

U.S. TO SELL DEFENCE SYSTEMS WORTH \$2.4 BILLION TO TAIWAN

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Tsai Ing-wen

The U.S. on Monday said it had approved a \$2.4 billion sale of 100 Harpoon coastal defence systems to Taiwan, defying Beijing's anger over a \$1 billion missile deal last week.

The announcement came just hours after Beijing said it would sanction U.S. firms involved in an earlier arms sales to the democratic self-ruled island.

The proposed sale of the Harpoon systems "will help improve the security of the recipient and assist in maintaining political stability, military balance... and progress in the region," the State Department said in a statement.

The deal involves 100 Harpoon Coastal Defense Systems (HCDS), which includes 400 RGM-84L-4 Harpoon Block II surface-launched missiles with a range of around 125 km.

The missiles, manufactured by Boeing, can be positioned on fixed platforms or mounted on trucks.

The office of Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen released a statement thanking the U.S. for the sale, saying it would "upgrade asymmetric warfare capabilities."

Democratic and self-ruled Taiwan lives under constant threat of invasion by China, whose leaders view the island as part of their territory. They have vowed to one day seize Taiwan, by force if necessary.

Beijing has ramped up diplomatic and military pressure on Taiwan since the 2016 election of Ms. Tsai, who views the island as a de facto sovereign nation and not part of "one China."

Military activity

Chinese fighter jets and bombers have entered Taiwan's air defense zone with unprecedented frequency in recent months, while propaganda films have shown simulated attacks on Taiwan-like territories and U.S. bases in Guam.

Beijing said on Tuesday it "firmly opposed" such moves, urging the U.S. to "call off the relevant arms sales plan to Taiwan, so as not to cause further damage to China-U.S. relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait". China said it would "take necessary measures to firmly safeguard its national sovereignty and security interests."

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