

## Taiwan should change military thinking: US official

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Taiwan should change its military thinking and figure out how to make sure it has the ability to safeguard continued peace and stability both across the Taiwan Strait and within the Indo-Pacific region, a US official said on Tuesday.

David Helvey, the principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, made the remarks at the US-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference in Annapolis, Maryland.

According to a transcript of the speech provided by the Ministry of National Defense, Helvey said that in strengthening its armed forces, Taiwan is developing sufficient conventional capabilities to meet the peacetime needs of a military in a rough neighborhood.

However, he warned that Taiwan could not “afford to overlook preparing for the one fight it cannot afford to lose.”

In the face of China’s growing military threat, Taiwan should respond by improving its national defense, which means innovation, smart investments and leveraging asymmetries to its advantage, he said.

To achieve that, the features should be incorporated into Taiwan’s need for a credible, resilient and cost-effective deterrent, Helvey said.

To be credible, Taiwan’s “acquisitions, training and doctrine” need to “address the vulnerabilities of a potential adversary that spends more and fields faster,” he added.

Resilience means that Taiwan’s forces and systems are maneuverable and can operate autonomously while facing cyber, electronic, missile and air attacks, Helvey said.

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Being cost-effective means retaining conventional capabilities, but focusing on “research, development, procurement, and maintenance on affordable and scalable asymmetric capabilities that are integrated into a multidomain defense,” Helvey added.

“If Taiwan’s military makes these changes to its force structure, it is equally important that Taiwan continue to make progress on how it trains and organizes its forces,” he said.

“The [US] Department of Defense has been helping Taiwan to think through how to increase joint capabilities while operating in a decentralized environment,” which would enable Taiwan to deploy mobile systems without central command and control, Helvey said.

Given the capabilities the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) could bring to bear in a blockade or outright amphibious invasion, including information control, Taiwan’s progress is key, he added.

Achieving that goal would require developing and empowering junior officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs), Helvey said, adding: “Leaders at senior levels must trust that their junior leaders — officers and NCOs — are capable of performing their mission.”

The changes in thinking, procurement, planning and training are needed because of the magnitude of China’s threat, he said.

“Taiwan cannot count on Beijing’s forbearance for its security,” Helvey said, adding that there is no indication that China is preparing to renounce the use of force to bring Taiwan into its fold, now or in the future.

The US Department of Defense’s National Defense Strategy has highlighted this concern, as China leverages military modernization, influences operations and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to its advantage, he said.

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