

Taiwan appoints Japanese ex-military chief as advisor

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Japan is deepening its military connections with Taiwan as it prepares for a US-led war against China. On Friday, Taiwan's presidential cabinet, the Executive Yuan, announced that it had appointed Shigeru Iwasaki, the former head of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF), as an advisor.

Citing Taiwanese government sources, the *Asahi Shimbun* reported that Iwasaki will occupy the position for one year. Iwasaki, who will provide policy recommendations, is a retired general who served as the head of Japan's air force and then, from 2012 to 2014, as Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff, the highest military position in the country. After retiring, he worked as a special policy advisor to the Defense Ministry.

It is rare for a non-Taiwanese figure to be appointed to such a role. Last week, Iwasaki was in Taiwan at the invitation of the Executive Yuan for a meeting with Premier Cho Jung-tai. The far-right Japanese government of Shigeru Ishiba refused to comment on the matter, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi saying at a Friday press conference, "The government is not in a position to comment on the activities of a private individual who has retired from public service."

Hayashi also claimed that there was no change to Tokyo's formal position that Japan only maintains unofficial relations with Taiwan. Since 1972, Japan has recognized Beijing as the legitimate government of all of China, including Taiwan—the One China policy, to which most governments around the world formally adhere. This includes the United States, though Washington has all but renounced the policy as part of its imperialist war drive against China.

Hayashi's statements are completely disingenuous. Iwasaki remains an influential figure in Tokyo and his appointment is meant to strengthen political and

military ties with Taiwan. He was part of the Japanese delegation that attended the inauguration of Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te last May, a first for a former military head.

Emboldened by Washington and Tokyo, Lai and his ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) have increasingly pushed for independence, challenging the One China policy. Taipei has also embraced the fascistic Trump administration, with Legislative Yuan Speaker Han Kuo-yu of the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) leading a bipartisan delegation to Trump's January inauguration.

Han declared Trump's administration the "pinnacle of the free world" even as Trump declared he would be a dictator from day one, a pledge he has lived up to with his attacks on immigrants, anti-Israeli genocide protesters and democratic rights in general. Trump's plans for war against China have only encouraged pro-independence forces in Taiwan and Japan which is ramping up its own militarist agenda.

The issue of Taiwan is paramount in Beijing. Japan first seized the island from China in 1895 following the First Sino-Japanese war as part of the imperialist carve-up of the country. Taiwan later became a shelter under US protection for dictator Chiang Kai-shek and his KMT following its defeat in the Chinese Revolution in 1949. Washington claimed Taipei was the true government of all of China, using the island to harass and threaten the Chinese mainland.

In 1979, the US switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing to exploit tensions between China and the Soviet Union as well as to gain access to China's cheap labour as it moved to restore capitalism. However, Washington continued to provide Taipei with support and weaponry. Now, the US and Japan routinely challenge the One China policy in order to goad Beijing

into firing the first shot in a war planned in Washington.

Beijing is also conscious that allowing Taiwan to declare independence would set a precedent for the further carve-up of Chinese territory. China's Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Mao Ning responded to Iwasaki's hiring by saying, "We've lodged protests with the Japanese side. The DPP authorities' separatist provocations with foreign support are doomed to fail."

Iwasaki's appointment is only the latest Japanese provocation against China. At the beginning of March, the Japanese government announced it had provocatively sailed a Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) destroyer through the Taiwan Strait on February 5. The JS *Akizuki* then joined naval vessels from the US, Australia and the Philippines for a joint exercise in the South China Sea.

It was only the second time Japan has sent a navy ship through the Taiwan Strait—last September alongside ships from Australia and New Zealand. However, February's passage was the first solo transit for Japan's MSDF. Washington and Tokyo claim that the strait comprises "international waters," a barely concealed challenge to the One China policy.

On March 16, *Kyodo News* reported that Tokyo plans to deploy long-range missiles to Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands. The deployment is likely to begin by March 2026. The government and military are currently carrying out an assessment of possible locations including Yufu, Oita Prefecture and the city of Kumamoto.

This aligns with Washington's efforts to surround China with a system of military alliances and bases, which include the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery in South Korea and the medium-range Typhon missile launcher system in the Philippines. The US stations approximately 55,000 troops in Japan.

Japanese government sources who spoke with *Kyodo News* claimed the missile deployment would be part of Japan's move to acquire "counterstrike capabilities." This is simply a euphemism for offensive weaponry that is explicitly banned under Article 9 of Japan's constitution. While the political establishment has pushed to revise the constitution to legalize Japan's remilitarization, public opposition to war has prevented this from occurring. Instead, Tokyo increasingly

ignores the constitution altogether, while still paying lip service to "self-defense."

The Ishiba administration is pushing ahead with plans to de facto double military spending by 2027 to 2 percent of GDP. This year alone, Tokyo plans to spend a record 8.7 trillion yen (\$US 58.3 billion) on the military. Money will be spent on long-range missiles such as the upgraded Type-12 guided missiles, which Tokyo plans to deploy to Kyushu. This would place China's eastern coast, including Shanghai, and Pyongyang, North Korea in Japan's crosshairs.

These moves have nothing to do with defending Japan or Taiwanese "democracy" but are part of imperialist war plans to eliminate a major economic competitor. It is part of an overall attempt to redivide the Indo-Pacific as the US, Japan, and their allies attempt to offset the crisis of capitalism internationally through militarist means.



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