

December 6, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write with concern about reports that U.S. arms transfers to Ukraine are impeding our ability to prevent a war in Asia by supplying Taiwan with the weapons it needs to deter a Chinese invasion.

We should be clear: Taiwan is more important for U.S. national interests than Ukraine. Seizing Taiwan is Beijing's next step toward dominating the Indo-Pacific region. If Beijing succeeds, it would have dire ramifications for Americans' national security, as well as our economic security and freedom of action. We must not let this happen. Averting the real and growing threat from China requires us to expedite delivery to Taiwan of the weapons it needs to defend itself—provided Taiwan commits to an asymmetric defense, significantly increases its own defense spending, and pursues necessary defense reforms.

Your Administration, however, is doing the reverse. You are prioritizing arms to Ukraine over our vital security interests in Asia. This is not a tenable position. Last month, you personally acknowledged, "There has been a change in the approach from Beijing toward Taiwan in recent years," and that Beijing is now "determined to pursue reunification on a much faster timeline."ⁱ This is consistent with Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines's assessment that China poses an "acute" threat to Taiwan between now and 2030.ⁱⁱ It also aligns with warnings from defense officials, including former commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Admiral Phil Davidson, who testified that Beijing may invade Taiwan as soon as 2027.ⁱⁱⁱ

Despite the increasingly urgent threat, however, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission recently found that "[t]he diversion of existing stocks of weapons and munitions to Ukraine and pandemic-related supply chain issues has exacerbated a sizeable backlog in the delivery of weapons already approved for sale to Taiwan, undermining the island's readiness."^{iv}

A *Wall Street Journal* report echoed the Commission's findings.^v The report states, "The flow of weapons to Ukraine is now running up against the longer-term demands of a U.S. strategy to arm Taiwan to help it defend itself against a possible invasion by China." It goes on to say that the backlog for Taiwan "has grown to \$18.7 billion," up from "more than \$14 billion" a year ago. The backlog reportedly includes Javelin anti-tank weapons and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles. These weapons are vital to an asymmetric defense of Taiwan, but they have yet to arrive in Taiwan, even as the Administration has sent thousands to Ukraine.^{vi}

Administration officials will no doubt point out that the mechanisms for delivering weapons to Ukraine and Taiwan differ. Many weapons headed to Ukraine, for instance, come from existing U.S. stocks. But this explanation does little to allay concerns. Regardless of the weapons' source, if both Taiwan and Ukraine need them, they should go to Taiwan first.

Nor does the United States have the luxury of waiting for China to invade Taiwan before we send weapons to the island. It will be exceedingly difficult to deliver weapons to Taiwan after a contingency begins due to Taiwan's susceptibility to Chinese blockade. Moreover, the whole purpose of sending weapons now is to *deter* any conflict. Waiting jeopardizes this goal.

None of this is to say we should sell or otherwise provide weapons to Taiwan absent conditions. To the contrary, all U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan should be strictly conditioned to ensure they are used as effectively as possible in support of an asymmetric defense strategy. Among other things, that means tying U.S. transfers to Taiwanese defense spending increases and defense reforms. It also means providing Taiwan the right capabilities. Fighter jets, tanks, and the like will do little to deter or defeat an invasion. In contrast, Javelins, Stingers, HIMARS rocket launchers, and related weapons are ideal for an asymmetric defense strategy and should be sent to Taiwan as quickly as possible—not diverted to or delayed on account of Ukraine.

These concerns in mind, I request your written responses to the following questions no later than December 16, 2022:

1. Is it true that both Ukraine and Taiwan would benefit from some of the same capabilities to defend themselves? If so, please provide a list of such capabilities.
2. Is it true the United States has sent weapons to Ukraine that could also be used for an asymmetric defense of Taiwan? If so, please provide a list of such weapons, along with an explanation for why the Administration prioritized Ukraine over Taiwan in these cases.
3. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff testified in April 2022 that arming Taiwan would help to reduce operational risk to U.S. forces.^{vii} How do you explain why it is worth arming Ukraine over Taiwan if that could leave U.S. forces in greater danger in the event of a Taiwan contingency?
4. The Chairman also testified that arming Taiwan would help to bolster deterrence against China. Does sending weapons to Ukraine that could also be used for an asymmetric defense of Taiwan weaken deterrence against China?
5. Going forward, will the Administration commit to prioritizing delivering weapons to Taiwan ahead of Ukraine and other countries? If so, how will you ensure this is done rapidly and effectively, at scale? If the Administration feels it is unable to deliver weapons to Taiwan ahead of other countries for legal reasons, please explain why.

6. How can Germany or other NATO allies do more to arm Ukraine, so the United States can focus more of its scarce resources on arming Taiwan?

Thank you for your attention to this important and increasingly urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley
United States Senator

CC:

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin, III
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

ⁱ Ellen Francis, “China Plans to Seize Taiwan On ‘Much Faster Timeline,’ Blinken Says,” *The Washington Post*, October 18, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/18/china-seize-taiwan-plan-blinken/>.

ⁱⁱ Katie Bo Lillis, Michael Conte, Jennifer Hansler and Veronica Stracqualursi, “US Intelligence Officials Warn China is ‘Working Hard’ to Be Able to Take Over Taiwan Militarily,” *CNN*, May 10, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/10/politics/avril-haines-china-taiwan>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mallory Shelbourne, “Davidson: China Could Try to Take Control of Taiwan In ‘Next Six Years’” *USNI News*, March 9, 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/03/09/davidson-china-could-try-to-take-control-of-taiwan-in-next-six-years>.

^{iv} *2022 Annual Report to Congress*, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, November 15, 2022, <https://www.uscc.gov/annual-report/2022-annual-report-congress>, 618.

^v Gordon Lubold, Doug Cameron, and Nancy Youssef, “U.S. Effort to Arm Taiwan Faces New Challenge With Ukraine Conflict,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 27, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-effort-to-arm-taiwan-faces-new-challenge-with-ukraine-conflict-11669559116>.

^{vi} Mark F. Cancian, “Is the United States Running out of Weapons to Send to Ukraine?”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 16, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/united-states-running-out-weapons-send-ukraine>.

^{vii} Hearing to Receive Testimony on the Department of Defense Budget Posture in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2023 and the Future Years Defense Program, 117th Cong., April 7, 2022, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/22-26_04-07-2022.pdf, 107.