

China irate over Kyiv pro-Taiwan group

Written by Taipei Times

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Ukrainian lawmakers attend a session of parliament in Kyiv on Feb. 23.

Photo: Reuters

The Chinese embassy in Ukraine attempted to thwart the Ukrainian parliament's plan to establish a pro-Taiwan group, *Newsweek* magazine reported on Saturday.

Ukraine's parliament on Aug. 17 launched the Taiwan Friendship Group, which is led by Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Oleksandr Merezhko and consists of 15 lawmakers, two-thirds of whom belong to the ruling party.

Newsweek reported that "a diplomatic dispute is brewing between Ukraine and China" as Beijing lodged a protest against the newly established group at the Ukrainian embassy in China last week.

Merezhko was quoted as saying that China is "trying to dictate what a foreign parliament should do," adding that he turned down a request to meet with Chinese Ambassador to Ukraine Fan Xianrong (范先荣) prior to the initiation of the group.

He said that Fan refused to meet with him and his colleagues in March when they tried to solicit China's support for humanitarian corridors amid Russia's invasion of the nation, the magazine reported.

China's indifference to Ukraine motivated the parliament to set up the group, he added.

After the group was launched, Fan complained to several senior members of the Servant of the People ruling party, but nobody put pressure on members of the group, Merezhko said.

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Fan might be worried that Ukraine would send a delegation to Taiwan following the lead of US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi earlier this month, he said.

Ukrainian lawmaker Inna Sovsun, another member of the group and a long-term supporter of Taiwan, said that “China is worried Ukraine’s defense against Russia could become a model for Taiwanese resistance against China,” the magazine reported.

The biggest concern for Beijing is the similarity between Ukraine and Taiwan, as they are “two smaller countries fighting against colonialism,” she was quoted as saying.

She said that group members “coordinated the creation of the group through different layers of government” so as not to cause trouble for the executive.

The executive departments of foreign governments are likely to be constrained by diplomatic ties with Beijing or the “one China” policy, while legislative departments have more freedom to act, *Newsweek* said.

Analysts say that the Ukrainian government is hesitant to support Taiwan publicly because it does not want to see China taking Russia’s side in the war.

“I do not see the potential of the Chinese helping Ukraine. What we want from them is not to help Russia,” Sovsun was quoted by *Newsweek* as saying.

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