

Last month, Hon Hai Group chairman Terry Gou (郭台銘) said that arms procurement should not involve buying weaponry “just for the sake of it” and that “Taiwan should stop purchasing arms from the US.”

The remarks by Gou, who is contesting the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) presidential primary, evoke memories of attempts by the KMT and the People First Party during former president Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) administration to sabotage purchases of military equipment.

The main slogan the pan-blue camp used at the time was: “Oppose wasteful arms procurement.” It encouraged people to protest, even employing nonsensical slogans such as: “Oppose arms procurement, tackle unemployment,” “oppose arms procurement, help credit card slaves” and “oppose arms procurement, help prevent suicides.”

The administration of then-US president George W. Bush was willing to sell Taiwan three important types of military equipment: eight diesel-electric submarines, Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missile batteries and Lockheed P-3C Orion aircraft. If the KMT had not blocked that purchase, Taiwan would have received the first submarine in 2013 and the final vessel this year.

When discussing submarines in 2015, then-president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) said that “the US has agreed to sell us submarines, but we have heard nothing in 14 years. It is really too much” — as if he were not aware that the only obstacle to the sale was the reticence of KMT legislators.

Ironically, with Ma in office, the KMT resubmitted a similar arms purchase agreement, selectively proposing less controversial items that would not create a Chinese backlash, but a lot of time had already been wasted.

When Ma boasted that Taiwan had never spent more money on arms purchases from the US, he did not mention that he was benefiting from the letter of request, with the pricing and availability of weapons the nation needed, submitted by Chen's administration.

Meaningless rhetoric by Gou, KMT on US arms

Written by Chen Kuan-Fu 陳冠富

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The request for submarines — which are critical for defending the Taiwan Strait frontline — remains up in the air, but when President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) took office, it launched an indigenous submarine program.

The KMT has long bragged about its special relationship with China, but the party has been too China-friendly in terms of cross-strait relations and too prone to wishful thinking, which has led to unavoidable conflict with its claim to be the protector of the Republic of China.

This is why the party is always questioned and scrutinized when it talks about national defense capabilities and its own determination, regardless of how many superstars, such as Gou or Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜), it has on its side.

Gou said on Facebook: “I dare declare peace! I will insist on democracy! I will defend the nation! What about you?”

When did it become necessary to say that you want to protect democracy and Taiwan? These are the most fundamental demands. Apart from hinting at the incongruence between the KMT’s statements and actions, these comments are meaningless.

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Translated by Edward Jones and Perry Svensson

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