” he added. “Our inventory is less than 250, and we’re just not producing them at a rapid rate. I believe we can get up to above 200 a year.”

Other high-priority munitions Gallagher identified are the Naval Strike Missiles, which U.S. Marines are fielding in Japan and the Philippines as part of an expeditionary ship interdiction system; Joint Strike Missiles; Joint Direct Attack Munitions; and SM-6 missiles.



A U.S. Navy ship launches an SM-6 during a live-fire test of the Aegis weapons system. (U.S. Navy)

“We need multiyear appropriations to make that happen,” he said. “We’re talking about a relatively small amount of money compared to the overall defense budget.”

Multiyear procurement authorities historically have been used for big-ticket items like ships and aircraft, but the Pentagon and some lawmakers have recently expressed interest in using them for munitions acquisition to encourage defense companies to ramp up production amid concern about insufficient U.S. stockpiles.

The FY23 NDAA sought to jump-start high-priority U.S. munitions production by [authorizing multiyear procurement contracts for thousands of critical munitions](#). That includes 950 long-range anti-ship missiles, 1,250 Naval Strike Missiles and 1,500 SM-6 weapons, as well as thousands of other munitions — some of which [the U.S. is backfilling after sending some of its stocks to Ukraine](#).

But appropriators did not fully fund the critical munitions authorization in the FY23

government funding bill. The spending bill allocated \$687 million for the Army for two years to accelerate production “of critical munitions to replace defense articles” provided to Ukraine and its backers.

Gallagher said that this funding level in the appropriations bill “fell far short of what was authorized” and that he’s talking to appropriators “to get to some sort of compromise.”

“I understand why they usually resist multiyear authority and why they are skeptical about the way [the Defense Department] spends money,” he said. “Sometimes [the department] spends money in a stupid fashion.”

The Pentagon requested [multiyear procurement authorities for munitions for the first time in March as part of its FY24 budget request](#), which asks Congress for \$30.6 billion in missile and munition procurement. That includes the long-range anti-ship missile, the Naval Strike Missile and the SM-6.

## Arming Taiwan

The FY23 NDAA also authorized up to \$2 billion in annual Foreign Military Financing grants for arms to Taiwan and another \$1 billion in presidential drawdown authority to give it weapons from existing U.S. stockpiles — the same authority President Joe Biden has used to arm Ukraine. But like multiyear procurement authorities, the [FY23 appropriations bill did not fund either Taiwan aid authorization](#).

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told the Senate in March that the Pentagon is preparing [a weapons drawdown package from U.S. stocks for Taiwan](#), but that he’ll need lawmakers to follow through with appropriations to backfill those munitions.

Additionally, industrial capacity issues have contributed to [a \\$19 billion arms sale backlog to Taiwan](#) — something Gallagher also hopes to ameliorate. That will also require reforms to the Foreign Military Sales process. Montgomery, the retired Navy officer, told the House’s China committee that it can take more than 30 months from the announcement of a Taiwan arms sale until the Defense Department inks a contract for the weapon system.

“Once the sale is approved, there’s nobody in [the Defense Department] that then rides herd on the contract to actually get it done,” said Gallagher, noting that the Foreign Military Sales process “exists in this weird no-man’s-land” between the Pentagon and State Department.

The chairman also wants to move Taiwan to the front of the line for certain arms sales, including Harpoon missiles. Saudi Arabia stands ahead of Taiwan in the queue for those anti-ship weapons, which Gallagher said “makes no sense.”

An initial draft of last year’s Taiwan aid legislation in the Senate would have required defense manufacturers to “prioritize and expedite” weapons for Taiwan in their queues, but [lawmakers dropped that provision when they added parts of the bill to the FY23 NDAA](#) due to concerns it would violate U.S. contracting law.

Lastly, Gallagher — who chairs the Armed Services Committee’s cyber panel — hopes to enhance the U.S.-Taiwan cybersecurity partnership to improve the island’s “resiliency and critical infrastructure.” He has introduced a bill, the Taiwan Cybersecurity Resilience Act, which would require the Pentagon to work with the Asian nation to improve cooperation on

military cyber operations.

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