

US bases military “trainers” permanently in Taiwan

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A *Newsweek* article published on Thursday reported for the first time that US special forces troops would be stationed in Taiwan on a permanent basis, rather than as part of a temporary or rotational arrangement. The deployment of any American troops to Taiwan is a breach of the “One China” policy, under which the US de facto recognises Beijing as the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan.

Citing the Taiwan-based *United Daily News* (UDN), *Newsweek* stated that “Army Green Berets of the 1st Special Forces Group are this year permanently stationed at two bases of the 101st Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, a Taiwanese army special operations force.”

The US deployment is particularly provocative as some of the US special forces are based on Kinmen, a group of fortified Taiwanese-controlled islands just 10 kilometres from the Chinese port city of Xiamen. Another group is stationed on the Pescadores islands off the Taiwanese coast in the Taiwan Strait.

Nominally, the US troops are involved in training Taiwanese forces, but their positioning also facilitates intelligence gathering of movements in the Taiwan Strait and on the Chinese coast. Xiamen has naval and air force bases.

According to UDN, American troops are also present at a military base in Taoyuan, in northern Taiwan. They are involved in training in the use of drones that the Taiwanese military is seeking to buy for its Airborne Special Service Company, an elite special forces unit.

Neither Washington nor Taipei has provided details of the number of US trainers or the training involved. It was only in 2021 that Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen officially confirmed that American special forces were in Taiwan and training local forces. The US Defence Department acknowledged that 30 US troops

were present, but only to guard the American Institute in Taiwan, which functions as an unofficial US embassy in Taipei.

At the time, Taiwan’s defence minister Chiu Kuo-cheng told the country’s parliament lawmakers that American instructors had worked with Taiwanese forces over successive administrations. He did not consider the deployment to be a permanent US military presence on the island.

The permanent presence of US special forces in Taiwan is part of far broader preparations by US imperialism for war with China. By deliberately violating the “One China” policy, Washington is inflaming tensions with China over Taiwan in a manner akin to the way in which it goaded Russia into invading Ukraine.

When Washington established diplomatic relations with Beijing in 1979, it closed its embassy in Taipei, ending formal diplomatic ties, and maintained only low-key unofficial contact. While it continued to sell arms to Taipei, the US ended its longstanding military pact with Taiwan and withdrew all its military forces.

Under Trump and now Biden, the US has torn up longstanding diplomatic protocols limiting contact between Taipei and Washington, boosted arms sales, including of offensive weaponry, and now stationed US trainers in Taiwan. The Biden administration welcomed last month’s election of Lai Ching-te, the candidate of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as Taiwanese president.

In establishing diplomatic relations with Washington, Beijing put off reunification with Taiwan but made clear that it would not do so indefinitely. While offering peaceful reunification under the one China, two systems principle, Beijing has repeatedly made clear that it would respond with force to any formal

declaration of independence by Taipei. By moving to integrate the economically and militarily strategic island within its sphere of influence, the US is recklessly plunging the region toward war.

The permanent stationing of US special forces in Taiwan is just one aspect of the growing American military presence. While the US Defence Department has only admitted the deployment of a handful of military personnel, the *Wall Street Journal* reported last February that the US planned to send between 100 and 200 troops to Taiwan in the immediate months ahead.

According to unnamed US officials, the planned increase was the largest deployment of forces to Taiwan in decades. Moreover, a Taiwanese military contingent was to travel to the US for training by the Michigan National Guard. That included involvement in annual exercises with multiple countries at Camp Grayling in northern Michigan.

US officials told the *Wall Street Journal* that the American troops in Taiwan were not only involved in training local forces in the use of US weapons, but engaged in military manoeuvres aimed against a potential Chinese offensive. Taiwan's Defence Minister Chiu confirmed to the newspaper that the Taiwanese troops in the US were receiving training in basic combat skills as well as advanced training focussed on staff operations and troop deployment.

Last April, the *Taiwan Times* confirmed that the US Indo-Pacific Command had dispatched more than 200 military trainers to Taiwan, of which 80 percent were from the US Army. Most were stationed at new training centres and with the reserve brigades of Taiwan's army.

The expansion of US trainers in Taiwan is partly in preparation for this year's extension of compulsory military service for young men on the island from four to 12 months as a component of its military build-up against China. Washington, which is seeking to weaken and destabilise China in any conflict, has pressed Taipei to adopt a "porcupine" strategy aimed at inflicting maximum damage on Chinese military forces.

The *Taiwan Times* article last year noted that although some American instructors trained Taiwanese special operations troops, "the US military has determined there is a gap between the training of the Taiwan Army's grassroots units and combat tactics instruction." More than 160 of the US trainers were non-

commissioned officers with combat experience, sent to check on overall combat effectiveness and propose training methods to improve it.

The article underlined the fact that US forces were assessing Taiwan's overall preparedness for war. Last April, US instructors "reportedly entered the Chiashan Air Force Base... to re-evaluate the safety of the bunkers, such as explosion-proof and protective facilities, especially the safety of areas where fighter planes and ammunition are stored."

While the reported numbers of US troops on Taiwan are still comparatively small, their activities and increasing size indicate that Washington is intent on preparing the island as a military trap for China in the not-too-distant future—not decades down the track. Already at war with Russia in Ukraine, backing Israel's genocidal war in Gaza and widening the conflict in the Middle East, the US is deliberately drawing China into a global war with catastrophic consequences.



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