

Make Taiwan a tough nut to crack

Written by Taipei Times Editorials
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Robert Tsao (曹興誠), founder of major chipmaker United Microelectronics Corp, has unveiled plans to donate NT\$3 billion (US\$97.1 million) in a bid to boost Taiwan's defense capabilities in the event of a Chinese invasion.

As part of his efforts to help Taiwanese civilians prepare for war, the semiconductor magnate would be donating NT\$600 million to the private Kuma Academy to help train 3 million "black bear warriors" in the next three years, while another NT\$400 million would be used to train 300,000 "marksmen" with shooting skills. After passing tests, these civilians would work alongside the military and provide support during wartime.

Kuma Academy's basic training course is divided into four modules: cognitive warfare, introduction to modern warfare, wartime first aid and evacuation drills.

The courses have been fully booked for this month and next month. One of the academy's cofounders, Puma Shen (陳柏豪), said the training would teach the public what to expect and how to assist with various tasks — such as stopping blood flow or identifying the "fifth columns" — if war broke out.

However, Sun Yat-sen School president and pro-unification supporter Chang Ya-chung (張亞中) said that once the sum had been divided, the training fees for warriors and sharpshooters would only be NT\$200 and NT\$1,333, calling for Tsao to increase his donation.

Despite negative comments from the pan-blue camp, Tsao's actions show that he understands the crux of the problem: Taiwan has always suffered from internal division. With pro-China figures constantly undermining Taiwan's solidarity — such as spreading ideas of defeatism and appeasement — combined with China's cognitive warfare campaign, Taiwan has always been vulnerable to false information and infiltration.

However, Taiwan has learned from Russia's invasion of Ukraine the invaluable lesson of staunch resistance and perseverance that has saved Ukraine from annihilation. From their steadfast leader to the valorous actions of civilians, Ukrainian solidarity has won them admiration and support from different nations.

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Taiwan needs to realize that national defense is not just the job of the national army. Tsao is using his donation to arouse patriotism in civilians and realize civil defense education. As with Ukraine, it is necessary for civilians to learn to use guns, acquire military knowledge, strengthen civil defense and make psychological preparations.

For the training of the “sharpshooters,” Taiwan would need to take a page out of the US military’s book and introduce modular shooting ranges in cities for civilians to regularly practice shooting. For the “black bear warriors,” the academy would be training civilians to manage facilities, identify false information and provide medical treatments. It would enable civilians to know their roles during wartime.

However, Taiwan should exercise caution to ensure that the trained civilians do not become a source of internal discord, or transform into civil armed groups. Another point of focus should be the coordination of civilian-centered programs with the conscription programs drawn up by the Ministry of National Defense.

Taiwan needs to ensure that demand for the courses would continue, as a strong defense can only be realized with the effort and dedication of a majority.

Even if Taiwan became the world’s most impregnable “porcupine” island fortress, it would still be vulnerable without strong-willed civilians rallying behind it. Taiwan must show China that it is a tough nut to crack with its all-out defense.

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