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President

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 26, 2018

Arlington, Virginia, USA

U.S. Senators Cornyn and Inhofe Urge President Trump to Support New Fighters for Taiwan

In a March 26, 2018 letter, Senators John Cornyn and James Inhofe urge President Donald Trump to support the sale to Taiwan of a new tranche of modern, U.S.-built fighters - the F-35B with its vertical lift capability, or additional F-16Vs - to boost Taiwan's air defense capabilities.

The Senators wrote, "*Taiwan has a legitimate requirement to field a modern fighter fleet to address a myriad of defense contingencies. Therefore, Taiwan is requesting U.S. support in their procurement of the F-35B.*" "*However, if determined that release of the F-35B to Taiwan is premature, we hope that you will instead make available additional F-16Vs to address the quantitative and qualitative challenges confronting Taiwan's fighter fleet. Taiwan already fields the F-16, and this would represent a cost-effective solution to Taiwan's legitimate defense requirement for additional fighters.*"

Cornyn and Inhofe also noted, "*These fighters will have a positive impact on Taiwan's self-defense and would act as a necessary deterrent to China's aggressive military posture across the Asia-Pacific region.*"

China's force modernization efforts are having a destabilizing impact on the entire North East Asian security environment. Japan and Korea, as well as forward-deployed U.S. forces, are procuring and/or upgrading their fleets of modern fighters in response. It is entirely consistent with U.S. interests to support Taiwan's efforts to do likewise. To maintain a credible defense against China's coercive military posture, Taiwan urgently needs to modernize its fighter fleet.

It has now been 25 years since Taiwan last bought new-build fighters, and this has become a challenge for the Taiwan Air Force. Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen recognizes this challenge, and has stated her willingness to take decisive action including budgeting significant funds to procure new fighters. A U.S. sale of new fighters to Taiwan would have a positive impact on Taiwan's defense spending, and would represent an important increase in Taiwan's commitment to its own defense and security.

Rupert Hammond-Chambers, President of the US-Taiwan Business Council, noted that "*failing to sell new-built fighters to Taiwan is to relegate the Taiwan Air Force to marginalization and eventual extinction. That would significantly weaken the island, which is inherently destabilizing, while placing an additional burden on U.S. and allied forces to manage the airspace between Okinawa and the Philippines.*"

Hammond-Chambers also said, "*The Council supports the sale of additional fighters to Taiwan. We believe that such a sale is consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) requirement to provide Taiwan with arms to defend itself. It would also be an important development in the Trump Administration's policy of promoting capacity-building amongst Asian friends and allies, it would represent an important defense export opportunity for American companies, and it would be an appropriate response to China's ongoing force modernization efforts and its constant coercive training deployments against Taiwan.*"

A copy of the letter is attached, and can also be downloaded from the Council's website at www.us-taiwan.org.

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 26, 2018

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write today to urge your administration to commit to providing new, U.S. made fighters to aid in Taiwan's self-defense. Since the early 1950's, the United States has promoted peace by ensuring that Taiwan has the means to defend itself. The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), states that the US should, "maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan," which codifies the U.S. policy of robust support for Taiwan's self-defense into law.

After years of military modernization, China shows the ability to wage war against Taiwan for the first time since the 1950's. However, with your leadership, it is possible to help Taiwan remain a democracy, free to establish a relationship with China that is not driven by military coercion. Taiwan has a legitimate requirement to field a modern fighter fleet to address a myriad of defense contingencies. Therefore, Taiwan is requesting U.S. support in their procurement of the F-35B.

In 1993, the U.S. sold Taiwan 150 F-16s to bolster its air defenses, ensuring that Taiwan pilots flew U.S. made fighters to defend Taiwan's sovereign airspace. Those F-16s have been the backbone of Taiwan's air force for over 20 years. Taiwan currently has approximately 144 F-16 fighters in its inventory; 15 are in the U.S. for training, and an additional 24 will be offline on a rolling basis in their ongoing upgrade program that runs through 2023. At a reasonable operational rate, Taiwan is likely able to field only 65 F-16s at any given time in defense of the island. In my opinion, this is not enough to maintain a credible defense.

I understand that Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has requested to purchase the F-35B vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft to bolster Taiwan's air defense. The survivability of the F-35B and modern long-range sensors could help Taiwan intercept Chinese missiles, promoting deterrence well into the next decade. The F-35B would not only provide a modern fifth-generation fighter, but would also bolster their capabilities in next-generation warfare.

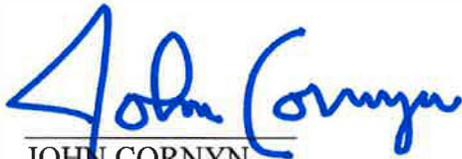
However, if determined that release of the F-35B to Taiwan is premature, we hope that you will instead make available additional F-16Vs to address the quantitative and qualitative challenges confronting Taiwan's fighter fleet. Taiwan already fields the F-16, and this would represent a cost-effective solution to Taiwan's legitimate defense requirement for additional fighters.

If Taiwan's air defense fleet is allowed to degenerate in number and quality, I am concerned that it would be destabilizing and would encourage Chinese aggression to ensue. Additionally, I am concerned that Taiwan's military weakness and the inability to mount a credible air force would place an undue burden on forward-deployed U.S. forces in North East Asia.

Taiwan is rightly criticized for not investing enough in its own self-defense. However, we can make a significant impact on our longstanding commitment by partnering with Taiwan to provide replacement fighters that positively impact force modernization efforts.

I recommend that your administration make a commitment at the earliest possible date to support the procurement of the F-35B or the F-16V for Taiwan's air force. These fighters will have a positive impact on Taiwan's self-defense and would act as a necessary deterrent to China's aggressive military posture across the Asia-Pacific region.

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator



JAMES M. INHOFE
United States Senator



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About the US-Taiwan Business Council:

The US-Taiwan Business Council (www.us-taiwan.org) is a membership-based non-profit association, founded in 1976 to foster trade and business relations between the United States and Taiwan. The Council provides its members with business intelligence, offers access to an extensive network of relationships, and serves as a vital and effective representative in dealing with business, trade, and investment matters.

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