

Tsai has 'very successful' US meetings

Written by Taipei Times

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Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen, center, talks to reporters as she leaves the DPP's office in Washington on Tuesday.

Photo: CNA

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) on Tuesday held a series of "very successful, very positive" closed-door meetings with top Washington officials and politicians.

She held discussions with US Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain and the committee's ranking Democratic member, Jack Reed. Republican Senator Dan Sullivan was also present.

For reasons of diplomatic protocol, DPP Secretary-General Joseph Wu (吳敦義) later said that he could not reveal the names of US government officials that Tsai would meet or details of the discussions.

However, Washington sources said that she was expected to spend time with US National Security Adviser Susan Rice, US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Danny Russel and US Trade Representative Michael Froman.

Tsai is in the US capital this week to brief members of US President Barack Obama's

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administration, Capitol Hill politicians and think tank members about her policies and plans should she win next year's presidential election.

At a media briefing held late on Tuesday, Wu said that while many people have characterized the visit as a "test" or "interview" for Tsai, that is not correct.

He said she is in Washington to "harvest the fruits" of the work undertaken over the past two years by members of the DPP mission to the US.

The three-person mission has been operating on a tight budget with funds raised by Taiwanese-Americans, but has been doing "a superb" job, he said.

As a result, the treatment that Tsai and her DPP delegation had received was much improved, he added.

"Everything has been easier and more positive than in the past," the secretary-general said.

Wu said there were no particular issues that needed to be clarified during the visit and that Tsai would focus on discussions about "how to make Taiwan stronger."

He said that she wanted to strengthen the nation's trade relationships in a way that would create momentum in the domestic economy.

During Tsai's meeting with the three senators, concern was expressed about Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea and its security implications.

Wu said that under a DPP administration, the South China Sea policy would be to adhere to international law and address disputes through international legal channels.

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"We will safeguard our sovereignty and what is rightfully ours," he said.

While in the US, Wu said that Tsai and members of her delegation would not discuss domestic politics or the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT).

"We do not criticize our government while abroad," he said.

Wu said there was concern in the US about Taiwan preserving its economic autonomy and freedom of action in the economic realm. A major target is to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, he said.

Wu said that Taiwan needed to improve its economic institutions to make sure it would be able to participate in the TPP.

"The regulatory structures that exist in Taiwan right now are not conducive to attracting foreign investment," he said. "Government bureaucracies are very slow and very inefficient, so it makes foreign capital less interested in investing in Taiwan."

At a US Department of State briefing this week, US Senior Advisor for Strategic Communications Marie Harf said that Tsai's visit was welcome and that "we look forward to a productive exchange."

Asked if the administration was concerned about a possible negative reaction from Beijing, Harf said: "We have an interest in a comprehensive, durable and mutually beneficial partnership with Taiwan."

Harf said that was fully consistent with the "one China" policy based on the Three Joint Communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act.

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"You can support Taiwan's security and freedom from coercion, you can promote Taiwan's economic prosperity and help people in Taiwan enjoy the respect they deserve in the international community, while supporting at the same time our policy, that has not changed," Harf said.

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