

US to Chen: please stop the surprises

ADHERENCE: The US State Department repeated its displeasure over possible changes to unification guidelines with a call for improved communication

By Charles Snyder

STAFF REPORTER IN WASHINGTON

A senior State Department official has called on Taipei to communicate fully with Washington to avoid a repetition of President Chen Shui-bian's "surprise" Lunar New Year proposal to scrap the National Unification Council and unification guidelines and seek UN membership as "Taiwan."

James Keith, the department's special assistant for East Asian affairs, said he expected that Washington and Taipei would continue to operate very closely together in the future, "with no daylight between us in terms of our policy approaches."

Speaking to Taiwanese reporters at an impromptu press conference on Thursday after he made an appearance on Capitol Hill, Keith said that US policy toward Taiwan had not changed, "and we have every expectation that that will be the case in Taiwan as well."

Noting that communication between the two sides was very close, Keith said he was "gratified" by this.

"It's important that we use those channels to ensure there are no surprises between us, because these are issues that directly affect American interests, and therefore we need to be in close touch," he said.

The State Department is said to be angry that Chen put forward his proposals on UN membership and the unification council without telling Washington first. That would explain the department's sharp reaction on Monday when it took the unusual step of widely publicizing its reaction statement to Chen's speech, equating his speech with an effort to change the "status quo."

Keith, the department official most closely involved in Taiwan policy, said the department acted because "we felt it necessary to be absolutely clear about US

policy ... We fully expect that the president and his government will continue to adhere to the status quo ... and that the kind of assurances that were provided in the past will continue to be honored."

The gap in communication that the department says occurred around the New Year speech is curious, considering that communication between the two sides has been closer and more open in recent years.

This is especially the case in Washington, where de facto ambassador David Lee Ta-wei and other officials with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office are in regular contact with key US officials.

"We've heard from the Taiwan government just about every day this week, and last week and the week before," Keith said.

On Chen's proposal to seek UN membership under the name "Taiwan," Keith said only that US policy had not changed.

"Our expectation is that we'll stay in close alignment with the government in Taiwan on that and many other issues," he said.

Keith did not directly comment on the latest statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs James Huang on the issue, saying he had not seen Huang's remarks.

In response to the US rebuke, Huang said that Chen was merely suggesting that the government was considering scrapping the council and the guidelines because the council is covered by a legislative resolution that all ad hoc commissions without a legal basis be eliminated.

"The president is just reflecting the concerns of Taiwan's people," Huang said on Thursday.

"It was not Taiwan's intention to surprise the United States," he said. "If there are differences on both sides, we shall strengthen communication with the US authorities."



US officials warn PRC repression will fuel instability

EROSION OF VALUES: State Department official James Keith said China's economy was growing at the price of health, the environment and the ability to manage change

AGENCIES , WASHINGTON

A senior US State Department adviser on East Asia says China's leaders face the daunting task of trying to bring stability to a society that is quickly fracturing even as the economy booms.

Washington's challenge is to push Beijing to respect citizens' rights while encouraging it as it moves from developing to developed country, Special Assistant for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Keith told a congressional advisory panel examining US-China relations on Thursday.

"China's economic miracle is unfolding at a high cost," Keith told the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, "not just in terms of environmental degradation and public health, but also in terms of an erosion of social and ethical values."

"From our perspective, unless they tap the full potential of their people, unless they allow the exercise of various expressions, they won't be able to succeed with their goals" of making China into a developed world power, he said.

China's rapid transformation has exposed, and sometimes created, serious problems for its 1.3 billion people, he said.

Despite 26 years of average annual growth rates of 9.5 percent, the country still faces desperate poverty, Keith said, with a per capita income of about US\$1,700. US per capita income was estimated in 2004 at about US\$40,000.

More than 200 million Chinese live on less than US\$1 a day, Keith said, and people in cities have four times the income of the 800 million Chinese living in the countryside.

Keith also told the commission that China's official figures counted 87,000 public protests last year, up from 74,000 in the previous year.

