

## Non-conventional defenses needed

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
Friday, 18 September 2020 04:33

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The US is reportedly preparing to sell Taiwan seven new major weapons systems, including sophisticated aerial drones, land-based anti-ship missiles, anti-tank missiles and smart mines, Reuters said on Wednesday.

The planned sales are part of the Pentagon's "Fortress Taiwan" strategy to assist the nation in building up asymmetric warfare capabilities and turning it into a "porcupine" capable of deterring a Chinese attack.

The prospect of the sale of high-quality weapons is welcome news, but the government must ensure to not inadvertently leave a "back door" open for China by neglecting non-conventional warfare, in particular cyberwarfare and espionage.

In 2010, the 500-kilobyte computer worm Stuxnet infiltrated the systems of Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment plant, which supplies Tehran's nuclear weapons program. It disrupted controlling mechanisms of the facility's centrifuges, and caused the equipment to spin out of control and self-destruct. Believed to have been developed by US and Israeli intelligence agencies, Stuxnet was the first known computer virus capable of crippling critical hardware.

It has been a decade since the Stuxnet Pandora's box was opened, and China has certainly been developing its own version of the worm as well as other offensive cybercapabilities.

Taiwanese security officials must work on the assumption that China has the means and the intent to carry out similar attacks on Taiwan's infrastructure, including power stations and telecommunications infrastructure, that would be priority targets during wartime.

Drones and missiles would be useless in defending against such attacks. The government must ensure that it has adequate means to protect critical infrastructure.

While a lot of attention is paid to hardware, the espionage threat China poses to Taiwan, which in a wartime scenario could include acts of sabotage, defections by high-ranking military

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officers and misinformation campaigns designed to destroy morale, is just as crucial.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is an institution steeped in the history of covert operations. Right from the party's inception within Shanghai's foreign concessions in the early 1920s, the CCP was outlawed and forced to operate in the shadows.

Under instructions from the Soviet-run Comintern, the CCP in 1923 entered into an alliance with the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), enabling its members to thoroughly infiltrate the KMT.

The communists covertly inserted their members into the Whampoa Military Academy — a tactic that paid high dividends during the Chinese Civil War. The communists by then had a network of spies burrowed deep inside the upper echelons of the KMT military, who either defected, bringing with them entire divisions, or remained undercover, feeding the CCP notice of the KMT military's plans.

The CCP has had decades following the KMT's retreat to Taiwan to infiltrate Taiwan's military and government institutions, greatly aided by shared linguistic, cultural and family ties.

Ever since then-president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) began pursuing closer ties with China, espionage cases involving members of the military, active duty and retired, have become all too common. Retired officers have openly fraternized with the enemy and attended Chinese military parades.

Three former legislative aides were last month indicted on suspicion of running a spy network for China. The threat of espionage from China to the military and to government continues to be real and formidable.

The acquisition of new military hardware is vital, but if counterespionage and cyberdefense are not given equal priority, the government runs the risk of letting China in through the back door.

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials2020/0918](#)