

Pentagon commits to Taiwan security

Written by Taipei Times

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The US Department of Defense (DOD) on Friday said that it would continue to build a strong partnership with Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific as part of its efforts to maintain security in the area.

In its Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, the Pentagon said that at a time when China is escalating its pressure on Taiwan, the Taipei-Washington partnership has been critical to the region and the US would continue to ensure that Taiwan has sufficient capability to defend itself.

“The United States has a vital interest in upholding the rules-based international order, which includes a strong, prosperous and democratic Taiwan,” the report said.

“The United States is pursuing a strong partnership with Taiwan and will faithfully implement the Taiwan Relations Act [TRA], as part of a broader commitment to the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific,” the report said. “Our partnership is vital given China’s continued pressure campaign against Taiwan.”

The TRA, which provides the legal basis for unofficial relations between Taiwan and the US, was signed into law on April 10, 1979, by then-US president Jimmy Carter, several months after the US switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing.

The report said that Taiwan last year lost three diplomatic allies — the Dominican Republic, Burkina Faso and El Salvador — and that some international forums continued to deny participation to the nation’s representatives.

Beijing has never given up the use of military force to reach the goal of unification with Taiwan, the report said.

“The salience of defense engagements has increased, as the PLA [China’s People’s Liberation Army] continues to prepare for contingencies in the Taiwan Strait to deter, and if necessary, compel Taiwan to abandon moves toward independence,” the report said.

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“As part of a comprehensive campaign to pressure Taiwan, China has increased military exercises in the vicinity of Taiwan, including circumnavigation flights by the PLA Air Force and naval exercises in the East China Sea,” it said.

According to the Pentagon, the goal for the department is to ensure that Taiwan remains secure, confident and free from China’s coercion, and to enable Taipei to engage Beijing peacefully and productively on its own terms.

“The department is committed to providing Taiwan with defense articles and services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability,” the report said.

“DOD is continually engaged in evaluating Taiwan’s defense needs to assist Taiwan in identifying capabilities that are mobile, survivable and effective in resisting the use of force or other forms of coercion,” it added.

In the report, the Pentagon cited US Vice President Mike Pence as saying: “America will always believe that Taiwan’s embrace of democracy shows a better path for all the Chinese people.”

Separately yesterday, at the 18th Shangri-La Dialogue — the leading security forum in the Asia-Pacific region — the US said it would continue to meet its defense obligations to Taiwan.

Acting US Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan made the remark during the three-day dialogue held in Singapore that gathers defense ministers and high-ranking military officials from around the world.

Commenting on the US’ cooperation with countries in Asia, Shanahan said that Washington would continue to meet its obligations under the TRA to make defense articles and defense services available to Taiwan.

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“This support empowers the people of Taiwan to determine their own future,” he said.

The US maintains that any resolution of differences across the Taiwan Strait must occur in the absence of coercion and accord with the will of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, Shanahan added.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its appreciation for the US’ continued support.

As a responsible member of the Indo-Pacific region, Taiwan would continue to improve security cooperation with the US and other like-minded countries to contribute to regional peace, it said.

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