The sometimes violent protests arose from anger at environmental degradation and official misdeeds, ranging from uncompensated land seizures to arbitrary and illegal taxes to failure to pay back wages and pensions, he said.

China's leaders were aware of those problems and others such as deteriorating healthcare and social services -- and in many cases were getting help in tackling them through US government programs, Keith said.

But China's crushing of dissent and other "backward steps" such as a clampdown on the Chinese media, Internet debate and nongovernmental groups represented a fundamental divide between Washington and Beijing, he said.

"We believe they need to protect fundamental freedoms. Clearly the Chinese have a different view of this," said Keith, who toured rural China last month.

Another top US official cited Chinese repression of unrest as a major area of disagreement.

"China's rise may be hobbled by systemic problems and the Communist Party's resistance to the demand for political participation that economic growth generates," US intelligence chief John Negroponte said.

"Beijing's determination to repress real or perceived challenges, from dispossessed peasants to religious organizations, could lead to serious instability at home and less effective policies abroad," he said.

But Jerry Clifford, an official with the US Environmental Protection Agency, praised Beijing's efforts to recognize that more needs to be done to fight a massive pollution problem.

He said China would overtake the US as the largest emitter of greenhouse gases within 25 years.



Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman positive on China ties

AFP, SEOUL

The chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff yesterday said that the risk of war with China was diminishing with the growth of economic ties with the country.

Despite concern over Beijing's rapid and secret military build-up and tension in the Taiwan Strait, General Peter Pace said Washington and Beijing had more shared interests than differences.

"I am optimistic about the future with regard to China. There is much more that the two countries have in common than we have not in common," said Pace, the top military advisor to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

"As we continue to build the economic bridges between the two countries and as each country becomes more and more dependent on the other for prosperity, when you do that you lessen significantly any probability of military complications," he said.

A Pentagon report last year estimated China's defense spending at two to three times greater than acknowledged by Beijing, or up to US\$90 billion for the year.

Last month Japan identified China as a military threat because of its opaque military spending.

Pace, a Marine Corps officer who took over as chairman of the joint chiefs last year, said it was the military's job to identify capabilities it would need for future events.

"You do not focus on countries but on potential capabilities that you will need, and then build to that," he said.

He said that on North Korea, Washington needed to look at the country's fighting capabilities which included an army of 1.2 million troops and "be prepared to counter that overwhelmingly."

He said a transformation of the US-South Korea alliance was in progress, including reducing US forces in South Korea from 37,000 to 25,000 by 2008 and withdrawing

them from the border with North Korea to bases south of Seoul.

He said it was hard to be certain of Pyongyang's intent, but "you need to be prepared if their intent is ill."

"We are fully capable today of defeating any North Korean aggression and we will maintain that capacity," he said.

Pace said that the Pentagon's Quadrennial Report, to be released next week, will assess US military needs over the next 20 years.

"It will be a lookout, as best you can look out, 20 years into the future," he said.

South Korea's move to regain wartime control over its troops, which now would come under the operational control of the commander of US forces here in times of conflict, was welcome, he said.

"This is an opportunity, not a challenge," he said of talks that are scheduled for this year.



President vows to keep on in 'the right direction'

By Shih Hsiu-chuan

STAFF REPORTER

President Chen Shui-bian, under fire from Washington for his recent Lunar New Year remarks regarded by the US as a move to change the cross-strait status-quo, said yesterday that he will keep on doing the 'right thing' without fear.

"This year, I am bound to do my duty to lead the Taiwanese people in doing the right thing as well as leading the country to move in the right direction," Chen said while giving an address at the Presidential Office's Lunar New Year reception.

Stance reaffirmed

While Chen didn't elaborate on the meaning of the "right thing" and the "right direction," the address suggested that he was reaffirming his stance on the abolition of the National Unification Council and the unification guidelines, joining the UN using the name "Taiwan," and holding a referendum on a new Constitution by next year.

"I believe that I won't have any fear of doing so as long as I have the conviction. As long as I am fearless, I will have power and I can make it in the end," he said.

