

## Taiwan thanks Trump for jet deal

Written by Taipei Times

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F-16 jets fly during an air force open house event in Hualien on Sept. 23, 2017.

**Photo: EPA-EFE**

The government yesterday expressed its appreciation to US President Donald Trump for approving the sale of 66 F-16 jets to Taiwan amid increasing threats from Beijing.

Trump a day earlier said that he had approved the US\$8 billion deal and believes that Taiwan will use the jets responsibly, according to a transcript of a media interview provided by the White House.

“I mean, I’ve approved the deal,” Trump said as he boarded an airplane in New Jersey. “Got to be approved by the Senate, but I’ve approved the deal.”

“It’s US\$8 billion. It’s a lot of money. That’s a lot of jobs,” Trump said. “It’s a great aircraft. And we really believe — or we perhaps wouldn’t have done it — they’re going to use it very responsibly.”

Trump made the announcement after the Washington Post on Friday reported that the US Department of State on Thursday submitted the deal to the US Congress for an informal review.

The Ministry of National Defense in February made a request to purchase the jets from the US.

However, progress seemed to have stalled as the Trump administration did not inform US

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lawmakers of the proposed arms sale before Congress went into recess on July 26.

Trump's announcement came amid harsh rhetoric from Beijing, as well as increased military drills and encirclement flights around Taiwan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs "welcomes and expresses appreciation for Trump's approval for the sale of new-generation F-16V fighters" to Taiwan, ministry spokeswoman Joanne Ou (歐安) said in a statement.

She thanked the Trump administration for adhering to the US' Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) and fulfilling its commitments in accordance with the "six assurances" as the two nations mark the 40th anniversary of the TRA.

The defense ministry said in a statement that it hopes Congress will approve the deal as soon as possible to benefit peace and security across the Taiwan Strait and the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

It would maintain close contact with the US about the deal, it added.

The air force on Saturday described the F-16V as a new version of F-16 A/B jets, which comprise the bulk of Taiwan's fighter fleet.

The F-16V has greater thrust, a longer range, a more streamlined frame, and more advanced radar and attack systems, the air force said.

US Senator Marco Rubio commended the Trump administration for moving forward with the sale to bolster Taiwan's defense capabilities.

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“As the Chinese government and [Chinese] Communist Party seeks to extend its authoritarian reach in the region, it is critical that the United States continues to enhance our strategic relationship with our democratic partner Taiwan through regular and consistent support,” Rubio said in a statement.

US Senator Jim Inhofe, chairman of the US Senate Committee on Armed Services, and US Senator John Cornyn also praised the deal.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2019/08/20](#)