

Abrams tanks deal with US in pipeline: MND

Written by Taipei Times
Sunday, 07 July 2019 05:53 -

The Ministry of National Defense (MND) on Friday confirmed efforts to procure M1A2 Abrams tanks and other weapons from the US, and welcomed news that a sale might be announced soon.

“We welcome [the news] and hope to get the tanks as soon as possible,” ministry spokesman Major General Shih Shun-wen (許勝文) said in response to a report by the Liberty Times (sister paper of the Taipei Times) that a review of Taiwan’s purchase request is complete and that Washington is expected to announce approval of the deal soon.

The 108 Abrams tanks that the government wants to buy are meant to replace aging CM-11 Brave Tiger tanks and M60A3 Patton tanks that have served the military for 20 years, the ministry said, adding that the new tanks would be deployed in northern Taiwan.

Requests had been submitted to Washington for 108 M1A2 Abrams tanks, 1,240 BGM-71 anti-tank missiles, 409 FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank missiles and 250 FIM-92 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, the ministry said in a June 6 statement.

The Pentagon and the US Department of State have notified the US Congress of a potential US\$2 billion arms deal with Taiwan, Reuters reported on Wednesday, a sign that the sale is likely to go through, although a formal, public notification must still be made to Congress.

The US has sent personnel to Taiwan to train technicians to maintain and repair the M1A2 tanks, military sources said.

To obtain the larger ammunition employed by the new tanks more quickly, the ministry’s Armaments Bureau is considering producing the 120mm rounds, as it can already manufacture the 105mm ammunition needed for M110 self-propelled howitzers, the military sources said.

Since US President Donald Trump took office, Washington has approved three arms sales to Taiwan, a sign that the US firmly backs Taiwan’s national security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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spokesman Andrew Lee (李安德) said.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2019/07/07](#)