NAPSNet Daily Report 25 April, 2001

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 25 April, 2001", NAPSNet Daily Report, April 25, 2001,
https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-25-april-2001/

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I. United States

1. US Protection of Taiwan

The US Department of State's Office of International Information Programs, ("WHITE HOUSE REPORT: BUSH ON ONE-CHINA POLICY," 4/25/01) reported that in a series of interviews with news organizations to mark his 100th day in office, which falls on Sunday, April 29, US President George W. Bush said that the US has an obligation to protect Taiwan from attack by the PRC, and will do so if necessary. Bush told the Associated Press (AP) April 25, "What I'm saying is that China must know that if circumstances warrant, that we will uphold the spirit of the Taiwan Relations Act and that they just have got to understand that. Clearly. They just need to understand that we will do so.... The Chinese have got to understand that (military force) is clearly an option." In an April 24 interview with ABC News, broadcast April 25, Bush said that he would do "whatever it took" to defend Taiwan from an attack by the PRC. In an April 25 interview with John King of the Cable News Network (CNN), broadcast live from the White House, Bush was asked by King if this were not a dramatic break with past policy. For the past 20 years, King said, US Presidents have been deliberately ambiguous about what they would do to defend Taiwan. Bush responded: "I think the Chinese must hear that ours is an administration, like other administrations, that is willing to uphold the spirit of the Taiwan Relations Act and I will do so. However, I think it's important for people to also note that

mine is an administration that strongly supports the one China policy, that we expect any dispute to be resolved peacefully and that's the message I really want people to hear.... Nothing has really changed in policy as far as I am concerned. This is what other Presidents have said and I will continue to say so. I certainly hope Taiwan adheres to the one-China policy. And a declaration of independence is not the one-China policy and we will work with Taiwan to make sure that that doesn't happen -- we need a peaceful resolution of this issue. Our nation will help Taiwan defend herself at the same time that we support the one China policy where we expect, and hope, and believe there will be a peaceful resolution in any differences of opinion." Bush said that relations with the PRC are "difficult" and "complex" but that it is a relationship that his administration "takes very seriously. We'll find areas where we can agree and we'll find areas where we don't agree but we will do so in a respectful way. And there's going to be some times where we are going to have to draw some lines and I'll be willing to do so."

Agence France Presse ("NO NEW POLICY ON TAIWAN: US OFFICIALS," Washington, 4/25/01) reported that US officials denied on Wednesday they had ended a decades-old policy of ambiguity on how the US would respond to a PRC attack on Taiwan. US President George W. Bush, during an appearance on ABC's "Good Morning America" show, was asked: "If Taiwan were attacked by China, do we have an obligation to defend the Taiwanese?" Bush replied, "Yes we do, and the Chinese must understand that." Bush was then asked if he would use the "full force of American military." He responded: "Whatever it took to help Taiwan defend herself." Those remarks were widely interpreted by television commentators in the US to mean that Bush was significantly firming the US line on Taiwan's security. However, a senior administration official said it would erroneous to see Bush's comments as a dilution of the traditional policy of ambiguity. The official said, "What's there (in the Bush interview) is implicit, he is saying we will help Taiwan 'defend herself' ... in terms of our obligations under the Taiwan Relations act. That should be understood. There is no new policy here." A second US official pointed to comments Bush made in another interview, also Wednesday, with NBC television's "Today Show" in which he mentioned the law specifically. Bush told NBC, "I think that a president makes the decisions that will help Taiwan defend herself and we will help Taiwan defend herself, that's the spirit of the Taiwan relations law and I will continue to ... review Taiwan's defensive needs and if I think it's in our country's interest, sell (weapons) to them." The second official said, "The answer the president gave to ABC may have been interpreted differently than it was intended. The bottom line is that we are going to adhere to the Taiwan Relations act." However, in US Congress, Bush's remarks were seen by some representatives at a hearing on PRC relations as a hardening of US policy.

2. US Annual Taiwan Sales Review

The Washington Post (Dana Milbank and Mike Allen, "BUSH TO DROP ANNUAL REVIEW OF WEAPONS SALES TO TAIWAN," 4/25/01) reported that US President George W. Bush said on Tuesday that he will stop the annual review of arms sales to Taiwan, ending a policy used by the US since 1982. The president, in an interview with the Washington Post, described his decision this week to offer Taiwan the largest arms package in nearly a decade as the "right package for the moment." Although the US would "reserve the right" to arm Taiwan, Bush said, "We have made it clear to the Taiwanese that we will not have this so-called annual review--that we will meet on an as-needed basis." Experts said that the decision could cool the arms race in the Taiwan Straits and can be seen as a conciliatory gesture toward the PRC. Bush also said that this week's offer of weapons to Taiwan was unrelated to the surveillance plane standoff with the PRC. He added that he was not concerned that the offer would worsen relations with the PRC, and that he still expects to make a state visit to the PRC in the fall. Bush said that he did not view the PRC as an "enemy" and said that competition between the two nations "does not necessarily mean distrust, anger, you know, furor."

Bush noted, "the fact that this nation is making progress toward more freedom, albeit not at the pace we'd like to see in America." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for April 25, 2001.]

