

Presidential guard cut in sword attack

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An injured military police officer is being taken to National Taiwan University Hospital after being attacked by a man wielding a samurai sword outside the Presidential Office Building yesterday.

Photo: Lee Hsin-fang, Taipei Times

A man wielding a Japanese sword yesterday slashed a military police officer guarding the Presidential Office Building, authorities said.

A 51-year-old, surnamed Lu (呂), was overpowered by other guards and prevented from entering the building, police said, adding that the injured guard was rushed to nearby National Taiwan University Hospital for treatment.

Lu approached the west wing of the building on the intersection of Boai Road and Zhangsha Street at about 10:15am, where he slashed the guard's neck, police said.

An initial investigation found that Lu used a hammer to smash a display case containing the sword at the Armed Forces Museum on Guiyang Street and took the weapon before heading to the Presidential Office Building, they said.

Police found a People's Republic of China flag in Lu's bag.

Police said they also found what appeared to be Lu's will, which contained such sentences as:

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“I watch China Central Television daily and I get emotional seeing the motherland’s development projects,” and “Achieve unification with China as soon as possible.”

TV footage showed Lu being carried away by four officers and put in a police car near a side entrance of the building, which was cordoned off after the attack.

During questioning, Lu said he attacked the guard to “demonstrate my political position,” said Tsai Han-cheng (蔡漢成), head of the Jieshou police station affiliated with the Taipei Police Department’s Zhongzheng First Precinct.

Lu has been turned over to the Taipei District Prosecutors’ Office, Tsai said.

Minister of National Defense Feng Shih-kuan (冯世寬) said the protocol for use of force by armed personnel will be reviewed.

“I cannot imagine the scenario if the man had stormed into the Presidential Office Building during the annual family day,” when relatives of employees working at the office spend the day there, Feng said.

Presidential Office spokesman Alex Huang (黃育昇) said the injured guard was in stable condition after receiving treatment.

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) was concerned about the guard after learning about the attack, Huang said.

Presidential Office Secretary-General Joseph Wu (吳敦義) issued a statement condemning the attack after visiting the injured officer in hospital.

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Tsai Ing-wen also visited the injured guard later yesterday.

The guard sustained a 10cm cut to the right side of his neck, but was not in critical condition, Colonel Chang Po-yen (張博恩) of the Military Police 202nd Command said.

Ministry of National Defense spokesman Major General Chen Chung-chi (陳重奇) confirmed that a sword was stolen from the museum, adding that surveillance footage had been handed over to police.

The museum was closed to the public following the attack.

The Presidential Office Building and its surrounding area have been the target of attacks before.

In November 2014, a man tried to drive into the front door of the nearby presidential residence, saying he was protesting the health policies of then-president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九).

In January 2014, a man drove a truck through a bullet-proof screen and into the main gate of the Presidential Office Building, saying he was protesting a judicial hearing involving his ex-wife.

There were no injuries from either incident, apart from one of the drivers.

Additional reporting by AFP

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