

Obama informs Congress of arms sales

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US President Barack Obama has informed Congress that he will approve the sale of weapons to Taiwan.

The White House opened discussions about the arms sale last week in a series of secret talks on Capitol Hill. Those talks are continuing this week.

Congressional sources have told the Taipei Times that a public announcement detailing the weapons involved will be made soon — possibly before the end of this month.

The sale could cause a major rift in the China-US relationship, which Obama has been working very hard to develop. At the least, China is expected to cancel military-to-military direct communications. But the rift could widen and have an impact on other aspects of the relationship, including trade and climate control talks currently under way.

Earlier this month, White House sources said that an arms sales announcement was not expected before Obama makes his state of the union speech on national television.

Obama will deliver the speech before both houses of Congress tonight and may include an announcement of the arms package.

The Associated Press (AP) reported on Monday evening that the arms package was likely to include UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missiles and material related to Taiwan's defense communications network.

Congressional sources, speaking on the strict understanding that they would not be named, told the Taipei Times that, failing a last-minute change of heart, the advanced F-16C/D fighters that Taiwan has requested will not be part of the package.

The sources did not know if Taiwan's request for detailed plans to build diesel-powered submarines would be included, but there was no mention of such plans in the AP report.

Following news of the imminent package, US Congressman David Wu (吳德勝) told President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) at his hotel in San Francisco on Monday night that he hoped to see Taiwan obtain F-16C/D fighter jets from Washington.

Ma stopped over in San Francisco on his way to visit allies in Latin America.

Ma said his administration would strive to acquire the weapons, but added that it would depend on Washington's attitude.

AP reported that the sale would satisfy parts of an US\$11 billion arms package originally pledged by former US president George W. Bush in 2001.

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“That package has been provided in stages because of political and budgetary considerations in Taiwan and the United States,” the AP report said.

Beijing has issued a number of warnings over the last few weeks about the expected arms sale and has made it clear that China's top leadership would be furious if Obama ignores its wishes and proceeds with the sale.

But there was never much doubt that some defensive weapons systems would be sold this year as provided for in the Taiwan Relations Act.

Obama met the Chinese leadership in Beijing in November and signaled that he wanted a much-improved relationship.

“Since then, tensions have spiked, with the United States criticizing Chinese Internet freedom and China worrying over a possible meeting next month between Obama and the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader China accuses of pushing for independence,” AP said.

Source: [Taipei Times 2010/01/27](#)