

Taipei thanks US for missile package

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A Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) surface-to-air missile system is deployed next to the Changhua Reserve Runway on the Sun Yat-sen Freeway (Freeway No. 1) on May 28 last year for the annual Han Kuang military exercise.

Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times

The government yesterday thanked the US for approving the possible sale of a US\$620 million missile repair and recertification package to Taiwan.

The US Department of State has approved the sale of a package to recertify Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missiles to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Washington for an estimated US\$620 million, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a news release on Thursday.

The agency has delivered the required certification to the US Congress, notifying it of the possible sale, it added.

The TECRO had requested to buy an upgrade package that would support an operational life of 30 years for its PAC-3 missiles, including air transportation services for missile processing, ground support equipment, and US government and contractor technical and logistical support, it said.

The proposed sale is in line with US law and policy, and serves its “national, economic and security interests by supporting the recipient’s continuing efforts to modernize its armed forces and to maintain a credible defensive capability,” it said.

“The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region,” the agency said.

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Lockheed Martin would be the primary contractor, it added.

The proposed sale, which is expected to take effect in one month, would be the seventh arms sale to Taiwan by US President Donald Trump's administration, the Ministry of National Defense said in a statement yesterday.

The US, in line with its Taiwan Relations Act and "six assurances," continues to provide Taiwan with defensive weapons, and the missile refurbishment package would boost Taiwan's self-defense capabilities, it said, thanking the US for the decision.

As President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) mentioned in her second inaugural speech, Taiwan has over the past four years worked to reform its national defense sector, as well as participate on the global stage, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

These efforts — which are to continue over the next four years — seek to maintain cross-strait peace and stability, and to allow Taiwan to become more involved in fostering peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, it said, adding that bilateral security partnerships would only deepen.

"Taiwan will continue to increase investment, and research and development in the defense sector in a bid to add to long-term peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region," Presidential Office spokesman Alex Huang (黃珊珊) said.

The nation's oldest PAC-3 ground systems and missiles, which were purchased from the US nearly 10 years ago, need maintenance, Taiwan Security Analysis Center director Mei Fu-hsing (梅福興) wrote on Facebook yesterday.

The refurbishment would cover 444 PAC-3 systems and missiles bought over the years, Mei said.

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Just like the previous arms package sale announced on May 20, the new proposal shows a normalization of arms sales between the US and Taiwan, he added.

Taiwan, like any other country, can tender arms purchase proposals to the US at any time, and the US reviews them upon request, as per legal procedure, instead of holding the proposals and then “clearing the warehouse” all at once, he said.

That was one of the Taiwan-friendly policies instituted by Randall Schriver during his tenure as US assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs, Mei added.

Additional reporting by CNA

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