

U.S. Plans More Than \$2 Billion in Weapons Sales to Taiwan, Angering Beijing

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is planning a new effort to help the Taiwanese government upgrade its military by allowing Taipei to buy billions of dollars' worth of weapons systems, possibly including more than 100 tanks — a move that has already drawn criticism from Beijing.

Washington is legally obliged under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 to help the self-ruled island access defensive weapons, but such transactions are bitterly opposed by Beijing, which considers Taiwan a breakaway province. A new round of weapons sales to Taipei would also risk further inflaming tensions between the U.S. and China as the two countries remain locked in a trade fight.

Multiple people familiar with the weapons-sales plan told The Wall Street Journal that members of Congress have been informally notified of the possible arms sale. Ultimately, the Taiwanese government would have the option to buy some or all of the items included in the proposal, these people said.

Reuters earlier reported the potential sale, which includes Abrams tanks, antitank missiles, medium-range tactical missiles and portable Stinger air-defense missiles. The value could be in excess of \$2 billion.

A State Department official, citing U.S. government policy on potential or pending arms sales, declined to comment on or confirm the terms before formal congressional notification.

A representative of the Taiwanese government declined to comment beyond a Ministry of National Defense statement confirming its request for the weapon systems, in accordance with U.S. procedures for foreign military sales.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said "China firmly, consistently and unequivocally opposes U.S. arms sales to Taiwan." He said he urged Washington to recognize the sensitive nature of the matter, honor the One China policy and halt any U.S. arms sales to or military relations with Taiwan.

China and Taiwan have been governed separately since 1949, when China's Nationalist government retreated to the island after it was ousted from the mainland by Communist Party forces.

The U.S. officially adheres to the One China policy, meaning Washington won't establish formal diplomatic relations with Taipei, but the U.S. and Taiwan view the sales as crucial for stability in the region. President Trump approved a \$1.42 billion arms sale in 2017, and the Obama administration approved a similar transfer in 2015.

With Beijing and Washington at a critical point in the high-stakes trade negotiations, new weapons sales could become a complicating factor in the dispute.

President Trump warned Beijing on Thursday about another potential tariff increase on Chinese goods if negotiators fail to reach a deal. China's Commerce Ministry reiterated that Beijing wouldn't shy away from responding to any U.S. escalation, though said it is not seeking a trade war.

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