

US military analyst warns of danger of nuclear war with China

Peter Symonds
6 October 2021

Retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Davis, writing in the *Guardian* on Tuesday, issued a stark warning of the danger that the US could “stumble” into a nuclear war with China if conflict erupts between the two countries over Taiwan.

In his comment, headlined, “The US must avoid war with China over Taiwan at all costs,” Davis declares: “The prevailing mood among Washington insiders is to fight if China attempts to conquer Taiwan. That would be a mistake.”

“Before war comes to the Indo-Pacific and Washington faces pressure to fight a potentially existential war, American policymakers must face the cold, hard reality that fighting China over Taiwan risks an almost-certain military defeat—and gambles we won’t stumble into a nuclear war,” he warns.

Davis’s remarks undoubtedly reflect intense discussions taking place behind closed doors in Washington in political, intelligence and strategic circles over the preparations for war with China and the growing likelihood that Taiwan could be the trigger.

In March, the outgoing head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Philip Davidson, warned that the US could be at war with China over Taiwan within six years and called for a doubling of his command’s budget.

Davis argues that the US would almost certainly lose a conventional war with China over Taiwan “at the cost of large numbers of our jets being shot down, ships being sunk, and thousands of our service personnel killed.” To avoid defeat, he insists that the US should refuse to be drawn into such a conflict, even if it means China taking over the island.

In reality, the Biden administration is accelerating Washington’s decade-long, aggressive confrontation with Beijing on all fronts—diplomatic, economic and

also military. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has condemned the latest sorties by Chinese military aircraft into Taiwan’s self-proclaimed air defence identification zone (ADIZ) as “provocative,” declaring that such activity “risks miscalculation” and could “undermine regional peace and stability.”

What staggering hypocrisy at every level! When China announced its own ADIZ in the East China Sea in November 2013, the Obama administration bluntly refused to recognise it. In a blatant provocation, the Pentagon flew nuclear-capable B-52 bombers into the area without notifying the Chinese military, risking miscalculation and a potential clash.

While the US and international media issued dire warnings about Chinese military aircraft, the US Navy was carrying out major war games in waters east of Taiwan, involving three aircraft carrier strike groups—two from the US and one from Britain—as well as Japanese, Dutch and New Zealand warships. The military drills follow the announcement of the AUKUS alliance between the US, Britain and Australia, which includes arming the Australian navy with nuclear-powered submarines.

More fundamentally, it is Washington, not Beijing, that has drastically undermined the status quo on the explosive flashpoint of Taiwan. When it established diplomatic relations with China in 1979, it effectively accepted the “One China” policy that acknowledges Beijing as the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan. The US broke diplomatic ties with Taipei and abrogated its defence treaty with the island.

Over the past year, the US has dramatically raised the stakes over Taiwan. In the last days of the Trump administration, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lifted all restrictions on official contact—military and civilian—between the US and Taiwan at all levels. The

Biden administration with minor alterations retained the policy and has continued to provocatively send US warships through the Taiwan Strait between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. In August, it approved another large sale of arms—self-propelled howitzer artillery systems—to Taiwan.

By boosting relations with Taiwan, the Biden administration is undermining the basis for diplomatic relations with China and heightening the danger of war by encouraging the Taiwanese government to push towards independence. Beijing has repeatedly declared that Taiwan is a renegade province that is an integral part of China, and warned that it would resort to force if Taiwan ever declared formal independence.

Washington is edging away from its policy of so-called “strategic ambiguity.” Under the 1979 Taiwan Act, the US declared that it would sell defensive weapons to Taiwan and oppose any attempt by China to take over the island by force. However, the US refused to give an iron-clad guarantee to support Taiwan militarily in all circumstances—an ambiguity that was aimed at reining in pro-independence forces on Taiwan.

Increasingly, that caveat is being undermined. In his remarks this week, Blinken declared that “the United States has a commitment to Taiwan that is rock solid.” Earlier this year, the Taiwan Invasion Prevention Act was introduced, which would authorise “the president to use military force to defend Taiwan against a direct attack.” All of this spurs on the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party administration in Taipei to take a more aggressive stance against Beijing.

The Taiwanese legislature is currently reviewing a \$T240 billion (\$US8.6 billion) special defence budget bill that would vastly expand its land-based missile capacity and expand its navy, with the deployment of “high-performance” ships. Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng warned that tensions with China were the worst in 40 years, adding that China would be completely prepared to launch an invasion of Taiwan in three years.

Taiwan is just the sharpest focus of the US confrontation and military build-up throughout the Indo-Pacific region against China. Biden was vice president under Obama as the then-president ramped up the so-called “pivot to Asia” to challenge what US imperialism regards as the greatest danger to its global hegemony—the economic rise of China. Biden has now

taken over where Trump left off—maintaining all of the previous administration’s trade war measures and continuing provocative military activity in waters close to the Chinese mainland.

Davis’s comment in the *Guardian* is just the latest evidence that the US is actively preparing for war with China. His warning that the US could “stumble” into a nuclear war greatly understates the real risks involved. US imperialism will not tolerate any threat to its global position from China and is prepared to use all means, including military, to prevent being eclipsed economically and strategically. If it faced defeat in a conflict with China involving conventional arms, as Davis concludes is most likely, the US would not hesitate to use its huge nuclear arsenal despite the incalculable consequences for humanity. The US is the only country in the world to have used atomic weapons in war—in August 1945, to obliterate the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The US drive to war can and must be halted. The worsening global economic and social crisis that is propelling Washington towards conflict with Beijing is also generating a resurgence of the class struggle, as workers around the world fight for their social rights, which are further undermined by the funnelling of money into military budgets. This emerging opposition is the basis for the development of a unified international anti-war movement of the working class based on a socialist perspective and directed against the root cause of war—the profit system and its outmoded division of the world into rival nation states.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)