

## Ministry mum on TECRO name change

Written by Taipei Times

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The nameplate of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the US is pictured in an undated photograph.

**Photo: Liberty Times file photo**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday declined comment on a Financial Times report that the name of Taiwan's representative office in Washington might be changed, saying only that bolstering and upgrading ties with the US has been the government's long-term objective.

The ministry made the comments after the UK-based newspaper reported on that US President Joe Biden's administration is considering allowing the government to use the word "Taiwan" in the office's title.

The US is "seriously considering a request from Taiwan to change the name of its mission in the US capital from 'Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office' [TECRO] to 'Taiwan Representative Office,'" the paper reported on Friday, citing several anonymous sources close to the matter.

The two countries had discussed the issue toward the end of former US president Donald Trump's term in office and Taiwan made a formal request to the administration Biden in March, the report said.

US National Security Council Indo-Pacific Coordinator Kurt Campbell is in favor of a name change, and the idea has garnered wide support at the US National Security Council and among US Department of State Asia officials, it said.

However, the final decision lies with Biden, who would need to sign an executive order before the office's name can be changed, the report said.

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The ministry yesterday said it has no comment on the report.

“Comprehensively strengthening and upgrading the relationship between Taiwan and the US has always been a policy objective for the government, which has brought tangible improvements to the bilateral relationship in recent years,” it said.

The government would continue to steer Taiwan-US relations pragmatically, and in accordance with mutual trust and shared interests, it said.

In response to media queries, Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) said that “the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the US is, as a matter of fact, Taiwan’s representative office.”

A name change would make the office more recognizable and distinct, he said.

“We thank the countries that are developing policies in this direction and working to raise Taiwan’s visibility,” he added.

The US Department of State on Friday neither denied nor confirmed the Financial Times report, reiterating its stance that ties with Taipei were “rock solid.”

“I don’t have anything to preview or announce from here when it comes to the name change at all,” US Department of State principal deputy spokesperson Jalina Porter told a news briefing. “But what I can say ... broadly speaking is that our support for Taiwan is rock solid and we remain committed to keeping our ties with Taiwan, which is a leading democracy and a critical economic and security partner.”

The Chinese embassy in Washington said it “firmly opposes” a name change, and has urged the US to stop official interactions with Taiwan and refrain from sending wrong signals to “Taiwan independence forces” or challenging China’s bottom line, the newspaper said.

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Taiwan's efforts to improve ties with European countries resulted in Lithuania allowing the nation to open a representative office to expand ties with the Baltic state and other Central European countries.

The office, to be named "the Taiwanese Representative Office in Lithuania," is to be located in Vilnius, Wu has said.

The newspaper reported that senior US government officials were on Friday to hold a round of sensitive talks known as the "Special Channel" in Annapolis, Maryland, on Friday with a Taiwanese delegation, which included National Security Council Secretary-General Wellington Koo (吳伯雄) and Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳敦義).

The meeting would be the first time the Biden team has engaged in high-level, in-person talks with Taiwan. Such meetings have traditionally been kept under wraps to avoid antagonizing Beijing.

Additional reporting by Chueh Ching-lun

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