



Press Note:

Senator Cornyn Releases Lippert Hold, White House Makes Concessions on Taiwan Arms Sales

(Arlington, Virginia, April 27, 2012)

Senator John Cornyn has lifted his hold on the Senate confirmation of Mark W. Lippert for Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian & Pacific Security Affairs – the Pentagon's top Asia official. The hold was lifted in exchange for a White House letter (attached) addressing Senator Cornyn's concerns over Taiwan arms sales, and in particular the longstanding request from Taiwan to purchase new F-16 C/D aircraft. The White House letter included a commitment that forthcoming "near-term" solutions to Taiwan's fighter shortfall will include new U.S.-made fighter aircraft. Mr. Lippert was confirmed by the Senate last night, before it recessed for a week.

In the letter, signed by White House Director of Legislative Affairs Robert L. Nabors, the Administration states that *"We are mindful of and share your concerns about Taiwan's growing shortfall in fighter aircraft - as the F-5s are retired from service and notwithstanding the upgrade of the F-16A/Bs. We recognize that China has 2,300 operational combat aircraft, while our democratic partner Taiwan has only 490. We are committed to assisting Taiwan in addressing the disparity in numbers of aircraft through our work with Taiwan's defense ministry on its development of a comprehensive defense strategy vis-a-vis China."* In addition, the letter asserts that *"the Assistant Secretary, in consultation with the inter-agency and the Congress, will play a lead role as the Administration decides on a near-term course of action on how to address Taiwan's fighter gap, including through the sale to Taiwan of an undetermined number of new U.S.-made fighter aircraft."*

The language in today's White House letter differs significantly from the original Administration response to Senator Cornyn's concerns. In a February 15 letter, the U.S. Department of Defense asserted that *"we believe the F-16 A/B upgrade effectively meets Taiwan's current needs."* (See attached.)

In a statement today, Senator Cornyn said *"I commend the Administration for recognizing that our friend and ally Taiwan's air force is woefully undersized and outgunned by Communist China, and their inability to adequately defend themselves poses a threat not just to their own security, but to that of the United States. I look forward to continuing to work hand-in-hand with the Administration and Taiwan as we move forward in this joint effort to ensure Taiwan has the new American-made fighter jets it needs to defend itself."*

Senator Cornyn is not alone in expressing his concerns over U.S. efforts to support Taiwan's legitimate requirement for a modern and fully capable air force. The Taiwan Airpower Modernization Act - bipartisan legislation authored by Senator Cornyn and Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), which would require the Obama Administration to sell no fewer than 66 new F 16C/D multirole fighter jets to Taiwan - may be considered in the House later this spring. The issue is continuing to attract attention because as the program to upgrade Taiwan's 145 F-16 A/Bs begins, and in the absence of new F-16s C/Ds, Taiwan will have as few as 75 usable modern fighters at any given time between 2016-2022.

The US-Taiwan Business Council congratulates Mr. Lippert on his new position, where we look forward to working with him on Taiwan defense issues. The Council also urges the Administration to follow through on this newfound commitment to Taiwan's defense by announcing the sale of new F-16 C/Ds to Taiwan. At a time when America needs every job it can generate, such a sale would mean more than \$17 billion to the U.S. economy, and it would be protecting more than 87,000 jobs. It would also serve to protect peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, which is a core strategic interest of the United States.

We look forward to keeping you updated on this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

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