

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) yesterday expressed regret over US President Barack Obama's remarks that "the US respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China."

"[The remarks] did not clarify the fact that Taiwan does not belong to China and disregarded the fact that the 23 million Taiwanese are under threat from the 1,400-odd missiles [deployed] by China. The result is regrettable," Tsai said in a statement.

Tsai's remarks came after the US and China issued a joint statement in which Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) underscored the importance of the Taiwan issue in US-China relations.

Beijing emphasized that the Taiwan issue concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It said it hoped the US would honor its commitments and appreciate and support the Chinese side's position on the matter.

The US said that it follows a "one China" policy and abides by the principles of the three US-China joint communiques. The US said it welcomes the peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait and looks forward to efforts by both sides to increase dialogue and interactions in economic, political and other fields, as well as develop more positive and stable cross-strait relations.

The two countries reiterated that the fundamental principle of respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity were at the core of the three US-China communiques that guide US-China relations. Neither side supports any attempts by any force to undermine this principle. The two sides also agreed that respecting each other's core interests was important to ensure steady progress in US-China relations.

While the statement did not mention the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), Obama mentioned it in his statement to a press conference.

Saying that Obama's mention of the TRA would help improve cross-strait relations and stability in the region, Tsai called on the US government to continue to provide Taiwan with the defensive weapons it needs to ensure its national security in accordance with the spirit of the TRA.

"Taiwan is a sovereign and independent country. This is an undeniable fact," Tsai said.

Tsai said the DPP was happy to see the US and China establish healthy and cooperative relations and make efforts to ensure prosperity and stability in the region, especially in terms of the economy and trade, climate change, energy, human rights and religious freedom.

"[The DPP] hopes that China's human rights record and position on religious freedom will improve and that China will renounce the use of force against Taiwan to bring real peace and

stability in the region,” she said.

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) yesterday downplayed the omission of the TRA in the written statement and praised Obama for mentioning it during his conference with Hu.

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) spokesman Lee Chien-jung (李顯榮) said that although the TRA was not mentioned in the joint statement, Obama brought it up “right in Hu’s face.”

“This was the first time a US president mentioned the TRA over the past six years,” Lee quoted Ma as saying. “As the US and Chinese mainland develop their relationship, we don’t want to be a stumbling block, nor do we worry the US will sell us out because the triangle relationship between the mainland, Taiwan and the US is at its optimum stage in the past 60 years.”

In fact, mutual trust between senior officials in Taipei and Washington has been “fully restored,” Lee quoted Ma as saying.

Ma made the remarks during the KMT’s weekly meeting, which he chairs as KMT chairman.

Lee said that Ma hinted during the meeting that the administration had “kept abreast of the US position” before the joint statement was made public.

Last night, the DPP said it would have to double check to determine whether a US president had mentioned the TRA since 2003, adding that Ma had nevertheless missed the point.

Ma should worry about the omission of the TRA in the joint statement rather than being satisfied with Obama’s verbal reference at the press conference.

The DPP urged the government to ask the US to clarify the omission because the US always mentions the three communiques and the TRA when it speaks about the Taiwan issue.

Meanwhile, former vice president Lien Chan (連戰) said yesterday that despite the absence of references to the TRA in the joint statement, he did not think Washington would harm cross-strait interests simply over a single visit by Obama to China.

Obama is in Beijing for a four-day state visit to China that started in Shanghai on Sunday night.

He did not mention the TRA during talks with Chinese youth in Shanghai on Monday, but mentioned it at his conference with Hu.

Saying the relationship between the US and China would become closer, Lien yesterday added that Washington had on many occasions emphasized that its “Republic of China [ROC] policy” would not change.

“Such a framework began in 1979 and is clearly stated in the TRA and the three

communiques signed with Beijing,” he said.

Lien made the remarks at Taipei Guest House yesterday morning after returning from the APEC forum in Singapore, where he served as Ma’s representative.

His comment came in response to a question by the Taipei Times on whether Taiwan’s interests would be compromised as Washington and Beijing develop a closer relationship.

Lien said that as US-China relations are complex and unique, many analysts suggested that Washington’s best strategy was to “weigh [things] interest by interest.”

“They have common interests, but also have different ones,” he said. “The question is how to make the selection.”

Lien said the Ma administration must make it clear that “the diplomatic interests of the ROC” are best served not as a troublemaker, but rather as a promoter of common interests that will no longer make recourse to “belligerent diplomacy” or “irresponsible and provocative acts.”

“What I say is not targeted at any particular party,” he said. “It is the national interest we are talking about.”

Since Ma took office in May last year, Lien said, Taiwan and China have inked nine agreements and reached one consensus, with the fourth round of high-level cross-strait talks scheduled to take place in Taichung next month.

“It would be wrong to continue seeing Taiwan as a troublemaker,” he said. “We all have peaceful development at heart and nothing will change that.”

On a cross-strait peace agreement, Lien said it would be a positive development to “establish a framework to protect peace” in the Taiwan Strait.

However, he conceded that the goal could not be attained overnight.

“It would be better if it materialized in decades,” he said.

While the administration has insisted on tackling economic issues before moving to political ones, Lien said that some matters are not purely economics, such as the country’s participation in the World Health Assembly as an observer this year and accession to the Government Procurement Agreement.

On the possibility of a meeting between Ma and Hu, Lien said the timing was not ripe.

At the Presidential Office yesterday, Ma praised Lien for his “excellent intelligence-gathering” before the APEC summit and expressed his surprise at Lien’s relationship with Obama.

Lien and Obama’s great uncle, Charles Payne, attended the University of Chicago together

DPP unhappy with Obama comments

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and have been good friends since.

Obama's first words to Lien when they met at the summit were: "I know you."

The exchange lasted for 10 minutes, in which Lien said both hoped to keep in touch.

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