Chen said that the realization that he was doing the "right thing" without fear came after reading the book *The Faith of George W. Bush*, during the Lunar New Year holiday.

Bush book

"I learned from the book that one of [US President George W.] Bush's ancestors was a minister who told his family to 'do the right thing,'" Chen said.

Chen said that he welcomed comments from everyone on his realization and he encouraged everyone to encourage each other this year using the words of Bush's ancestor.

The US State Department said on Monday that Chen's plan to scrap the National Unification Council and guidelines was a move that would change the cross-strait status quo, adding that joining the UN using the name of "Taiwan" was a unilateral change.



No 'surprise' intended, says foreign minister

NOT CONCRETE: MOFA boss James Huang said that the suggestion to scrap the NUC was just an idea, and that the US should not be overly concerned with the issue

By Chang Yun-ping

STAFF REPORTER

Minister of Foreign Affairs James Huang yesterday said that Taipei did not intend to "surprise" the US with President Chen Shui-bian's remarks on abolishing the National Unification Council and the unification guidelines, despite Washington's call for Taipei to stop unsettling US-Taiwan relations.

Huang said yesterday that in Chen's remarks to his supporters in Tainan County on Jan. 30, he only mentioned that Taiwan should "seriously consider" scrapping the National Unification Council and Guidelines for National Unification and therefore it did not constitute a surprise because the president did not say it's a "done decision."

"If we tell the US after we've decided to [scrap the Unification Council and guidelines], then that's a surprise," Huang said.

Huang made the remarks yesterday during the ceremony to mark the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' award of a special diplomatic service medal to former foreign minister Mark Chen, who is now secretary-general of the Presidential Office.

In response to a local Chinese-language newspaper report that the US did not accept the explanation given by Taiwanese authorities regarding Chen's remarks, Huang said "it's too early to say whether the US was unsatisfied" as Taipei and Washington are still in communication regarding the issue.

The foreign minister admitted, however, that Washington did want Taipei to further clarify the issue and said the government has been actively explaining, both by talking to the press here and communicating with the US through private channels.

The foreign ministry has been busy communicating with the US over the past few days since the president made the remarks on the first day of the Lunar New Year. The AIT also sent its spokeswoman Dana Shell Smith to gather information regarding the issue on Thursday.

Ministry staff and officials in charge of relations with the US said they had been conducting emergency measures to "extinguish the fire" by stressing the president's ideas were a preliminary thought and nothing concrete.

High-ranking officials from different governmental departments also convened emergency meetings to try to set the tone for the issue as Secretary-General of the National Security Council Chiou I-ren, Vice Premier Tsai Ing-wen, Foreign Minister

Huang and Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Joseph Wu met in the foreign ministry on Thursday morning to decide on a unified response to the issue.

The meeting concluded that the foreign ministry would reiterate that Taiwan's stance is consistent with that of the US on cross-strait relations and the MAC would focus on attacking the necessity of the National Unification Council.



DPP legislators back Chen's proposals

CNA, TAIPEI

President Chen Shui-bian's proposal to scrap the National Unification Guidelines and the National Unification Council (NUC) are issues that should be studied, the legislative caucus of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) said yesterday, adding that it will give its full support to the plan.

Chen Chin-jun, a DPP caucus whip in the legislature, noted that the president said in his speech that he will reinforce Taiwan's sovereignty and that the Taiwanese people should be the ones to decide the nation's future.

Agreeing with the president's remarks, the legislator said that the pro-unification opposition parties did not have the right to decide the nation's future. But Chen Chin-jun added that Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, who has criticized the president's proposal as rash, should not "panic," because the president's words were only meant to highlight Taiwan's sovereign status.

Yeh Yi-jin, another DPP whip, said that Taiwan is already a sovereign independent country and has maintained the status quo, and that the NUC, which was established more than a decade ago by the KMT government, exists in name only.

