

## US positive on arms deal

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Despite strong Chinese objections, there was a generally positive reaction throughout the US on Saturday to US President Barack Obama's decision to sell more than US\$6 billion in Patriot anti-missile systems, helicopters, mine-sweeping ships and communications equipment to Taiwan.

The Washington Post said that even though the new arms package did not include the sale of 66 F-16C/D fighters, "that does not mean the Obama administration has rejected Taiwan's request."

"The Defense Department is drawing up a report on the air power balance between China and Taiwan that could be used to push a decision," it said.

The New York Times said that administration officials pointedly noted that they "were not shutting the door to future F-16 sales."

The newspaper quoted a senior administration official as saying "we continue to study it [and] we will look at it from the perspective of what its impact would be on Taiwan's defense capability."

The New York Times reported Chinese reaction to the new arms sales was "swift and negative."

The paper quoted Wang -Baodong (王宝东), the spokesman at the Chinese embassy in Washington, as saying: "We believe this move endangers China's national security and harms China's peaceful reunification efforts."

An administration official told the Taipei Times that the possible future sale of F-16s would "undoubtedly" be raised directly by Beijing when US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visit China later this year for high-level talks.

Walter Lohman, director of the Heritage Foundation's Asian Studies Center, issued a statement praising the sale, but added: "The President should now turn expeditiously to addressing needs that have been piling up — starting with the sale of the 66 advanced F-16C/Ds Taiwan has requested. These planes are the real meat of Taiwan's pending requests — and even they, unfortunately, will not completely fill the need."

He said the limited nature of the current sale signaled an unwillingness to sell anything that truly counters China's "rapidly modernizing armed forces."

He said: "What good is reserving the prerogative to sell weapons to Taiwan if we never get around to selling them what they need most?"

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs

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Committee, said that she was pleased with the sale of arms to Taiwan, but added: "It is my expectation that the administration will soon begin regular consultations with Congress on Taiwan security affairs, thereby fulfilling its responsibility under the law to work jointly with Congress to maintain Taiwan's self-defense capacity."

Asked about the US' military-to-military relations with China and whether Taiwan had come up in discussions on this issue, a senior Obama administration official said: "Taiwan is always in the discussions in some form."

"We sort of get used to the fact that Taiwan is a component of the way they think about their interests and their relationship with the US. We would hope that we can agree to disagree on this question," the official said.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the White House had a lot of questions about China.

"Why is it modernizing its military? Why is it developing certain capabilities that we find to be challenging? Both sides, given our size and our presence in Asia, need to have a consistent dialogue so that people at all levels are reassured that China's rise is indeed peaceful and that our intentions are indeed not contrary to China's," the official said.

Source: [Taipei Times 2010/02/01](#)