

MND to purchase US missile system

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Deputy Minister of National Defense Chang Che-ping speaks at a meeting of the legislature's Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: CNA

The Ministry of National Defense (MND) yesterday confirmed media reports that it plans to purchase coastal defense cruise missile (CDCM) systems from the US, saying that they could be delivered by 2023, should Washington agree to sell.

At a meeting of the Legislative Yuan's Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Tsai Shih-ying (蔡希英) asked the ministry to respond to rumors about plans to purchase CDCMs, a truck-mounted system of Harpoon anti-ship missiles made by Boeing Defense, Space & Security for mobile coastal defense.

Deputy Minister of National Defense Chang Che-ping (張哲平) said that the ministry and the Chungshan Institute of Science and Technology (CSIST) had reviewed national missile production capabilities through 2025.

The review found that the nation is incapable of fielding sufficient missiles to annihilate 50 percent of enemy forces on Taiwanese shores in the event of a Chinese invasion, Chang said.

Taiwan has operated indigenous Hsiung Feng II subsonic anti-ship missile systems since 1988 and its supersonic variant, the Hsiung Feng III, since 2007.

After Tsai asked about annual production of the locally made missile systems, Chang said that he would have to verify the numbers.

Harpoon missiles are similar to the Taiwanese weapons, although the Hsiung Feng II has

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greater range and a faster cruising speed, CSIST president Art Chang (蔡國昌) said, adding that the truck-borne Harpoons allow for comparatively greater mobility than the Hsiung Feng II, which needs to be towed.

Meanwhile, Chang Che-ping said that the ministry was not aware of Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu's (吳敦義) comments about potential Chinese People's Liberation Army actions against Taiwan.

In a video interview with Fox News anchor Martha MacCallum on Tuesday, Wu said that Taiwan and the global community are watching Beijing's actions in Hong Kong closely.

Asked if it were possible that China might deploy its military against Taiwan or in Hong Kong, Wu said that the Chinese government is trying to fully take over the administration in Hong Kong.

There is "also concern that China might take some military action against Taiwan," he said. "That's what I said all along: When the Chinese government is facing crisis domestically, the best way for it is to find a scapegoat outside, and Taiwan can be a very easy scapegoat for China."

Some reports mistakenly reported Wu as saying that China's next step would be to take Taiwan by force, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Joanne Ou (歐陽瑜) said yesterday.

Chang Che-ping told the committee that the military had contingency plans in place and was closely monitoring the Taiwan Strait, but it would not "make a blind move" based on a single comment.

Military readiness levels remain normal and adjustments would depend on developments in Hong Kong, which the military is closely monitoring, he said.

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The MND has contingency plans in place for any Chinese invasion scenario, he said.

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