

Trump approves largest-ever arms sale to Taiwan

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The Trump administration last Thursday approved an \$11.1 billion arms package to Taiwan—the largest single US weapons sale to the island in history. The package, the second since Trump was installed in office this year, is a calculated escalation in US imperialism’s war preparations against China.

The huge arms package is not defensive in any meaningful sense, but features long-range offensive strike systems capable of carrying out precision strikes on the Chinese mainland. These include:

- 82 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers, which have been extensively used by Ukrainian military in its US-NATO backed war against Russia. The HIMARS system consists of a heavy-duty truck loaded with a single missile pod capable of firing with six GMLRS rockets or a single ATACMS class tactical missile.

- 420 ATACMS missiles and more than 1,200 GMLRS pods, each with six rockets. The ATACMS missile has a range of about 300 kilometres while the GMLRS rockets have a range of between 70-80 kilometres. Both are precision-guided. An unnamed senior official told the Taiwan News that the US was also supplying Taiwan with newer ATACMS missiles with a range of up to 500 kilometres.

At its narrowest point, the distance between the main island of Taiwan and the Chinese coastline is just 130 kilometres—well within the range of the ATACMS missiles. Taiwan, moreover, controls a series of heavily fortified islets, the closest of which are just kilometres from the Chinese mainland.

The stationing of such weaponry on Taiwan is a calculated provocation designed to undermine the One China policy to which Washington nominally continues to adhere. In establishing diplomatic relations with China in 1978, the US ended diplomatic and military

ties with Taiwan and withdrew all US military forces from the island—effectively recognising Beijing as the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan.

The latest US arms package is in clear breach of the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act that has long provided Washington with a flimsy legal justification for selling defensive, but not offensive, arms to Taiwan.

Trump, following on from the Biden administration, is using arms sales as well as closer ties with the Taiwanese government of President Lai Ching-te in a bid to heighten tensions across the Taiwan Strait and goad China into attacking Taiwan. Trump is well aware that China has repeatedly warned that it will reunify Taiwan by force if Taiwan ever declares formal independence.

While US naval vessels and military aircraft have not taken the step of visiting Taiwan, US warships provocatively transit through the Taiwan Strait with increasing frequency. High-level US political visits are also increasing. In August, US Senate Armed Services Committee chair Roger Wicker made a trip to Taipei, which he used to push for joint US-Taiwan arms manufacturing in a bid to tie Taiwan’s economy and arms industry more tightly into US war planning.?

The US is seeking to exploit Taiwan as a means of drawing China into a war that would significantly weaken the Chinese military and government of President Xi Jinping. It has pressed the Taiwan government to adopt a “porcupine strategy” of asymmetrical warfare to inflict maximum deaths and damage on Chinese forces.

The arms sales to Taiwan are determined largely by the Pentagon rather than Taipei. The latest package includes 60 propelled howitzers, and large quantities of Javelin and TOW anti-tank missiles. It also includes Altius loitering munition drones, which have a range of

400 kilometres and have multiple functions, including making precision strikes.

Under the guise of “military advisers,” the US is steadily building up a military presence on Taiwan and its outlying islets. Since 2021 when Washington first acknowledged that 30 US special forces troops were in Taiwan, the numbers built up to 200 “advisers” by early 2023 and by 2024 included elements of the US Army’s 1st Special Forces Group attached to amphibious bases on frontline Taiwanese islets such as Kinmen.

By this year, the scale of the US presence has grown again. In May, retired Rear Admiral Mark Montgomery testified that about 500 US military personnel are in Taiwan as trainers, more than 10 times the number previously disclosed. These forces are not simply teaching Taiwanese troops how to use and maintain equipment. They are engaged in exercises, operational planning, and the integration of HIMARS, drones and other systems into war plans against China.?

The ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taipei has fully aligned itself with the Trump administration and embraced its demands for a huge increase in military spending to above 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) next year with plans for a boost to 5 percent of GDP. President Lai last month announced a \$40 billion supplementary defence budget to run from 2026 to 2033, saying there was “no room for compromise on national security.”

The 2025 annual Han Kuang war games in April and July were the longest and largest in the island’s history, with two weeks of around-the-clock computerised war-gaming and 10 days of continuous live-fire drills built around full-scale invasion scenarios. Taiwan’s military rehearsed not just coastal defence but urban warfare, infrastructure protection, and “whole-of-society” mobilisation—exactly the kind of protracted proxy conflict that US planners envisage as a means of bleeding and destabilising China.?

The Lai administration has already extended the compulsory military conscription for 19-year-olds from four months to one year, beginning last year. Moreover, the training is not only extended but more rigorous, going beyond basic drills to include the use of modern technology like anti-tank missiles and drones in line with the overall US-dictated military strategy.

The ruling DPP is based on sections of the Taiwanese

ruling class that regard the island’s ambiguous international status as a barrier to its economic ambitions. While the DPP in office has stopped short of declaring independence and directly provoking war with China, President Lai is aligned with the party’s more hardline, separatist layers.

The announcement of the latest US arms sales to Taiwan provoked an angry response from Beijing. Foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun urged the US to abide by the one-China principle and to stop the dangerous actions of arming Taiwan. He said that large US arms sales to Taiwan constituted a gross interference in China’s internal affairs, seriously undermined its sovereignty and security interests, jeopardised stability across the Taiwan Straits, and sent a wrong signal to the separatist forces in Taiwan.

The Trump administration, however, has not the slightest intention of halting its provocative moves. In October, Washington was forced to reach a one-year truce in its escalating economic war with Beijing when China imposed restrictions on the export of critical minerals to the US. The latest arms sale, however, makes it clear that US imperialism is continuing to accelerate its war planning against China, which it regards as the chief threat to its global domination.



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