

Testimony of Randall G. Schriver

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Madame Chairwoman and esteemed committee members, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to appear before your committee to talk about the importance of Taiwan as a friend and partner to the United States.

The United States has a strong interest in seeing Taiwan maintain its prosperity, security, and freedoms. We have supported the Republic of China for decades as the citizens there established a thriving democracy – and in doing so, we have simultaneously advanced our own interests in the Asia-Pacific.

American interests in Taiwan range from economic to security to diplomatic. Although commerce is only one aspect of the U.S.-Taiwan relationship, bilateral trade alone argues for greater consideration of Taiwan's importance to American interests. Taiwan is the United States' ninth largest trade partner; 11 percent of the United States' export market goes to Taiwan, surpassing both India and Brazil, and Taiwan's technology companies are some of the most vibrant in the world. Taiwan is home to a population of 23 million, holds the 21st largest GDP in the world, and is geographically situated to handle more shipping containers than any single port in Japan or Korea. By objective standards, Taiwan is clearly an important international friend.

Furthermore, Taiwan has become an exemplary model of a nation that has peacefully and successfully used American diplomacy and aid to transition into a democratic nation capable of providing aid to, and setting an example for, others. Taiwan has become a "responsible stakeholder," firmly committed to international efforts to fight terrorism, poverty, disease, and disaster.

The current U.S.-Taiwan relationship is strong and stable – but it needs to be made a priority. Taiwan's strengths and capabilities need to be maximized to emphasize its role as a peaceful member of the international community. Perpetuating a healthy and growing relationship with Taiwan will help to stabilize cross-Strait relations and secure American interests in Asia.

The Obama Administration, like previous administrations, does not have high enough aspirations for Taiwan. Taiwan is most often seen by members of the administration as an "issue to manage" in the United States and China relationship rather than the very important standalone player that it is. Such a framework not only relegates Taiwan to a sub-issue in U.S.-China bilateral ties, but it also carries huge opportunity costs. Namely, we are losing

many opportunities to partner with Taiwan, and to leverage all Taiwan can bring to bear on regional and international problem solving.

We also implicitly validate China's policies, and thus fail to consistently challenge China's illegitimate, irredentist claims on Taiwan, and fail to challenge their military intimidation and coercion. One often hears expressions of relief from officials in this administration and among the cognoscenti that Taiwan is no longer a "trouble maker." But this fundamentally misses the point. Potential instability in the Taiwan Strait does not emanate from Taiwan's style of democratic governance – the greatest danger comes from the continuing insecurities of the Chinese leadership, Beijing's neuralgia associated with democracy on Taiwan, and a strategy that is fundamentally flawed by an over-reliance on coercion.

The United States should do more to support Taiwan, just as we should seek more from our relationship with Taiwan. We should reject the false zero-sum proposition that our ties with Taiwan will unduly hinder either the U.S.-China relationship, or the cross-Strait relationship.

China and Taiwan have enjoyed many positive developments in the past few years. The signing of the Economic Cooperative Framework Agreement (ECFA), the establishment of direct commercial flights between Taiwan and China, the promotion of tourism in both directions and Taiwan's observership at the World Health Assembly are all indications of increasing rapprochement. Taiwanese president Ma Ying-jeou has made economic and cordial relations with Beijing the cornerstone of his administration, leading cross-Strait relations into its most stable era.

But despite the recent political and economic cooperation between Taiwan and China, the continued military buildup on the Chinese mainland opposite Taiwan and the increased targeting of People's Liberation Army assets directed toward Taiwan is cause for concern. We should be absolutely clear on this point – the Chinese build-up continues unabated. I believe some former U.S. officials and scholars are either misinformed or worse, are willfully engaging in misdirection when they publicly give credit to the Chinese for reducing the military threat to Taiwan. And some Chinese officials have simply been dishonest about their military posture. Objective analysis is important because it remains the legal obligation of this administration to make weapons for self-defense available to our democratic friend Taiwan.

Chinese military modernization has paid off; their power is remarkable and their advantage is constantly growing. Analysts in the United States and Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense say China has more than 1,500 missiles targeted at Taiwan. The PLA has developed and deployed other military capabilities to coerce Taiwan. Ultimately, Chinese military leaders seek capabilities to ensure an attempted invasion of Taiwan would be successful if Beijing ordered the attack. As the 2010 U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review report notes, "China is developing and fielding large numbers of advanced medium-range ballistic and cruise missiles, new attack submarines equipped with advanced weapons, increasingly capable long-range air defense systems, electronic warfare and computer network attack capabilities, advanced fighter aircraft, and counter-space systems."

The PLA has about 1.25 million personnel in its ground forces, with roughly 400,000 based in the three military regions opposite Taiwan. A new PLA Navy base on Hainan Island provides direct access to vital international sea lanes, and offers the potential for stealthy deployment of submarines into the South China Sea. China bases 490 combat aircraft within unrefueled operational range of Taiwan, and has the airfield capacity to expand that number by hundreds. The PLA is developing the capability to deter Taiwan independence or influence Taiwan to settle the dispute on Beijing's terms while simultaneously attempting to deter, delay, or deny any possible U.S. support for the island in case of conflict. The balance of cross-Strait military forces continues to shift in the mainland's favor.

