

China threatened US Congress: report

Written by Taipei Times

Saturday, 14 October 2017 04:19 - Last Updated Monday, 30 October 2017 17:46



Chinese Ambassador to the US Cui Tiankai speaks at the Bloomberg Global Business Forum in New York on Sept. 20.

Photo: Bloomberg

Prior to the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs' passage of a bill that would relax restrictions on mutual visits of high-level officials from Taipei and Washington, China allegedly sent a letter to the US Congress warning against "crossing a red line," according to the Washington Post.

In a hearing in Washington on Thursday, the committee unanimously passed the Taiwan travel act bill, which seeks to encourage visits between Taiwan and the US at all levels at a time when bilateral ties "have suffered from insufficient high-level communication due to the self-imposed restrictions that the US maintains on high-level visits with Taiwan" since the 1979 enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act.

Although Chinese pressure about Taiwan has become commonplace, Josh Rogin of the Washington Post said the article published earlier on Thursday that a threat-laden letter sent by Chinese Ambassador to the US Cui Tiankai (崔天凯) to leaders of the US House's and Senate's foreign relations and armed services committees in August was considered "unusual and out of line."

Rogin, who claimed to have obtained a copy of the letter, said Cui expressed "grave concern" about the Taiwan travel act bill, as well as other proposed laws or provisions considered friendly toward Taipei, such as the Taiwan security enhancement act bill — which aims to enhance the security of Taiwan and bolster its participation in the international community.

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The Chinese ambassador said the bills represented “provocations against China’s sovereignty, national unity and security interests” and “have crossed the red line on the stability of the China-US relationship,” Rogin wrote, citing the letter.

Cui urged the leaders of the committees to use their power to block the bills, Rogin added.

He said Cui’s letter has met with criticism, quoting US Representative Eliot Engel, a ranking member of the foreign affairs committee, as saying that “the letter stood out because of its threatening tone” and that “it is interesting to me that they [China] now feel that they can get away with these kind of threats and vague pressure tactics with the US Congress.”

An anonymous Senate aide told Rogin that such threats and imposition of red lines on US domestic legislative action “is neither helpful nor constructive to build the sort of relationship needed between the US and China.”

When asked to comment on the matter yesterday, the Mainland Affairs Council thanked the US Congress for valuing Taiwan-US interaction.

The ministry expressed the hope that Washington would continue to adhere to the Taiwan Relations Act and the “six assurances” issued by then-US president Ronald Reagan in 1982, support Taiwan’s promotion of policies aimed at ensuring cross-strait peace and stability, and strengthen bilateral Taiwan-US ties.

“These measures could help China adopt a practical and rational attitude, and respect Taiwan’s dignity and interests,” the council said, adding that Taiwan is a sovereign state that is entitled to develop relationships with other nations.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2017/10/14](#)