

Arms procurement budget bill passes

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Chi Yang-class frigate Ning Yang fires a Harpoon anti-ship missile during joint-service live fire exercises on July 15 last year.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of National Defense via CNA

The Legislative Yuan yesterday approved a bill authorizing the government to draft a special budget of up to NT\$240 billion (US\$8.63 billion) for arms procurements over the next five years.

The new law allows the government to use a special budget — which is not subject to the spending constraints of the normal budgeting process — to acquire mostly indigenous weapons to upgrade the nation's anti-air and anti-surface capabilities.

The Executive Yuan would soon write a special budget based on the new law and submit it for review to lawmakers, said Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Chao Tien-lin (趙天麟), a convener of the legislature's Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee.

Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) would then attend a hearing held by the Legislative Yuan to elaborate on the special budget and answer questions about it, Chao said.

Under the new law, the Ministry of National Defense would submit a written report to the legislature every May on the progress made in the previous year and the spending plan for the following year.

Eight types of weapon systems can be purchased under the special budget: shore-based anti-ship missiles, field and ground-based air defense systems, uncrewed aerial vehicles, air-to-ground and surface-to-surface cruise missile systems, high-performance submarines and weapon systems for the coast guard.

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The production of the Taiwan-made Tien Kung (Sky Bow), Tien Chien (Sky Sword) and Hsiung Feng (Brave Wind) series of missiles would be supported by the budget, the ministry said.

When the Executive Yuan proposed the bill in September, Su said it was part of the effort to safeguard national sovereignty and security, as China continues to engage in military exercises near Taiwan.

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