

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 21, 2013

The Honorable Charles Hagel
Secretary of Defense
Office of the Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As friends and supporters of the Republic of China (Taiwan), we would like to thank you for continuing the long-standing security and economic partnership between the United States and our democratic ally, Taiwan. We agree strongly with the Obama Administration's view, expressed by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, that Taiwan is an "important economic and security partner" that helps to maintain a peaceful and prosperous Asia-Pacific. As such, like with other allies and partners in the region, we believe the United States should consider every opportunity to help enhance Taiwan's ability to contribute to regional peace and stability. We therefore request that you extend an invitation to Taiwan to participate in RIMPAC 2014 to help increase their Navy's proficiency in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations.

As you know, currently RIMPAC 2014 will include 23 nations, including the People's Republic of China, and will focus on the objective of enhancing "the interoperability of the combined RIMPAC force across the full spectrum of military operations and to improve maritime security competencies." It is our understanding that the PLA Navy, after being invited to participate by your predecessor, Leon Panetta, is planning to contribute several Navy ships to the exercise. We believe it is beneficial for the United States to maintain a relationship with Taiwan equal to the relationship our government chooses to maintain with the PRC. For the same reasons that the PRC has been invited to join RIMPAC, including building a closer maritime relationship and enhancing critical nautical skills useful for maintaining peace and stability in the region, an invitation should also be extended to Taiwan.

Taiwan's participation in HA/DR exercises will contribute to its capacity to respond to disasters. Taiwan must respond frequently to earthquakes and typhoons that strike its own homeland. Building this capacity will only increase the Taipei government's ability to effectively respond in the future. As well, consistent with our Maritime Strategy, building cooperative relationships with maritime nations such as Taiwan will contribute to the security and stability of the maritime domain in the Asia-Pacific region for the benefit of all.

We also believe there is a strong precedent for both bilateral and multilateral engagement with Taiwan that should make its participation in RIMPAC 2014 a natural decision. As you know, since 1997 the U.S. Air Force has trained Taiwan's F-16 fighter pilots at Luke Air Force Base, AZ. This training is not just bilateral, but also multilateral as Taiwan's Air Force pilots train there along with Singapore Air Force pilots. The United States has stressed the importance of this training and notified Congress on September 21, 2011 that it planned to continue the program. In its justification, the Department stated Taiwan is "one of the major powers in Asia and the Western Pacific and a key partner of the United States in ensuring peace and stability in that region," and the pilots of the Taiwan Air Force and the U.S. Air Force "will have the opportunity to fly together, which will support disaster relief missions, non-combatant evacuation operations, and other contingency situations." We could not agree more with the benefits of this effort and believe Taiwan and the region will only benefit from extending our training and exercises to the maritime realm.

Our security relations with Taiwan in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act, in addition to our treaty alliances with other regional allies, are the cornerstone of our strategic position in the Asia-Pacific region and continue to ensure regional stability and enhance our regional leadership. America's long-standing relationship with its democratic partner in Taiwan is stronger than ever, but we believe there are still areas where we should continue to deepen this partnership. We therefore hope you strongly consider our request to expand military exercises with Taiwan and extend an invitation for their participation in RIMPAC 2014.

Sincerely,



J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress



Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress



Rob Wittman
Member of Congress



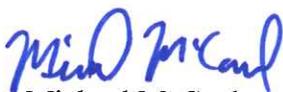
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