President Chen said at a Lunar New Year gathering with his supporters in Tainan on Sunday that he might seriously consider scrapping the NUC and the National Unification Guidelines to "highlight Taiwan's unique national identity," despite pledging in his inaugural speeches in 2000 and 2004 that abolishing the council and

guidelines would "not be an issue," as long as China had no intention of using force against Taiwan.

In his recent remarks, Chen also proposed applying for UN membership under the name "Taiwan" and drafting a new constitution by the end of this year to be put to a referendum next year.



Independence stalwart shares his views

Examination Yuan President Yao Chia-wen, who is a former Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) chairman and a pioneer of Taiwan's independence movement, shared his views on the current difficulties that the DPP is experiencing in taking the independence campaign to the next stage in an exclusive interview with 'Taipei Times' staff reporter Jewel Huang

Taipei Times: Since the success of the Feb. 28, 2004 hand-in-hand rally that championed Taiwan's sovereignty and rejected China's missile threat, the Taiwan independence movement seems to have been unable to move forward. Do you think the movement has suffered any setbacks?

Yao Chia-wen: I don't think that Taiwan's independence movement has been thwarted or experienced any setbacks. On the contrary, I think it has made many successful achievements in a sense. If you look back at the history of the Taiwan independence movement, it can be divided into three general stages.

The first stage was before 1971, a period during which we focused on advocating Taiwan's separation from China because the government ruled by Chiang Kai-shek claimed it was a regime that represented China, with the official name of the Republic of China (ROC) only. Therefore, many independence campaigners overseas at that time argued that Taiwan should separate from China and announce its independence.

The second stage was from 1971 to 1986, the year that the DPP was founded. During this period, the Kaohsiung Incident occurred in 1979, former president Chiang Ching-kuo passed away and former president Lee Teng-hui succeeded him. What we worked on during this period was trying to rid Taiwan of the color of China or China's

influence and trying to change Taiwan from a "Chinese nationality" into a "Taiwanese nationality." In practical ways, we facilitated full-scale elections for the legislature and promoted the direct election of the president.

The third stage of the Taiwan independence movement started in 1986 and is still ongoing. We are now in the latter period of the third stage. What we [the DPP] have tried to highlight and restate during this period is that Taiwan enjoys independent sovereignty. In that regard, we proposed a Constitution for the Republic of Taiwan in 1990. And then Lee announced the abolition of the "Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion" and enabled people to vote directly for the president and vice president.



Examination Yuan President Yao Chia-wen, left, speaks at a book launch in Changhua County last month. He is accompanied by his wife, National Policy Adviser Chou Ching-yu.

With the subsequent chain of democratic reforms, Taiwan has confirmed the fact that its territory covers Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu. Since then, the DPP has stopped championing separation and moved to highlighting Taiwan's status quo, which indicates that Taiwan is an independent sovereign state with a democratic system.

After that, Lee proposed his "special state-to-state" theory in 1999 and President Chen Shui-bian declared "one country on either side" in 2002. The campaign for changing Taiwan's official name and writing a constitution naturally follows. I believe that few people in Taiwan would recognize that Taiwan represents the Chinese government or argue that the Taiwanese government has sovereignty over China. Therefore, I think the Taiwan independence movement has been quite successful up to now.

What independence campaigners are doing now is to promote something that will enable Taiwan to become a state that has a name and constitution matching the present reality and its people's needs. I think the Taiwan independence movement moves forward slowly but you can't say it has been dealt any setbacks.

However, we do face some difficulties in revising the Constitution and promoting the

name-change movement because the opposition parties control the legislature. Besides, I think the DPP has not disseminated enough information regarding the independence movement. But that's another issue.

What Taiwan does now is to fight against China's rule and refuse to become a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In this regard, it also means that Taiwan has never been a part of the PRC.

So far, we've made some initial achievements regarding the name-change movement, for example, the word "Taiwan" has been added to Taiwanese passports.

However, there are still many government departments and social groups using the word "China," such as state-run China Steel, the Chinese Petroleum Corp and China Airlines. But the atmosphere [for name changing] has gradually been building.

