

Lu tells visitors China wants to annex Taiwan

NAKED AMBITION: The vice president emphasized China's hostile intent, and noted that Beijing now had an arsenal of more than 800 missiles aimed at Taiwan

By Chiu Yu-Tzu

STAFF REPORTER

"We clearly know that China wants to extend its power into the Pacific Ocean by taking Taiwan," —Annette Lu, Vice President.

Vice President Annette Lu yesterday repeated her view that China's ambition is to annex Taiwan, to a group of visiting German parliamentarians

Lu told her visitors that she expected that Germany, which is now led by its first ever female chancellor Angela Merkel, will maintain its efforts to ensure world peace.

Lu said she appreciated the German parliament's decision last year not to allow the lifting of the arms embargo on China.

"The decision is crucial not only to Taiwan but also to the Asia-Pacific region," Lu said.

Stressing China's animosity toward Taiwan, Lu said that President Chen Shui-bian, in his New Year address, noted that China has deployed 784 ballistic missiles targeted at Taiwan.

If cruise missiles are included in that count, Taiwan is now targeted by more than 800 Chinese missiles, Lu said.

"We clearly know that China wants to extend its power into the Pacific Ocean by taking Taiwan," Lu said.

Lu said she was glad to see the EU expand and that she hopes the EU's 25 members would jointly monitor the development of China's military capabilities in order to ensure peace in the region.

In his New Year address, Chen said that he would not bow to pressure from the opposition parties and China to relax his cross-strait policies. Since then, Chen's idea of "active management, effective opening" has been criticized by opposition parties.

Elaborating on the president's remarks, Presidential office Deputy Secretary-General James Huang yesterday said that "what the president said is not about new policies, but rather a new mindset ... we are trying to significantly improve the efficiency of government management."

Huang made the remarks while meeting with foreign correspondents in Taipei to explain Chen's policies.

Huang said that Chen's past "five noes" pledges and his sincere willingness to engage in dialogue with China remain unchanged.

"The president has held out olive branches several times, but the Beijing government remains hostile to Taiwan's government," Huang said.



The grim road ahead

President Chen Shui-bian's New Year message was different from his previous speeches that pretended everything was going well.

This time, he adopted a more aggressive attitude in dealing with problems that have plagued the government since 2000.

Commentators say that since the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) took power, the party has been living in a dream world in which "reconciliation" with the opposition is possible. This led the government to support a policy of "active opening, effective management" over China and "reconciliation and coexistence" with the opposition.

But Chen has finally realized that what the opposition really wants is the power to rule.

As a result, major bills such as the arms procurement plan, the reconstruction of government agencies, the handling of the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) stolen assets, and the NT\$80 billion flood prevention budget have been consistently blocked in the legislature.

The pan-blue camp believes that with its legislative majority it can simply use gridlock to cripple the government until the next presidential election.

It has also allied itself with Beijing in placing pressure on the government to allow fruit exports to China, challenged the executive in pushing for direct links and insisted that the National Communications Commission adopt a dubious procedure in which members are selected based on representation in the legislature. It is not considering a change of policy, and why should it? Closing down chunks of the executive has proved politically acceptable for voters who value action over rhetoric.

Chen has rekindled hope among the pan-green camp's supporters, for many believe that Chen has now renounced reconciliation with the opposition and realized that current trade policies have made the economy too reliant on China.

He also admitted that the government has not been effective in pursuing the KMT's stolen assets, thereby allowing that party ample time to defend or liquidate them. His

admission is no more than the public deserve.

Although Chen placed considerable emphasis on the importance of clean government, he retains a number of people of dubious character around him and failed to satisfactorily address the question of Presidential Office staff playing the stock market during office hours.

His promise to establish a government ethics and anti-corruption office under the Ministry of Justice, however, is simply adding to the already formidable bureaucracy. If this office is to be established, it should be directly under the Presidential Office. Regardless, the sheer volume of talk and the absence of action on government and other corruption has been acutely disappointing.

A number of Chen's idealistic proposals, such as a referendum on a new constitution, are likely to sustain confrontation between the government and the legislature. But without any clear strategy to have these items appeal to lawmakers, it is likely that 2006 will be yet another year of gridlock, stalling and impotent speeches.



The problem of leadership

By Huang Jei-hsuan

Questions regarding the best person to lead the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) following the debacle in the recent local government elections are being raised in earnest. But people must first ponder the necessary qualifications of such a leader lest history be repeated.

The uniqueness of Taiwan's security needs dictates that the first order of business for a pan-green-camp president is to minimize the US government's anxiety over conflict with China while allowing Taiwan to protect its democratization.

It is therefore imperative that the next pan-green-camp presidential candidate possess international experience in addition to domestic appeal.

In particular, the new candidate should have a solid grounding in US politics as well as the skill to forge a rapport with Washington.

Most importantly, this person must be capable of earning respect. Only respect can be translated into trust. One of the worst things a Taiwanese president could do internationally is to lose credibility.

It's worth noting that heads of state who have wavered under US pressure often find themselves losing the trust of not only their own constituents but also, surprisingly, the US government.

That helps to explain why, of all Taiwanese politicians, former president Lee Teng-hui, who insisted on continuing democratization while occasionally frustrating US government officials, is the most revered figure in the US.

The bottom line is that the US does not trust a politician who lacks conviction.

A new pan-green-camp president could advocate democratization just short of crossing the line, a line that admittedly has never been clearly marked out. Yet there exists no compelling reason why this line could not stop short at a new name and a new flag.

Caution voiced by Washington on Taiwan's continuing democratization has been invariably justified in the context of maintaining the ever-elusive "status quo," while reflecting no motivation other than an arbitrary interpretation of the antiquated "one China" policy or, worse, knee-jerk reactions to pressure from Beijing.

More often than not, the effects of meddling with Taiwan's democratization have impeded Washington's long-term security interests.

The new president, therefore, should be able to promote changing the name of the country just shy of giving it a new name, as well as pursue an overhaul of the Constitution up to and including a clarification on territorial claims.

Trust between Taipei and Washington is the key to success in these endeavors.

The new pan-green-camp leader could also tell the public that although there remain limitations on issues of sovereignty for the time being, Taiwan should always be ready

to grasp the opportunity for an unequivocal declaration of sovereignty if it arises.

In sharp contrast, a party-state established by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) will never take advantage of such an opportunity.

One need not look any further than the precedent set in 1971 when the KMT refused to consider a UN seat for Taiwan following its loss of the China seat to Beijing.

All of this only helps to illustrate how hopes for continuing democratization can only emerge with the arrival of a new pan-green-camp leader.

Bitter experience, however, tends to call into question the adequacy of the DPP's faction-brokered approach to installing one.

Further compounding this problem is the fact that a pan-green president is expected to perform well above the standard of his pan-blue-camp opponents even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The public doesn't easily tolerate excuses for a lack of accomplishments -- as President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) has painfully discovered.

Given that it is paramount to consolidate pan-green-camp resources for the next presidential and legislative elections, a formula should be laid out to incorporate not only DPP voices but also those under other parts of the pan-green umbrella in selecting a new leader.

Huang Jei-hsuan

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