



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on May 31, 2021

Special Forces Nominee Says U.S. Could Train Taiwan to Resist Chinese Invasion

President Biden's nominee to oversee the U.S. Special Forces said officials should "strongly consider" deploying American operators to Taiwan, where they could train local troops on how to deter a potential Chinese invasion.

Christopher Maier — who's been tapped to be the assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low-intensity conflict — told lawmakers this past week that special operators could be sent to the island to instruct Taiwanese forces on irregular warfare and resisting an "amphibious landing" — a military action of coordinated land, sea, and air forces organized for an invasion — by Beijing.



AP Images

"I do think that is something that we should be considering strongly as we think about competition across the span of different capabilities we can apply, [special operations forces] being a key contributor to that," Maier told Senator Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) at a Senate Armed Services Committee [hearing](#) on Thursday, when asked about ways to deter Chinese aggression.

During the hearing, Senator Hawley entertained the idea of special-operations forces assisting Taiwan, in a manner similar to how American special forces help Baltic nations strengthen their ability to resist Russian aggression. Maier supported the idea, saying that special operators could help Taiwanese troops hone their skills, and mentioned resistance networks and counteracting potential enemy amphibious landings as examples.

Information operations is a key area where special operators can help conventional forces deter Chinese aggression, he said. Improving how U.S. special forces conduct information operations will be one of his top priorities, he added.

Maier's comments come as the Biden administration embarks on a rhetorical and policy offensive against the People's Republic, [stepping](#) up U.S. military operations in China's backyard while putting out a steady stream of saber-rattling statements that would have been met with a fierce media shriek if Trump administration officials had said anything remotely similar.

On May 26, the White House's Indo-Pacific policy director, aka Asia Czar, Kurt Campbell [said](#) the era of Sino-American engagement had "come to an end," and declared a new "dominant paradigm" of "competition," adding that "for the first time, really, we are now shifting our strategic focus, our economic interests, our military might more to the Indo-Pacific."

Earlier, on May 21, President Biden met with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, where they [explicitly stated](#) the "preservation of peace and stability" on the Taiwan Straits was an important component of



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their regional strategy.

President Moon noted, “As for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, we agreed how important that region is, especially considering the special characteristics between China and Taiwan. We decided to work more closely on this matter going forward.”

Beijing has repeatedly denounced the efforts to meddle with China-Taiwan affairs, with the latter being considered a Chinese province in rebellion.

During one of the recent press conferences, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian [blasted](#) U.S. and South Korean leaders after they voiced concerns about Taiwan’s stability, saying Beijing would not “tolerate external interference” in its affairs.

“The Taiwan issue is purely Chinese internal affairs.... The interference from outside forces is unacceptable,” said Lijian, warning Washington and Seoul not to “play with fire.”

In recent months, the tensions have been rising between China and Taiwan. Chinese officials [stated](#) on numerous occasions that the Middle Kingdom reserves all options against Taiwan, including the use of force, to demonstrate its decisiveness. Just four days after President Biden took office, a large force of Chinese bombers and fighters [flew](#) past Taiwan and launched simulated missile attacks on the *USS Roosevelt* in the South China Sea.

President Xi Jinping hasn’t been subtle about it, either. “We do not promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option to use all necessary measures,” Xi [said](#).

People’s Liberation Army Air Force warplanes have flown over the Taiwan Strait in record numbers this year, and flights have escalated in the last couple of months. Such flights have violated Taiwan’s self-declared Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) and raised [Taiwanese fears](#) of full-scale war.

Chinese shows of force usually spike during perceived advancements in U.S.-Taiwan relations, experts [say](#). The military operations in the Taiwan Strait serve to tax the island’s small air force and put pressure on the Taiwanese government to accept Beijing’s preferred regional arrangement.

Taiwan continues to receive [bipartisan](#) support on Capitol Hill — American is the country’s most important international backer — yet the policy of “strategic ambiguity,” as the U.S. policy toward Taiwan is known, may only work until the United States actually has to decide whether to defend Taiwan from being annexed by China.

Any escalation of tensions could result in a [barrage](#) barrage of missile strikes and hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops landing on Taiwan’s beaches, and would force Biden to make a choice: wade into the fight against a nuclear-armed China, which could [end](#), according to simulated war games, into a crushing defeat for the United States, or hold back and watch a decades-long partner fall.



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