

New US security adviser good for Taiwan: Young

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US President Donald Trump's appointment of John Bolton as his national security adviser might lead to more visits by high-level US officials to Taiwan, former American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) director Stephen Young said on Saturday.

In an interview with the Central News Agency, Young said the US government would try to have "more frequent visits and higher level visits" following the passage of the Taiwan Travel Act, which encourages Taiwanese and US officials at all levels to visit each other.

While the Trump administration can implement the act at its discretion, the appointment of Bolton, "who knows Taiwan well ... could make it easier to get concrete decisions and actions on that score," Young said.

Bolton is considered to be an outspoken supporter of Taiwan, and he has recommended that the US increase arms sales to the nation and station troops there.

However, his hawkish disposition has some worried about how he might shake up US military policy as part of Trump's team.

Young said several times during the interview that visits, no matter the rank of the official, were always possible, even prior to the act's passage, and the bill simply highlights the importance the US attaches to these exchanges.

They have also been extremely rare. When then-US Environmental Protection Agency administrator Gina McCarthy traveled to Taiwan in 2014, she was the first Cabinet-level US official to visit the nation in 14 years. No other official of that level has visited since.

The upcoming opening of the AIT's new compound in Taipei's Neihu District (內湖) might prompt a visit by a high-level US official.

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Young, who scouted the plot and helped with the initial blueprints, said it “would be appropriate ... and make sense” for high-level US officials to attend the event.

The AIT, which represents US interests in Taiwan in the absence of formal diplomatic ties, has said that the new office would open in the summer.

“I personally think it would be great if [the US government] had a Cabinet level official with some relevance to Taiwan issues come here” for the ceremony, Young said.

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