

No change in policy on arms sales: US

Written by Taipei Times

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The US and China completed a series of top-level talks on arms sales to Taiwan, with Washington refusing to give Beijing any assurances that the sales would be stopped or curtailed, a US official said on Thursday.

“The US responded to PRC [People’s Republic of China] concerns over Taiwan by reiterating that it has followed a consistent approach,” State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said.

Deputy Secretary of State Jim Steinberg and Senior Director for Asian Affairs Jeff Bader conducted the talks this week in Beijing. They are now in Tokyo meeting senior Japanese government officials.

In Beijing they met Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi (楊潔希) and State Councilor Dai Bingguo (戴秉國), among others.

A source with close ties to the US State Department told the Taipei Times that while other issues were also discussed, Chinese officials appeared to place the most importance on arms sales to Taiwan.

They raised the possibility of US President Barack Obama selling F-16C/D fighters to Taiwan and indicated that if such a sale were to be approved their objections would be greater than those that followed the recent agreement to sell Taiwan a US\$6.4 billion arms package including Black Hawk helicopters, communications equipment and 114 Patriot missiles.

“The US and PRC agreed on the high importance each attaches to the relationships and their commitment to building a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship. The two sides engaged in an in-depth exchange of views on issues of mutual concern and they look forward to working together constructively to address these issues,” Crowley said.

Steinberg and Bader said the Obama administration was continuing with a “one China” policy, adherence to the Three Joint Communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act, and “expectations of a peaceful resolution of the differences across the strait.”

“Steinberg and Bader indicated the willingness to try to work together with China to bridge differences and deepen cooperation on areas of common interest,” Crowley said.

The source with ties to the State Department told the Taipei Times that no commitment was given “not to sell the F-16s.”

Shortly before the three-day Steinberg and Bader visit, the New York Times reported that Huang Xueping (黃學平), a spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense in Beijing, had warned the US to “speak and act cautiously” if it wanted to avoid further damage to bilateral ties.

As a result of the US\$6.4 billion arms sales package, China has canceled at least three

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high-level exchanges — a visit to the US by its chief of general staff, a visit to the US by one of its top regional commanders and a planned visit to China by the commander of the US Pacific Command.

The US hopes that Chinese President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) will visit Washington next month to attend a global nuclear security summit.

Sources in Washington have said a Pentagon report on China's military power and strategy and a US Treasury report on exchange rate policies have been delayed until after the proposed visit to avoid upsetting Beijing.

Taipei's long-time request for 66 F-16C/Ds is still under consideration by the Obama administration, but there is unlikely to be any development for months despite efforts by Republicans in Congress and others to pressure the White House to go ahead with the sale.

Still, this pressure is gradually building — sometimes from unexpected corners.

Earlier this year, the Republican National Committee passed a resolution calling on Obama to “restore strict limits on the transfer of missile and space technology to China.”

“The American people have good reason to be concerned about the demonstrated hostile actions and intentions of China directed toward the United States, Taiwan and the rest of the world,” the resolution said.

This week Aumua Amata, a probable Republican candidate from American Samoa in this year's Congressional elections, said she hoped the resolution “will put further pressure on the Obama administration to expeditiously sell the F-16s to Taiwan.”

“A strong, well-defended Taiwan is in America's and American Samoa's best interest,” Amata said in the statement.

Source: [Taipei Times 2010/03/06](#)