

US weapons deal progressing

Written by Taipei Times

Saturday, 17 August 2019 05:33 -



An F-16V jet lands on the runway in Changhua County during the 35th Han Kuang military exercises on May 28.

Photo: Sam Yeh / AFP

US President Donald Trump's administration is moving forward with a US\$8 billion arms sale to Taiwan of Lockheed Martin F-16 jets despite Beijing's protests, the Washington Post reported yesterday, citing an anonymous official and other sources familiar with the matter.

The US Department of State notified the US Congress late on Thursday that it would submit the deal to lawmakers for an informal review, the Post said, before calling the potential deal "the largest and most significant sale of weaponry" to Taiwan in years.

The decision came amid stalling trade talks and rising tensions between the US and China, the report said.

Lawmakers from the Democratic and Republican parties had raised concerns that Trump could scuttle the arms sale to assist ongoing trade negotiations with Beijing or use it as a bargaining chip, the report said.

In response, Air Force Command said on Facebook yesterday that the Republic of China Air Force would increase its number of tactical fighter wings from seven to eight after receiving the upgraded F-16C/D Block 70 aircraft.

Establishing a new tactical fighter wing is part of the air force's plan to grow the service, which

US weapons deal progressing

Written by Taipei Times

Saturday, 17 August 2019 05:33 -

would see the most significant increase in the strength of the air force in 20 years, the command said.

Should the project be implemented as planned, the air force would attain its goal of having volunteers comprise 90 percent of its personnel, it said.

The air force's fleet of third-generation fighter aircraft have reached the middle of their service life and urgently need to be replaced due to increasing military threats and future requirements, the command said.

The F-16C/D Block 70 aircraft, or F-16 jets that have been upgraded to the F-16V standard, would be equipped with advanced avionics, possess enhanced capabilities for firing beyond-visual-range missiles, and require short takeoff and landing distances, the command said.

Procuring upgraded F-16s would mean that pilots could be trained faster, as the aircraft would be similar to what they are used to and would provide logistics and maintenance benefits, it said.

The air force has been asking the US for upgraded jets since 2008 and has not received positive feedback until now, it said, adding that the proposed sale is in the process of deliberation, as per US laws and regulations.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2019/08/17](#)