

# US Prepares to Fast Track \$500 Million of Arms for Taiwan

Story by Peter Martin and Tony Capaccio • May 5



A Taiwanese flag flies during a Republic of China Armed Forces military exercise in Hukou, Hsinchu County, Taiwan, on Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021. China's state-run media called for retaliation after the Trump administration removed decades-old restrictions on interactions with Taiwan officials just days before President-elect Joe Biden takes office, one of its biggest moves yet to reshape U.S. ties with the Asian democracy.

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(Bloomberg) -- The Biden administration is preparing a \$500 million weapons package for Taiwan, using a fast-track authority that it has relied on to speed arms to Ukraine, people familiar with the matter said.

The package will involve sending existing stockpiles of US weapons or support equipment to Taiwan under what's known as a Presidential Drawdown Authority, said the people, who asked not to be identified discussing private deliberations. The equipment to be in the package wasn't immediately known.

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Using a drawdown will let the US sidestep the often-lengthy process of contracting and producing weapons, which has resulted in what lawmakers say is a \$19 billion backlog in armaments that have been approved but not yet delivered to Taiwan. It hasn't been used to send weapons to the island's government.

Congress authorized President Joe Biden to use as much as \$1 billion in US inventory for the island democracy in the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, and lawmakers have complained the administration has been slow to use that authority. Congress didn't appropriate funds to replace the equipment so the Pentagon would have to seek that money later.

Lieutenant Colonel Martin Meiners, a Defense Department spokesperson, said that the Presidential Drawdown Authority was authorized last year "in order to deliver vital security assistance in support of Taiwan's self-defense." The administration's approach remains "consistent with longstanding US policy as outlined in the Taiwan Relations Act," Meiners said.

The Biden administration and its allies have grown increasingly concerned about the pace of China's military modernization and have warned that the country's leaders want its armed forces to be capable of invading Taiwan by 2027. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines have said they don't see an effort by China to seize Taiwan by force as imminent.

"My team is working diligently to make sure that we have the right capabilities in that particular drawdown," Austin said in March testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, adding that "we'll need the appropriations as well" to replace that equipment.

Eric Sayers, a nonresident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, said the the money was "a good start but I expect the Congress will push for the administration to use the full \$1 billion they authorized."

"This should be viewed as a good first step to use these new authorities to begin to expeditiously address shortfalls in cross-strait deterrence," Sayers added.

The request is likely to anger China and cuts against President Joe Biden's effort to restore stability to contacts with Beijing. The administration has requested a meeting between Austin and his Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu on the sidelines of the Shangri-La forum in Singapore in June. Most high-level communication stalled after an alleged Chinese spy balloon traversed the continental US in February.

--With assistance from Jenny Leonard.

(Updates Pentagon comment, and analyst quote, starting in fifth paragraph.)