



By: TA | AP Brief

Taiwan's president defends US arms purchases



Taiwan's president stressed that arms purchases from the United States are "the most important deterrent" of regional conflict and instability, after President Donald Trump called into question continued **U.S. support of Taiwan** following his visit to China.

U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and security cooperation between the two sides are not only governed by law but also a catalyst for regional peace and stability, President Lai Ching-te said in a statement.

"We thank President Trump for his continued support for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait since his first term, including the continuous increase in the scale and amount of arms sales to Taiwan," he said.

His statement came days after **Trump raised doubts** over his willingness to continue to sell arms to Taiwan, the island democracy that China claims as its own breakaway province, to be retaken by force if necessary.

The U.S., like all countries that have formal ties with China, doesn't recognize Taiwan as a country but has been the island's strongest backer and arms supplier.

Washington is bound by its own laws to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself and sees all threats to the island as a matter of grave concern.

Trump rattles Taiwan with 'bargaining chip' comment

Trump already approved in December a record-breaking **\$11 billion arms package** to Taiwan including missiles, drones, artillery systems and military software.

In an interview aired Friday on Fox News, just as Trump wrapped up a **high-stakes visit to China**, he said he has yet to greenlight a new \$14 billion arms package to Taiwan and that it "depends on China."

"It's a very good negotiating chip for us

frankly," he said.

His comments raised concerns on the island, which the Taiwanese government has sought to disperse, noting that the U.S. official policy on Taiwan has not changed.

"Taiwan will not provoke or escalate conflict, but it will also not relinquish its national sovereignty and dignity, or its democratic and free way of life, under pressure," Lai said in his statement, calling China "the root cause of undermining regional peace and stability and attempting to change the status quo."

China cannot just go take over land, and we're going to stand strong and resolute by that - Mike Johnson

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson praised Lai's statement, saying "I thought that was a reasonable thing for the leader there to say." Johnson said on Fox News Sunday, "China cannot just go take over land, and we're going to stand strong and resolute by that. I know the Congress will."

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said on ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos" on Sunday that the president is "considering how to move forward on" the arms sales to Taiwan, noting previous U.S. presidents had paused sales in the past and Trump will need to weigh many factors.

"When the president makes a decision on national security, it's really based on American security needs first though," Greer said.

China has framed Taiwan as "the most important issue in China-U.S. relations" during Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent talks with Trump.

In one of his strongest statements to date, Xi on Thursday warned Trump of "**clashes and even conflicts**" if the issue of Taiwan was not handled properly.

China and Taiwan have been governed

separately since 1949, when the Communist Party rose to power in Beijing following a civil war.

Defeated Nationalist Party forces fled to Taiwan, which later transitioned from martial law to multiparty democracy.