

Senate allies add report

Written by Taipei Times
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Supporters of Taiwan in the US Senate Armed Services Committee added a requirement for a presidential report on the status of the Taiwanese Air Force in next year's National Defense Authorization Act passed on July 23, the latest edition of Defense News reported.

Defense News quoted Andrew Yang, secretary-general of the Taipei-based Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies, as saying that the requirement would likely push for the sale of the 66 F-16C/D fighter aircraft requested by Taiwan in 2006.

The report calls for a "thorough and complete assessment of the current state of Taiwan's Air Force" and an assessment of the ability of Taiwanese aircraft to repel a "full-scale concerted missile and air campaign by China," Defense News wrote.

"Section 1226, Report on Taiwan's Air Force," requires the US president to submit a report to US Congress within 90 days after the date of enactment, the report said.

The report quoted York Chen, a former official at the National Security Council, as saying that "a comprehensive assessment of the Taiwan Air Force required by the Bill is a milestone for both Taipei and Washington to consider seriously the fundamental element for Taiwan military security."

The report must also include a five-year plan for "fulfilling the obligations of the United States under the Taiwan Relations Act to provide for Taiwan's self-defense and aid Taiwan in maintaining control of its own air space."

The addition of the requirement comes on the heels of a US Department of Defense report released on March 25 that concluded that because of rapid modernization of the People's Liberation Army, the Taiwanese Air Force no longer enjoyed airspace dominance of the Taiwan Strait.

The requirement was absent from the US House of Representative's version of the bill. However, the two bills will have to be reconciled before being sent to the White House, Defense News wrote.

Meanwhile, in related news, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) yesterday urged the US to greenlight Taiwan's request for the procurement of F-16C/Ds.

The ministry made the remarks in response to a report recently issued by the California-based military think tank RAND Corp.

Despite the easing of political strain across the Taiwan Strait after the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) came to power last year, China has not renounced a military strike against Taiwan, the report said.

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If there were to be a military conflict across the Taiwan Strait between next year and 2015, China's growing Air Force and guided missile arsenal would pose a major threat to Taiwan regardless of US intervention, the report said, suggesting that Taiwan beef up its air defense in respond to potential large-scale missile attacks from China.

"In view of the threats posed by China's fast-growing air force, the need [for Taiwan] to procure F-16C/Ds has become an ever pressing issue in our air defense work," a statement issued by the ministry said. "The Ministry of National Defense would like to urge the US to quicken its consent to the procurement of the item so our country could effectively respond to Chinese Communist threats and assure [our] national security."

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