

Watch Russian Su-25 Aircraft Destroy Ukrainian Mortar Units

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The Biden administration announced a \$345 million military package for the island of Taiwan last week – the first tranche of a \$1 billion package allocated by Washington for Taipei earlier this year. US weapons will come directly from Pentagon stockpiles to the island under the so-called Presidential Drawdown Authority, a mechanism typically used for seeding-up arms supplies.

It turned out on Tuesday that the US president was going to ask Congress to fund arms for Taiwan as part of a supplemental budget request for Ukraine. The move was interpreted by the Western press as an effort to further speed up the delivery of new weapons to the island under the pretext of "the rising threat from China."

However, prospects of a war in the region would not necessarily pan out as Washington thinks, argued our pundit, Earl Rasmussen.

"It's going to be interesting in the Pacific area because it would not be a land war like Ukraine, it would definitely be a naval conflict or heavily navy," the retired lieutenant colonel with over 20 years in the US Army and an international consultant, told Sputnik.

"I think it would be unwise though. They could be thinking that it's another poor strategy and poor assumptions. We could see a lot of different carrier fleets eliminated by the Chinese I think quite quickly which I think would catch the West off by surprise. But they could look for a limited conflict they'd hope that would create new things to increase the relations with other countries in the Pacific region. New submarines, new battleships and things like that. I could picture that looking for an opportunity on that side. But I think it would be unwise."



An MQ-9 Reaper, a hunter-killer surveillance UAV

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Per the US press, the \$345 million weapons package will include MQ-9 Reaper drones as well as small arms ammunition. Earlier, the island bought Reapers, as well as missiles, fighter jets and other sophisticated weapons from the US. In particular, the list includes 400 land-launched Harpoon missiles, the F-16 Block 70 fighters, the MK-48 torpedoes, the M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzers and the Stinger missiles, per the US press.

Even though the US does not formally recognize Taiwan – as Washington still complies with the One China policy – it nevertheless supplies the island with weapons despite protests from Beijing that considers Taiwan an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China.



Analysis

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Why is Biden Fast-Tracking Taiwan Arms Sales?

There are multiple theories as to why the Biden administration is racing against time to arm Taiwan. In some sense, it could be an attempt by Biden to command support from the GOP in the US Congress, as per Rasmussen.

"I think there may be some bending on that to get more Republican support on the military budget. It's balancing on the political side there too. The Republicans do seem to be more anti-China than they are anti-Russian," the expert said.

Apparently, Biden is also under pressure from America's China hawks who are fuming over delayed arms deliveries to Taiwan. Last year, US lawmakers complained that the island is facing a \$14 billion backlog in foreign military sales from the US. They lamented the fact that some of those unfulfilled agreements date back to 2017.

The delays were blamed on increased weapons deliveries to Ukraine and the US defense industry's limited production capacity. Presently, the volume of Taiwan's military orders, which have yet to be delivered to the island, stands at almost \$19 billion in value.

There is yet another possible reason for the Biden administration to speed up arms supplies to the island: the Taiwanese US-backed **Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)** appears to be losing both international grip and domestic popularity ahead of the January 2024 presidential election.

In contrast, a somewhat "pro-China" **Kuomintang** is said to have good odds of returning to power. Previously, the Kuomintang maintained working relations with **the Communist Party of China** which were disrupted after the DPP won the majority in parliament in 2016 and presidency in 2020.



World

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Rasmussen agreed that the US military-industrial complex could profit from the further escalation over Taiwan. Moreover, the US naval industry has already been granted a years-long submarine deal, struck by the US, the UK and Australia within the framework of the tripartite AUKUS pact. The Indo-Asia-Pacific is clearly in focus of the present US administration, despite vocal concerns from **China** and even **ASEAN** states about a potential nuclear arms race and militarization of the region.

Still, the map of new possible conflicts which could see NATO's involvement includes more regions than just Europe and Asia-Pacific, according to Rasmussen.

"We've got potential new conflicts occurring as well," the military expert said. "I think you need to keep an eye on and then maybe even Central Asia too. But, but definitely I think we need to look at what's going on in Syria. We are going to get more intense there. Or look at Niger and what's going on with Niger. Are we going to try to ramp up tensions there? France is talking about intervening. We've got the Western embassies withdrawing their citizens out of that region. But it's not just Niger. If you go in with Niger, you're going to confront multiple African countries at once. It could be a nightmare."



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