

# U.S. REMOVES RESTRICTIONS ON DIPLOMATIC CONTACT WITH TAIWAN

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Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on Saturday that the State Department is voiding longstanding restrictions on how U.S. diplomats and others have contact with their counterparts in Taiwan, another move that is expected to upset China as the Trump administration winds to an end.

The Trump administration has sought to strengthen bilateral relations with Taiwan. It announced on Thursday that UN Ambassador Kelly Craft would go to Taiwan, a move that sparked sharp criticism from Beijing and a warning that the U.S. would pay a heavy price. In August, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar became the first Cabinet member to visit Taiwan since 2014.

Mr. Pompeo said that the State Department has created complex restrictions when it comes to contacts between the two parties. He said those actions were taken to appease the Communist regime in Beijing.

"No more," Mr. Pompeo declared in a statement. "Today I am announcing that I am lifting all of these self-imposed restrictions."

Mr. Pompeo said the U.S. maintains relationships with unofficial partners around the world, and Taiwan is no exception.

"Our two democracies share common values of individual freedom, the rule of law, and a respect for human dignity," Pompeo said. "Today's statement recognizes that the U.S.-Taiwan relationship need not, and should not, be shackled by self-imposed restrictions of our permanent bureaucracy."

Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu welcomed the move.

"I'm grateful to @SecPompeo & @StateDept for lifting restrictions unnecessarily limiting our engagements these past years," Wu said in a retweet of a Pompeo tweet about the announcement.

## China hits back at U.S.

China's state media lashed out at Mr. Pompeo, accusing the Secretary of State of "seeking to maliciously inflict a long-lasting scar on China-U.S. ties."

The Chinese government maintains that mainland China and Taiwan are parts of "one China." China has been stepping up its threats to bring the self-governing island under its control by military force with frequent war games and aerial patrols. It has been using its diplomatic clout to stop Taiwan from joining any organisations that require statehood for membership.

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