

Answer to Question

Question: On January 29th, 2010, the Obama administration announced that the US Congress has been informed of its plan to sell 6.40 billion dollars of weapons to Taiwan which include Black Hawk helicopters, Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missiles, mine hunter ships and information technology for F-16 fighter aircrafts.

What does the US gain by this deal with Taiwan? How will it tackle its relationship with China which have relatively improved since the economic crisis, and moreover there were expectatations of improvements in the relations especially after Obama having taken over the presidency and visited China in December, 2009? Does Taiwan still matter to it after the US de-recognised it as representing China? Or are there other motives behind the scene? Please clarify, may Allah reward you.

Answer:

Yes, as you have mentioned in the question, the Obama administration has on 29.01.2010 informed the US Congress of its plan to sell 6.40 billion US \$ worth of arms to Taiwan that includes Black Hawk helicopters, Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missiles, mine hunter ships and information technology for F-16 fighter aircrafts...

1. As a result of this, the Chinese are very upset and fuming, the Chinese Vice Minister for External Affairs He Yafei expressed his country's strong reaction and issued a statement warning that this deal to sell US arms to Taiwan "It will be unavoidable that co-operation between China and the United States over important international and regional issues will also be affected." He added: "This new American plan to sell arms to Taiwan which is an inseparable part of China constitutes gross intervention in the internal affairs and exposes the national security of China to great danger and jeopardise efforts towards a peaceful re-unification of the country." The US ambassador to Beijing was called and serious protest was conveyed to him. [Chinese News Agency Xin Hua: 30.01.21010]. After this, the Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi termed his country's reaction over US arms sale to Taiwan as "very reasonable", he said: "We approached the U.S. side very seriously on many occasions. Yet the U.S. went ahead with the deal worth 6.4 billion US\$." He added: "This plan grossly violates the 3 joint communiqués between the US and China, especially the 17th August communiqué." "The American decision to sell more weapons to Taiwan "constitutes a gross intervention into China's internal affairs, seriously endangers China's national security and harms China's peaceful reunification efforts," Mr. He said in the ministry's statement. He demanded that the US immediately cancel the erroneous decision with regard to the arms deal and respect China's vital interests as well as respect the US obligation to support peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan straits. [Xin Hua: 30.01.21010]. The Chinese foreign ministry as well as the foreign relations committee of the Chinese Peoples Congress have issued similar and strong statements expressing their protest over the US arms deal with Taiwan. In addition to this China has taken certain steps protesting the same, the foreign ministry issued a statement saying: "China has decided to partially freeze the exchange programme between the armed forces of the two countries as well as high-level consultation on strategic security, arms control and non-proliferation issues which were originally scheduled to be held shortly." "The statement further said:" China will impose sanctions on American companies involved in the arms sale to Taiwan." The statement also said that "Sino-US cooperation in regional and greater international affairs will certainly be affected because of this deal." [Xin Hua: 30.01.21010].

2. On the other hand the Chinese reactions and their intensity has been very visible while the US response over the Chinese reactions was lukewarm and uncaring with no senior US administration official speaking on the subject with exception of the US State Department's spokeswoman Laura Tischler saying: " "Such sales contribute to maintaining security and stability across the Taiwan

Strait," She further remarked that such arms sale are consistent with the One China policy of the United States and its Taiwan Relation Act. The sale, she said is also in line with the 3 pact that guide the US-China relations. [Reuters: 30.01.2010]. But it may be mentioned that the US action actually violates the three communiques especially the 17th August Communique wherein the US is committed to refrain from taking any action to implement long-term policies for arms sale to Taiwan and is required to work to gradually reduce arms sale to the Island!

3. The American action is not simply incidental, nor is it a merely a matter of trade profit through arms sale to Taiwan, it is intended to put pressure on China and force it into agreeing with the US in various matters including upward revaluation of the Chinese currency against the US dollar and othper trade issues as well as the censorship of the US electronic serach engine "Google" in which the United States has directly been involved.

4. Moreover due to America's shaken standing after the financial crisis as well as its problems in Iraq and Afghanistan, China is begining to emerge from its own region into the international political arena; therefore the US is trying to create an effective problem within the vicinity of China, thus engaging it there and further heating up the already tense situation. On the other hand the US wants to send the message to China that the US is strong and its writ runs globally. This is also the message for the other big nations of the world at large.

5. As for Taiwan importance to the US, it amounts to nothing in comparison with Amrica's interest that it can acheive with China. In 1979 the US had withdrawn its recognition to Taiwan as being representative of the Chinese people. Obama has added other features to please the Chinese since coming to power apart from the broad smiles he gave to them during his last visit in Decmber 2009 when he welcomed China's emergence into an international role. Obama expressed his intentions to strengthen and devlop relations with China including military relations...This is because the US needs China in many issues whether financial, trade or foreign policy...

. All this indicates that it is not possible for the US to sacrifice its relations with China neither for a mere 6.40 billion US dollars nor for the sake of Taiwan which amounts to nothing on the global political map which the US has alrady forsaken as being representative of the Chinese people...

Thus the tensions with China will not reach beyond a measured point especially because the US is convinced that the Chinese reactions will not spell a breaking point in their bilateral relations, as a US official recently commented:"The Chinese reactions are temporary."

16th Safar, 1431 A.H

February 1st, 2010 C.E