The United States needs to take bolder steps. The past two administrations' actions in response to China's weapons buildup have been anemic. Although U.S.-Taiwan military cooperation has continued, security assistance over the past decade has slowed. Taiwan is not keeping up with China in terms of military buildup, and we are not being robust enough in our policy to enable them to do so. We have severely neglected the U.S. responsibility to provide arms to Taiwan. Software is crucial for effective defense, but without the necessary hardware, it is simply insufficient.

Last month 45 senators reasserted Taiwan's need for enhanced defense capabilities. With the PRC's security posture opposite Taiwan, as well as their increased provocations in the region, the U.S. is not sufficiently helping Taiwan meet its defense needs. Aircraft upgrades, submarines, and F-16 C/Ds are currently under consideration in Washington. I believe a faithful interpretation of U.S. law demands this administration provide Taiwan with these capabilities. Yet the Obama Administration continues to delay response to Taiwan's requests.

In July 1982, the Reagan Administration promulgated the Six Assurances to Taiwan, agreeing, among other things, not to give prior consultation to China on potential U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. This provided additional assurance to buttress the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) language which states that U.S. decisions on arms sales will be based solely on analysis of Taiwan's defense needs. I question whether the administration honors this element of the Six Assurances and I question whether or not administration decision-making is consistent with the aforementioned part of the TRA.

We continue to hear that the administration's reluctance on a further arms sales announcement is based primarily on concerns related to China's possible reaction to an announcement, and/or a search for the right timing for an announcement in order to minimize potential disruptions to the U.S.-China bilateral ties. It seems to me that we are increasingly subject to China's influence in our decision-making. And we suffer from a "tyranny of the calendar" where frequent high level visits between U.S. and Chinese officials make the windows smaller and smaller for Congressional notifications. En route to Singapore, Secretary of Defense Gates was quoted as saying "we have tried to thread the needle pretty carefully in terms of Taiwan's defensive capabilities but at the same time being aware of China's sensitivities." Can any of us have confidence that this administration's decisions are based solely on the needs of Taiwan and not based in part on consultations with China and/or a fear of how China might respond to an announcement?

The administration needs to be bolder and more willing to deal with any fallout with China that may stem from an arms sales announcement. An objective review of historical data demonstrate that although the Chinese are angered by the arms sales, their response is predictable and quite limited in terms of any real, harmful impact on U.S.-China ties. The PRC will usually resort to verbal criticism of the arms sale, and postponing some military-to-military activities.

However, there have been few repercussions of arms sales for cross-Strait relations. We can document that cross-Strait breakthroughs often occur after U.S. arms sales to Taiwan are announced. Notably, the so-called '1992 Consensus' occurred shortly after the largest U.S.-Taiwan arms deal up to that point in time was announced. More recently, the Congressional notification of \$6.4 billion worth of arms to Taiwan in January 2010 preceded the conclusion of ECFA by a mere few months. Furthermore, ECFA negotiations were not interrupted by the notification. These breakthroughs demonstrate that arms sales give Taiwan the confidence it needs to get to the negotiating table and engage in constructive talks with China. They demonstrate that the United States' military partnership with Taiwan is paying dividends. Why then should policy change? The increasing economic and political cooperation between China and Taiwan is a sign that the United States should remain committed to Taiwan's military needs.

Nonetheless, some prominent former officials, former high ranking military officers, and scholars are now arguing in favor of revising the TRA and reducing (or eliminating) our arms sales to Taiwan. While these views do not represent the mainstream, the arguments are being made by serious, credible people – and we should therefore treat their views with equal seriousness, owing to their stature in the policy or academic community rather than the soundness of their arguments.

Let me state unequivocally that I disagree with the arguments suggesting the TRA should be revised and that we should reduce or eliminate our arms sales to Taiwan. In fact, I believe just the opposite. We should enhance our security assistance to Taiwan. Reducing or eliminating arms sales to Taiwan would put the strategic interests of the United States at risk.

If you review the op-eds, articles and reports that call for changing our policy, they all share a set of assumptions that serve as analytical foundation for the arguments being put forward. And I believe their assumptions are seriously flawed. Taken collectively, there are five assumptions underpinning the arguments in favor of abandoning Taiwan as follows: (1) reducing our commitment to the TRA will enable closer U.S.-China cooperation on a range of important issues; (2) Taiwan is sui generis for China, and accommodation on Taiwan will not engender more assertiveness on China's part elsewhere; (3) Taiwan is not strategically important to the United States; (4) our allies in Asia would respond positively; and (5) the trajectory of current events is not likely to reverse and ending the TRA is conducive to better cross-Strait relations.