As for writing a constitution, it is true that we face some hitches and difficulties. In Taiwan, there are still many people who are reluctant to wipe away China's influence. But I have to say that it was not wise for the president to claim that "Taiwan is the ROC and the ROC is Taiwan" as he did in his 2004 National Day address, because that does not reflect the reality.

Taipei Times: Do you think the issue of constitutional reforms and the name-change movement are overused by leading figures in the DPP at election time? It seems that leaders like the president often bring up these issues to stimulate voters' will, yet remain oblivious of their campaign promises after the election campaigns end.

Yao: The president did not participate in the independence movement from the very beginning; therefore, he might not exactly understand how we got through it and what we have achieved over the years.

Taipei Times: I talked to people who participated in the march held on Sept. 25 to protest against the pan-blue opposition's ongoing obstruction of the special arms budget. Many of them felt that the independence movement has lost its energy since the DPP won power. What exactly is the problem?

Yao: Well, I have to say that the DPP now lacks a complete discourse for the independence movement. But that is only one of the problems. The DPP's

organization is not strong enough either. The campaigning style should be changed too.

For example, from my observations, the constitutional task force established by the Presidential Office is weak and doesn't function effectively. Gathering academics and governmental officials to discuss constitutional topics in luxurious meeting rooms in hotels doesn't really help.

I think the biggest reason for the current inactivity of the Taiwan independence movement is the negligence of political leaders. It seems that leaders of social groups, political parties and governmental departments have more interest in campaigning for public office than in the campaign for reforms.

Some people holding important office who have power and influence either have no time or have no interest in [promoting the independence movement.]

Therefore, reforms are consequently stalled. Besides, Taiwan's mass media is also a strong reactionary force in blocking the reform movement. But the obstruction that we encounter is no less than that during the era of martial law.





Stop pan-blue shenanigans

By Huang Jei-hsuan

It was reported recently that the Japanese government, at the urging of the US military, may revise an existing law governing the use of some of Japan's airfields and seaports by US forces during a crisis near Japan, to expand it to cover more public facilities.

The revision would also clarify that emergency in the Taiwan Strait or the Korean Peninsula would qualify as such a crisis. In addition, the US military has reportedly inferred that it can use all commercial airfields in Kyushu in case of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

This and other indications all illustrate that the US-Japan alliance is forging ahead with preparations to guard against conflicts in the region.

In sharp contrast, Taiwan's pan-blue camp in the Legislative Yuan continues to block the arms procurement bill, despite the government's repeated efforts to address their concerns.

While the pan-blue camp may seem consistent in its propensity for pacifism, its treatment of the arms bill also has the earmark of a grand scheme to mislead the Taiwanese people and beguile the rest of the world.

There is near consensus that given the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) avowed goal of formal independence for Taiwan, the potential for conflict will peak during its watch.

That argument is but a red herring cultivated by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT)-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) alliance to divert attention away from the real threat to the area's stability: namely, Beijing's territorial claims on Taiwan.

In reality, the US' steadfast counsel of restraint to the DPP government would make any rash move to cross the line all but impossible under normal conditions.

It is a KMT administration that leans toward Beijing rather than Washington in its security considerations that would most likely put Taiwan in a precarious position. Instead of exercising prudence, Beijing's leaders would have no compunction in pushing Taiwan deep into "unification" without due consideration for stability in the region.

Parallel to this, some other mechanisms are also in play.

The cross-strait alliance between the CCP and the KMT has often been credited with easing tensions between Taiwan and China. What might have been overlooked is a simultaneously growing undertow of domestic tensions within Taiwan that can only bode ill for the Taiwanese people.

This could be better elaborated with the analogy of the interaction between two tectonic plates, with China on one side and the US-Japan alliance on the other. After pressure is released at one spot following a series of minor seismic activities, while the underlying energies that are forcing the plates remain intact, pressure accumulates in another spot and could trigger an earth-shattering event.

The potential for conflict has not been curbed. Only the location for potential flare-ups has shifted.

What matters most to the Taiwanese people should be the distinction between a peace predicated on a strong defense -- keeping the stress point external to Taiwan -- and a probable catastrophe if that stress is fully transferred or even multiplies, becoming internal to Taiwan itself.

