

## US readying arms sale: magazine

Written by Taipei Times

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Foreign Policy magazine says that US President Barack Obama “is getting ready” to announce an arms sales package to Taiwan that will include Black Hawk helicopters and Patriot missile batteries.

“Taiwanese sources now say they expect the decision shortly after Obama returns from the climate-change conference,” the magazine said.

Obama will be at the Copenhagen conference on Friday and Washington sources said the arms package for Taiwan was likely to be announced during the final week of the year.

But this could not be confirmed, and internal White House politics could always result in a delay.

Most significantly, the magazine says, the package will not include advanced F-16 fighters or design plans for diesel submarines.

White House experts believe that China will react negatively to the announcement and may even break off the recently reestablished military-to-military contacts with the US as a way of showing its displeasure.

In private conversations last month — before Obama’s trip to China — administration sources told the Taipei Times not to expect the new arms package before next month or February.

Other sources now say that the announcement has been moved forward at least in part to answer US domestic critics who have complained loudly that Obama failed to stand up to Beijing and that he spent most of his Asia visit kowtowing to the Chinese leadership.

The arms package for Taiwan, these sources say, is designed to demonstrate that Obama’s Asian policies are not dominated by a desire to please the Chinese.

“The Obama administration is getting ready to announce a package of arms sales to Taiwan that could complicate delicate relations between Washington and Beijing,” the magazine said this weekend.

Foreign Policy says it has been told by “Taiwanese government sources” that the arms package will include most of the items the US and Taiwan agreed upon previously, but not F-16s or submarines.

National Security Council Deputy Secretary-General Ho Szu-yin (何蘇銀) was in Washington recently to discuss details of the package.

Earlier this year, Taipei wanted to submit a formal letter specifically requesting advanced F-16

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fighters, but sources say the Obama administration strongly discouraged this move so that they would not have to turn it down.

Abe Denmark, Asia expert at the Center for a New American Security, is quoted by the magazine as saying: "Given the broad agenda that Presidents Obama and [Chinese President] Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) laid out in Beijing last month, I expect China to register their complaints, register their disapproval and then move on."

The White House will send an official notification to Congress detailing what arms it plans to sell Taipei under the Taiwan Relations Act.

At that point, only Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, a Democrat, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, also a Democrat, have the right to object and ask for changes.

"But that is seen as very unlikely," Foreign Policy said.

Black Hawk helicopters and Patriot missile batteries are expected to be in the package.

"Over the years, US arms sales to Taiwan have become a political football, more symbolic than strategic considering the towering and growing imbalance of power across the Taiwan Strait," Foreign Policy says.

"China continues to build up its missile inventory opposite Taiwan, which is now estimated to top 1,300 missiles capable of hitting Taiwan," the magazine says.

"When the sale is announced, pundits on both sides of the Pacific will be sure to praise or decry the move as Obama either bravely standing by Taiwan or dangerously thumbing his nose at the Chinese. But following the harsh criticism of his trip to Beijing, criticism the White House feels was unfair and unsupported, the White House is looking for a new storyline," the magazine says.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/12/14](#)