There is no evidence to support the assumption that revising the TRA will enable closer U.S.-China cooperation on other issues. There have been suggestions that we could potentially realize closer cooperation with China on issues such as Iran and North Korea. The problem

with this theory is that the Chinese have important, strategic interests related to both Iran and North Korea – and it is those interests that drive China’s policy irrespective of positions the United States takes on Taiwan. As Iran’s largest trading partner, third largest importer of oil, and largest investor in Iran, it is unlikely that China would cooperate with the U.S. to alienate Iran economically and pursue its own economic sanctions against Iran. China is also unlikely to put more pressure on Pyongyang. Just last week, North Korean officials and Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan attended groundbreaking ceremonies for an industrial park on Hwanggumpyong, an island on the Yalu River, and at Rajin for an industrial zone. Are we to believe that China is currently pursuing sub-optimal policies with respect to either Iran or North Korea to demonstrate pique over U.S. relations with Taiwan? It is highly doubtful that concessions on Taiwan will alter the PRC’s behavior and garner PRC support for U.S. positions when counter to Beijing’s interests.

Second, those arguing to revise the TRA and reduce or eliminate arms sales to Taiwan opine that Taiwan is *sui generis*. Taiwan is unique, the argument goes, because it is a so-called “core interest” of China, because of the historic legacy associated with an unfinished civil war, and because the most sensitive issues of sovereignty are at play. Therefore, making concessions on Taiwan would leave the Chinese sated, and would not engender more assertive and aggressive Chinese actions elsewhere. However, we once again note serious flaws to this assumption. One need only look at recent events to see that China is already behaving more aggressively in the region where Beijing’s often dubious sovereignty claims are at issue. China has acted aggressively toward our ally Japan over the Senkaku Islands, and has steadily been ramping up pressure on our Southeast Asian friends with claims and interests in the South China Sea. Beijing reacted with anger, followed by threats to friends in Southeast Asia after the Obama administration made policy pronouncements related to the South China Sea. And even this week China strengthened its rhetoric on the South China Sea and renewed threats to countries seeking to extract resources from that area. The Chinese behavior in these cases and others lay false the claim that Taiwan is different.

Third, those arguing for abandonment of Taiwan claim that Taiwan is just not that important to the United States. The bulk of this hearing and the first part of my statement focuses precisely on why Taiwan does matter to the United States. But what is equally important to consider is how our interests in the region would be impacted if Taiwan, left undefended, were to be acquired through coercion by China. A coerced settlement could carry even greater strategic significance over the long term. Chinese control of Taiwan and the strait could effectively deny the United States and its allies access to critical sea lanes during times of heightened tensions. Mainland control of Taiwan would also significantly extend the reach of the PLA in the Asia-Pacific region. In other words, even if one is not persuaded of Taiwan’s importance to the United States, surely that same person could see the potential harm to our interests if Taiwan is lost to Beijing’s control.

Fourth, some are arguing that ending the TRA and reducing or eliminating our arms sales to Taiwan would be welcomed by U.S. allies in the region. The assumption is based on a belief that our allies see our loyalty to Taiwan based on historic affinities and not truly interest-based. Further, the argument goes, our allies would see opportunities for closer cooperation with the United States once we shed ourselves of this anachronism, and could be positioned

to focus more intensely on treaty allies. This assumption is quite naïve and demonstrates little understanding of the views of our allies. Abandoning Taiwan would be received negatively by our allies in Asia. Instead of enabling us to focus more on our other treaty partners, it will project the idea of gradual withdraw from the region, appeasement of China, and a general willingness to abandon friends. This jeopardizes America's future status as a Pacific power if China was able to assert its will with impunity. Regional allies would question the credibility of America's political commitments, as would other young democracies around the world. Furthermore, a weakened TRA would also provide the PRC with extreme leverage over the other nations of Southeast Asia. Revising the TRA is deleterious to both our strategic interests in Asia and the strength of our alliances.

Lastly, the purpose of our arm sales is not just to give Taiwan the ability to defend itself from PRC aggression, but also to give Taiwan the confidence it needs to go to the negotiating table and strike a balance between the goals of mainland and the goals of the 23 million people of Taiwan. Previously cited examples demonstrate that the TRA is working and to change course now would change the nature of negotiations. Can we believe in the fidelity of negotiations if China is, figuratively speaking, holding a gun to the head of Taiwan? We should also be aware that the trend of positive developments in cross-Strait ties could turn. If we reduce support to Taiwan, and a later juncture higher tensions return, there will be an even greater burden on the United States and others to come to Taiwan's defense because of Taipei's diminished capabilities. Further, when militaries fall behind, they tend not to fall behind in a linear fashion. Rather, the challenge will get exponentially harder over time and reversing course becomes a near impossibility. It is clearly in the interests of the U.S. to continue to nurture our partnership with Taiwan. Such a relationship sustains America's favorable position and is necessary to keep the region peaceful, prosperous, and free.

The United States should make the hard decisions that are required for the long term viability of our leadership position in Asia. We should commit to our own legal obligations under the TRA and provide the necessary defense resources in a region where hard power still matters. We should continue to push a robust bilateral agenda for our military relationship with Taiwan – not to provoke the PRC, but to proudly convey that we have high aspirations and expectations for our relationship with Taiwan.

I hope the Obama Administration will share this outlook, and that friends in Congress will as well. Thank you again Madame Chairwoman for the opportunity to participate in your hearing today, and to offer these thoughts.

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs

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Randall Schriver	Armitage International, the Project 2049 Ins +
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