In short, should the KMT take power in 2008, Beijing would, in light of its "Anti-Secession Law," attempt to draw Taiwan into its sphere of control, thereby possibly touching off internal strife in Taiwan that would have implications for regional stability, at the very least.

Conversely, if the DDP stays in power, the US will maintain its sway over Taiwan and ensure that it does not cross the line. That, together with the US-Japan-Taiwan coalition's determination to wield sufficient military capability -- including adequate deterrence for Taiwan, will continue to keep peace viable in the region.

But this conclusion about the effects of the pan-blue camp's shenanigans on regional

peace and stability appears to go against conventional wisdom.

However, if the majority of the Taiwanese people arrive at the same conclusion in the next two years and discard the illusion that the pan-blue camp is more capable of maintaining peace in the region, the KMT's ability to keep making mischief should greatly diminish.

Until then, the US will have to weigh the probability that the course of action charted by the KMT-CCP alliance could inexorably draw all the powers in the region into a momentous collision.

Huang Jei-hsuan

California



Ma's youth corps set to produce dictators

By Cao Chang-qing

After taking over as chairman of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), Ma Ying-jeou has been intensely engaged in the organization of a KMT youth corps. The leadership of this youth corps is to be made up of the sons of former top KMT officials in an obvious attempt to use this "princeling party" to restore their power.

The establishment of such an organization is totally preposterous. In a democratic country, a political party is just that, and there should be no such "reserves." In the US, it would be inconceivable that the Democratic or Republican party would organize a youth corps. It takes a dictatorial party to set up that kind of organization, as exemplified by the Chinese Communist Party's Communist Youth League of China, the KMT's Three Principles of the People Youth Group -- which became the China Youth Corps after the KMT's move to Taiwan -- and the Hitler Youth and the SS in Nazi Germany.

Why is it that only dictatorial parties set up this kind of organization? Because the purpose -- besides providing new blood for a party aimed at despotism -- is to take

advantage of the ease of communication between young people of the same age and the ease of creating enthusiasm over ideological issues among youth, thereby undertaking a process of ideological brainwashing. Only dictators need to resort to such methods. Democratic parties that are open to the possibility of relinquishing their hold on power rely on mature governance and policymaking rather than ideological fanaticism to maintain or regain power.

With the KMT's despotic past still fresh in our minds and its dictatorial image still deeply imprinted in our hearts, the party should avoid setting up this kind of organization, if only to avoid suspicion. But the KMT is being loud in promoting its plan. According to the US-based Chinese-language newspaper World Journal, Ma has even said that he hopes the youth corps will produce a new Hu Jintao.

Who is Hu, apart from being China's president? According to the US magazine Parade, Hu ranks sixth on a list of the world's 10 biggest dictators. When the KMT, which claims to be a democratic party, expresses hope that its youth corps will create a future national leader, it should not use Hu as an example. Hu is the leader of a dictatorship aiming several hundred missiles at Taiwan. When making this kind of comparison, Ma could just as well be saying that he hopes that the KMT's youth corps will produce another Hitler.

Earlier on, Ma even said that in the future there would be nothing wrong with an alumnus of Peking University or Renmin University becoming chairperson of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, while a graduate of National Taiwan University or National Tsing Hua University could become the director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO).

The problem with Ma's statement is not that he lends recognition to Chinese degrees, but that he is totally indifferent to the brainwashing that constitutes education in China, and that he acknowledges the TAO, an organization whose ultimate mission is to swallow Taiwan. In his recent interview with Newsweek, he even said that "For our party, the eventual goal is reunification."

Why did Ma use Hu to describe a future KMT presidential candidate? Why was he so friendly toward the TAO? Why did he opt for "reunification" as his party's eventual goal, rather than respecting voters' right to choose and considering people's happiness? Apart from the fact that Ma has not emerged from under the shadow of one-man dictatorial rule, his words also reveal what the KMT expects from a prospective

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presidential candidate.

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