

## US opposes Chinese coercion

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US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday said that Washington wanted to make sure that Taiwan could not be coerced by China to do things “against the will of its people.”

Blinken said that he had very good talks with president-elect Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) at the US Department of State last summer and that “we have strongly encouraged the Chinese to engage with her and to engage with Taiwan.”

He was testifying on the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee in a hearing, titled “America as a Pacific Power: Challenges and Opportunities in Asia.”

US Representative Steve Chabot said that China would very likely “act up and try to throw its weight around” with Tsai’s inauguration on May 20 and the Democratic Progressive Party’s coming to power.

He said that China was a “classic bully” and that Beijing would want to show its displeasure.

“Taiwan is a very important US ally,” Chabot said.

He said that China has 1,600 missiles pointed at Taiwan and that Beijing is also building and militarizing islands, “to the great dismay” of its neighbors.

“And this is all occurring at a time when this administration, unfortunately, is trying to reduce the size of our military, including our navy, which I think is a terrible idea,” Chabot said.

He said the US should ensure that Taiwan has a sufficient, modernized military and that it is able to keep China from acting out.

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"I think the only time China ever acts is when they think Taiwan is weak and when they think that the US lacks the resolve to defend Taiwan," Chabot said.

"What would you say, on behalf of the administration, to reassure Taiwan that the US will have its back?" Chabot asked Blinken.

"First of all, Taiwan has given the world a very vivid illustration of what a democratic election is and of what a democratic transition is," Blinken said. "That was a very powerful message."

Blinken said that he "very much agreed" that what gave Taiwan the confidence to engage with China was support from the US, including arms sales.

"We want to make sure that Taiwan cannot be coerced into doing things against the will of its people," Blinken said. "I think we notified something like US\$14 billion in arms sales since 2010. We continue to look very actively at that."

Blinken said the US Navy has about 60 percent of its ships in the Asia-Pacific region.

"We take very seriously that Taiwan must feel confident if it is to engage from a position of strength with the mainland," he said.

Blinken said the White House also wanted to make sure that Taiwan and the talents of its people were able to be employed around the world against global challenges.

"Part of that is to make sure that Taiwan can be represented in international organizations and we have been working very hard on that," he said.

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Blinken said that the administration has been working “across the board” to strengthen US ties with Taiwan and “support its efforts.”

In the hearing’s opening, Blinken said the administration continued to call on both sides of the Strait to communicate with dignity and respect.

“We look forward to working with Taiwan’s first female president and leaders from all parties to further strengthen our relationship,” he said.

Blinken said the US had enhanced its military standing in the Asia-Pacific region, deploying some of the most advanced military equipment there.

“They include F-22 and F-35 stealth fighter jets, P-8 Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft, continuous deployments of B-2 and B-52 strategic bombers and also our newest surface warfare ships, like the amphibious assault ship USS America, and all three of our newest class of stealth destroyers, which will be homeported with the Pacific fleet,” he said.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2016/04/30](#)