

Kerry vows to look at A-bian case

Written by Taipei Times
Friday, 19 April 2013 07:56 -

US Secretary of State John Kerry promised a member of the US Congress on Wednesday that he would look into the imprisonment of former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), who is in failing health.

Kerry also agreed to investigate the status of Taiwan's request to buy eight diesel-electric submarines from the US.

The remarks came as members of the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee questioned Kerry during a special hearing on next year's foreign affairs budget and on securing US interests abroad.

Republican Representative Steve Chabot, co-founder of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus, first asked Kerry about the submarines.

"I'd like to talk about Taiwan just for a minute," he said.

"Back in 2001, there was the announcement by [then-US] president [George W.] Bush at the time of Washington's willingness to cooperate with Taiwan in acquiring eight diesel-electric submarines at the cost of US\$12 billion," Chabot said.

"The official position of Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense remains committed to procuring those submarines from the US," he said.

Chabot said the sale has been stalled because the US stopped making diesel-electric submarines many years ago.

"I know we've worked with France and some of our allies on this," he said. "Could you advise what the current status of these submarines being acquired by Taiwan is?"

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Turning to the issue of Chen's health, he said that Chen "languishes to this day in a jail cell in Taiwan."

"To me, it smacks of the criminalization of politics. To the extent that this administration communicates with President Ma [Ying-jeou (馬英九)], I would just urge you to urge President Ma to do the humanitarian thing. President Chen's health is failing," he said.

Kerry replied: "Well, thank you, congressman. I appreciate it."

"I'll take that and just follow up on it, and let me see what we can do about that," he added.

A US Department of State source said later that Kerry would "most probably" provide Chabot with written comments on both issues within the next month.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2013/04/19](#)