

## US plans to sell Taiwan arms: reports

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US President Donald Trump's administration is expected to announce new arms sales to Taiwan after his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) scheduled for early next month in Florida, US media have reported.

An article published on Tuesday on the Washington Free Beacon Web site said that the Trump administration "is now preparing to provide more and better defensive arms to Taiwan," citing administration officials familiar with internal discussion about the issue.

"The new arms package, however, is not expected to be made public until after Trump meets with Chinese leader Xi Jinping next month," it said.

It also quoted White House officials as saying that the meeting is set for early next month at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort.

Former US president Barack Obama's administration blocked a US\$1 billion arms sale to Taiwan in December last year that had been approved by the US Department of State and the Pentagon, the article said.

That coincided with a controversial telephone call on Dec. 2 last year between then-US president-elect Trump and President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文).

Asked about the possibility of new arms sales to Taiwan, Pentagon spokesman Gary Ross said he would not discuss "pre-decisional matters," the Beacon reported.

US arms sales have contributed to stability in the Taiwan Strait by providing Taipei with the confidence needed to pursue constructive interaction with Beijing, Ross added.

Meanwhile, the New York Times also reported on Tuesday that the Trump administration is

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expected to “sell Taiwan a robust package of weapons, a gesture that reliably infuriates China.”

The sale would revive memories of Trump’s “unorthodox decision” to take a telephone call from Tsai, before publicly questioning the US’ “one China” policy, it said.

The reports came ahead of US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s first trip to Asia as the nation’s top diplomat.

Tillerson is due to visit Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing later this week.

Taiwan is expected to be a major topic of discussion at both the summit between Trump and Xi, as well as Tillerson’s visit to Beijing, the Beacon said.

The Presidential Office in Taipei yesterday said it had “no comment” about the reports.

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Lu Yu-ling (呂玉玲) told the Chinese-language Apple Daily that while she welcomes arms sales to Taiwan, Taipei should nevertheless have the autonomy to choose what to purchase rather than accepting wholesale what the US has to offer.

Taiwan has the capability to manufacture on its own some of the arms that Washington has sold it in the past, Lu said.

Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Huang Wei-cher (黃偉哲) said it is key that Taipei has a clear idea about what arms it needs and what the US can offer.

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