

# U.S. Arms Sale to Taiwan Proceeds Over China Protest

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A proposed U.S. sale to Taiwan of missiles, helicopters and ships valued at about \$6.4 billion will go forward.

The House and Senate foreign affairs committees took no action on the proposal during the 30-day window for objection that ended yesterday, thereby allowing it to proceed in the face of protests from China.

"It's cleared so we are moving forward to put together the paperwork that will eventually be the letter of offer to Taiwan," Defense Security Cooperation Agency spokesman Paul Ebner said.

The U.S. Defense Department wants to sell Taiwan the most advanced Patriot anti-missile system, which is built by Lockheed Martin Corp. and Raytheon Co. The system, valued at \$2.8 billion, would add to Taiwan's network of 22 missile sites around the country to defend against a Chinese attack.

China's army "has increased the quantity and sophistication of its ballistic and cruise missiles and fighter aircraft opposite Taiwan, which has diminished Taiwan's ability to deny China's efforts to attain air superiority in a conflict," according to the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency.

The proposal also includes UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters costing \$3.1 billion made by United Technologies Corp. and Boeing Co. Harpoon missiles at a cost of \$37 million.

Contacts With U.S.

After the planned sale was announced Jan. 29, China said it would suspend military-to-military contacts with the U.S. and impose sanctions on the companies that make the weapons.

To date, China has postponed at least three high-level exchanges: separate visits to the U.S. by their chief of staff and one of their regional commanders and a visit to China by the head of the U.S. Pacific Command, Pentagon spokeswoman Major Maureen Schumann said in an e-mail today.

Still, China did allow the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier and four other U.S. warships to anchor last month at Hong Kong, where more than 5,000 sailors had shore leave, even as President Barack Obama prepared to meet with the Dalai Lama over the objections of leaders in

Beijing.

In 2007, China prevented the USS Kitty Hawk from visiting Hong Kong, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao saying China was angered that President George W. Bush met the Dalai Lama and presented him with the Congressional Gold Medal. Although China belatedly approved that port call, the fleet had already turned back.

A spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington today reaffirmed China's opposition to the sale.

'Part of China'

"We request the U.S. strictly abide by its commitment of recognizing Taiwan as part of China and not supporting Taiwan independence, stop selling weapons to Taiwan, so as to create favorable conditions for sustained growth of China-U.S. relations in a healthy and stable way," Wang Baodong said in an e-mail.

Yan Xuetong, director of the Institute of International studies at Tsinghua University in Beijing, said the proposed arms sales, as well as the Feb. 18 visit of the Dalai Lama to the White House, have set back bilateral relations.

Still, the disagreement won't derail overall relations, Yan said. "No matter what happens with the Dalai Lama, with Taiwan arms sales, with the conflicts on climate change, with the Iran nuclear problems, there might be a lot of troubles and ups and downs between China and the U.S. but people know that there is a limit," Yan said in an interview.

China considers Taiwan a province that should be reunited with the mainland by force if necessary. The U.S. pledge to help Taiwan bolster its defenses aims to balance the long-held American opposition to full independence from China. U.S. officials have urged the two sides to negotiate a resolution.

The U.S. arms sales to the island nation have irritated China so much that it cut off military talks after the last sale was announced in October 2008. Taiwan received \$18.3 billion in U.S. arms from 1950 to 2006, according to U.S. figures.

*With assistance from Michael Forsythe in Beijing and Viola Gienger in Washington. Editors: Bill Schmick, Laurie Asseo.*

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