

US senator seeks Taiwan Defense Act

Written by Taipei Times

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US Senator Josh Hawley speaks at a US Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on May 12.

Photo: Reuters

US Senator Josh Hawley on Thursday introduced a draft Taiwan Defense Act, which would require the Pentagon to maintain the capability to defeat a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, while continuing to fulfill its obligations under the US' Taiwan Relations Act (TRA).

“Yesterday, I introduced new legislation to stop #China imperialism and to defend our vital interests, and our partner #Taiwan,” the Republican senator wrote on Twitter on Thursday.

The proposed act would ensure that the US is capable of continuing to fulfill its obligations under the TRA in the face of the Chinese Communist Party's aggressive military buildup, he said in a news release posted on his official Web site.

The bill would also require the US Department of Defense to maintain the capability to defeat a Chinese offensive — and especially a Chinese fait accompli — against Taiwan and to report regularly on its progress toward this goal, he added.

The term fait accompli refers to Beijing seizing control of Taiwan by military force before the US Armed Forces can respond and keeping the US from mounting a counterattack by making it seem prohibitively difficult or costly.

Taiwan is the linchpin of a free and open Indo-Pacific, he said in the news release.

“If the Chinese Communist Party is allowed to seize control of Taiwan, it will stand ready to dominate the region,” he said. “This would pose an unacceptable threat to the lives and livelihoods not just of our Asian allies and partners, but of working Americans here at home.

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We must not allow that to happen.”

In a news release yesterday, the Ministry of National Defense said that a Chinese Shaanxi Y-8 military transport plane was detected yesterday morning by Republic of China Air Force reconnaissance aircraft in Taiwan’s southwest airspace, but that it left after being asked in a radio broadcast to leave.

It continues to monitor Taiwan’s surrounding waters and airspace, the ministry said, adding that everything is currently normal.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Joanne Ou (歐陽) yesterday thanked US lawmakers for taking action to support Taiwan-US military and security cooperation.

The ministry would monitor the development of Hawley’s bill, while maintaining close contact with friends in the US Congress and administration in a bid to further deepen partnerships in various areas, she said.

In related news, the US Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday approved the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2021 (FY21 NDAA) in a 25-2 vote, pending review by the full senate.

The bill, with a budget of US\$740.5 billion, establishes the Pacific Deterrence Initiative and reaffirms commitment to the TRA.

“The FY21 NDAA accelerates innovation, so we can compete effectively, and regain our comparative advantage over China and Russia,” an executive summary of the bill released by the committee says.

The bill supports the Pentagon’s security cooperation efforts to strengthen the capabilities of international partners, and expresses commitment to the TRA and deepened bilateral ties, the

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summary says.

The US Secretary of Defense would need to consider 5G and 6G security risks posed by Chinese vendors such as Huawei Technologies Co () and ZTE Corp () when making decisions about overseas bases, it says.

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