

## US advances three weapons sales: sources

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Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Zhao Lijian speaks at a news conference in Beijing in an undated photograph.

**Photo: AFP**

The White House is moving forward with three sales of advanced weaponry to Taiwan, sending in recent days a notification of the deals to the US Congress for approval, five sources familiar with the situation said on Monday.

Asked about the report, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington said it had no comment.

The news broke last month that as many as seven major weapons systems were making their way through the US export process, as US President Donald Trump's administration increases pressure on China.

Leaders of the foreign affairs committees of the US Senate and House of Representatives were notified that three of the planned weapons sales had been approved by the US Department of State, which oversees foreign military sales, the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The informal notifications were for a truck-based rocket launcher made by Lockheed Martin Corp called a high-mobility artillery rocket system (HIMARS), long-range air-to-ground missiles made by Boeing Co called SLAM-ER, and external sensor pods for F-16 jets that allow the real-time transmission of imagery and data from the aircraft back to ground stations.

Notifications for the sale of other weapons systems, including large, sophisticated aerial drones, land-based Harpoon anti-ship missiles and underwater mines, to deter amphibious landings, have yet to reach Capitol Hill, but these were expected soon, the sources said.

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“As a matter of policy, the United States does not confirm or comment on proposed defense sales or transfers until they are formally notified to Congress,” a State Department spokesman said.

Congress’ foreign affairs committees have the right to review, and block, weapons sales under an informal review process before the State Department sends its formal notification to the legislative branch.

US lawmakers, who are generally wary of what they perceive as Chinese aggression and supportive of Taiwan, were not expected to object to the arms sales.

News that new arms sales were moving forward came after senior US officials last week repeated calls for Taiwan to spend more on its own defense and carry out military reforms to make clear to China the risks of attempting to invade.

It comes at a time when China has significantly stepped up military activity near Taiwan and as US-China relations have plunged to the lowest point in decades ahead of the US presidential election.

In Taipei, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday said that the government had not received official notice of the arms sale, but would explain relevant details to the public once Washington informs the Legislative Yuan.

The government would continue to deepen the secure friendship that it has with the US amid China’s increasing efforts to disrupt regional security across the Taiwan Strait, the ministry added.

In Beijing, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday said that it would make a “legitimate and necessary” response to additional US arms sales to Taiwan.

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The US should immediately halt all weapons sales to Taiwan, ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian (趙立堅) told a daily news briefing.

Additional reporting by Dennis Xie

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