3. US-Taiwan Military Cooperation

The Wall Street Journal carried an analytical article (Jason Dean, "FOR US AND TAIWAN, WEAPONS DEAL WILL MEAN CLOSER MILITARY COOPERATION," Taipei, 4/25/01) which said that the PRC and Taiwan reacted largely as expected Tuesday to the news of US arms sales to Taiwan. In the PRC, the official response was angry but measured, and underscored the PRC's growing frustration with the US President George W. Bush administration over a range of continuing disputes. Lawmakers in Taiwan welcomed the announcement, but some expressed frustration over the decision to defer the sale of Aegis-equipped destroyers. Analysts said that in fact, the offer is certain to bring Taiwan and the US militaries closer together, in order to integrate the relatively advanced weapons into the island's outdated force structure. David Shlapak, a defense analyst at the Rand Corporation, said that such contacts "don't get headlines, they don't involve billion-dollar contracts to defense companies, but they're very valuable." For example, if Taiwan does choose to buy the eight diesel submarines included in the US offer, it will need to build an entire submarine warfare force and a base to hold it from almost scratch. While overt cooperation, such as joint military exercises, is still unlikely, Alexander Huang, vice president of the Chinese Eurasian Foundation, a nonpartisan think tank in Taipei, said, "This package will force us to have more concrete and detailed dialogues with our U.S. counterparts." The increased trust between the Taiwan and US militaries have given US experts greater clout in Taiwan on issues as mundane as reinforcing military bases with concrete to make them more resistant to attack. That could have as significant an impact on the cross-straits security balance as the details of any arms deal. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for April 25, 2001.]

4. Taiwan-PRC Military Balance

Agence France Presse ("TAIWAN HAS NET STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE DESPITE CHINA'S MILLIONS," Beijing, 4/25/01) reported that foreign defense experts said that Taiwan already enjoys a net strategic advantage over the PRC, even though the PRC is trying to make up for it by pointing an increasing number of missiles at the island. Experts said that the PRC looks stronger because it has 2.5 million armed personnel, against Taiwan's 380,000, but that superiority is on paper only. They believe that the PRC is in no position to carry out an invasion of the island because of the better equipment and training of the Taiwanese forces. Another reason is that the PRC army has only in recent years started reorienting itself towards the contingency of an amphibious invasion of Taiwan. Experts noted that the PRC's strongest card is its nuclear capability, but that advantage is mainly theoretical, since the PRC has vowed not to use it against Taiwan, inhabited by people it considers "compatriots." Against this background, western analysts estimate it will be at least another 5-10 years before the PRC can begin to tilt the balance in the Taiwan Straits in its own favor

5. Taiwan Military Reform

The Washington Post (John Pomfret, "TAIWAN MILITARY REFORM URGED," Chiayi Air Base, Taiwan, 4/25/01) reported that modern weaponry is just one of the shortcomings in Taiwan's military as it seeks security in the face of the modernizing of the PRC military. Taiwanese military officers acknowledge that Taiwan's armed forces not only need weapons, they also need top-to-bottom reform. Military experts said that morale, corruption in the arms procurement process, weak

leadership, undue influence of the army over Taiwan's navy and air force, lax training, and problems in integrating weapon systems from around the world constitute just some of Taiwan's troubles. Shuai Hua- min, a former two-star army general and one of the fathers of military reform in Taiwan, said, "The next five years are critical. We need to reform our organization, get a new defense system and deal with the threat from the People's Republic of China, all at once." US officials argued that Taiwan's military reforms are important to the US because the US has committed itself to helping the island's defense. If Taiwan's military collapses in the event of a PRC attack, the US would face a difficult choice of whether to directly intervene. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for April 25, 2001.]

6. PRC Reaction to US Arms Sales

Agence France Presse ("CHINESE MILITARY STOKES ANGER OVER NEW U.S. ARMS SALES TO TAIWAN," Beijing, 4/25/01) reported that the PRC military on Wednesday continued to voice its anger over US weapons sales to Taiwan. An editorial in the People's Liberation Army Daily, the PRC armed forces' mouthpiece, said, "The Taiwan authorities are now playing a very dangerous game. Arms purchases can only make the Taiwan Straits situation more turbulent, increase the threat to regional peace and stability, and backfire. Arms purchases will not only be unable to genuinely guarantee Taiwan's 'security,' they may also bring disaster to the people of Taiwan." Despite strong editorials in several leading newspapers, most state-controlled media carried straight reports on the arms sale and the PRC foreign ministry's condemnation, while state television was also restrained. The English-language China Daily focused on the US role, saying that the "inflammatory decision" to sell arms to Taiwan "could destroy the premise for Sino-US relations." It suggested the arms sale could turn the clock back to the time before 1979, when the US and the PRC established diplomatic relations and the US terminated a mutual security pact with Taiwan. It said, "Selling more advanced weapons to the island is tantamount to restoring the military alliance between Taiwan and the United States." The editorial appeared to blame the worsening of the atmosphere in bilateral relations on the attitudes of members of the new administration of US President George W. Bush. It said, "We can smell the McCarthy style of the provocative stance the Bush administration and some hawkish U.S. politicians have taken in the past weeks."

7. US-Japan Submarine Collision

The New York Times (Calvin Sims, "JAPANESE OUTRAGED AT COMMANDER'S FATE," Tokyo, 4/25/01) reported that Japanese expressed anger that the skipper of the US submarine that crashed into a Japanese fishery school vessel and killed nine people in early February, Commander Scott D. Waddle, was allowed to resign and avoid any further punishment. For many Japanese, the Navy's decision on April 23 to honorably discharge Waddle, who received a letter of reprimand but will keep his full rank and pension, was unacceptable and raised the issue of a possible double standard. However, the Japanese government said that it had no plans to challenge the US Navy's decision because the disciplinary action was taken according to US law. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for April 25, 2001.]

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. For descriptions of the world wide web sites used to gather information for this report, or for more information on web sites with related information, see the collection of other NAPSNet resources.
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Produced by the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development in partnership with:
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