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**Statement By
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Office of the Secretary of Defense
Before the 117th Congress
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
December 8, 2021**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to describe how the Department of Defense is supporting Taiwan's ability to defend its vibrant, prosperous democracy.

I'd like to begin with an overview of why Taiwan's security is so important to the United States. As you know, Taiwan is located at a critical node within the first island chain, anchoring a network of U.S. allies and partners—stretching from the Japanese archipelago down to the Philippines and into the South China Sea—that is critical to the region's security and critical to the defense of vital U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific. Geographically, Taiwan is also situated alongside major trade lanes that provide sea lines of communication for much of the world's commerce and energy shipping. It is in part for these strategic reasons that this Administration, like those before it, has affirmed our commitment to our one-China policy, as guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint U.S.-PRC Communiques, and the Six Assurances.

Taiwan is also integral to the regional and global economy. Its free-market economy embraces innovation, entrepreneurship, and private-sector led growth, which has helped Taiwan become a valuable economic and trade partner for the United States. Indeed, our economy—like many others around the world—has come to count on Taiwan as a critical supplier of high-technology, including semiconductors.

Moreover, Taiwan is a beacon of democratic values and ideals. In stark contrast to deepening authoritarianism and oppression in the PRC, Taiwan has proven the possibilities of an alternative path to that of the Chinese Communist Party.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) Threat

Unfortunately, although the PRC publicly advocates for peaceful unification with Taiwan, leaders in Beijing have never renounced the use of military aggression.

In fact, the PLA is likely preparing for a contingency to unify Taiwan with the PRC by force, while simultaneously attempting to deter, delay, or deny third-party intervention on Taiwan's behalf.

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The PRC's options for military campaigns against Taiwan are bolstered by the PLA's rapidly advancing capabilities, including the sophistication of its surface ships and submarines, advances in combat aircraft and air defenses, the increased quantity and quality of ballistic and cruise missiles, and the development of tools for cyber and information warfare.

The PRC threat to Taiwan, however, is not limited to invasion or blockade. The PLA is conducting a broader coercive campaign in the air and maritime domains around Taiwan. These operations are destabilizing, intentionally provocative, and increase the likelihood of miscalculation. They put the prosperity and security of the region at risk, and are part of a pattern of PRC military coercion and aggression against other U.S. allies and partners in the region, including India, Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

DoD Priorities for Taiwan

Although the PLA's actions are real and dangerous, and PLA modernization is unlikely to abate, the PRC can still be deterred through a combination of Taiwan's own defenses, its partnership with the United States, and growing support from like-minded democracies. Through smart investments and key reform efforts, Taiwan can send a clear signal that its society and armed forces are committed and prepared to defend Taiwan. Without question, bolstering Taiwan's self-defenses is an urgent task and an essential feature of deterrence.

We therefore appreciate that President Tsai has prioritized the development of asymmetric capabilities for Taiwan's self-defense that are credible, resilient, mobile, distributed, and cost-effective. In short, these are affordable investments in lethal capabilities tailored to counter the military threat from the PRC. These capabilities are aimed to strengthen multi-domain deterrence and ensure that an invasion or attack could neither succeed rapidly nor occur without substantial costs. DoD is taking an increasingly proactive approach to supporting these efforts as we continue upholding our commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act to make available to Taiwan relevant defense articles and services.

Asymmetric capabilities, however, are only one part of the deterrence equation. Taiwan must complement investments in these critical capabilities with equal focus on enhancing resilience, supporting civil-military integration, and building a strategy that includes defense-in-depth. In this regard, President Tsai's determination to reform Taiwan's reserve forces and integrate civilian and military agencies under the All-Out Defense Mobilization Agency is critical to enhancing Taiwan's overall preparedness—and in doing so will further strengthen deterrence. DoD will continue to work with relevant U.S. departments and agencies to support Taiwan's efforts in this regard.

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DoD's Focus on Taiwan

In addition to the provision of defensive arms and services to Taiwan, the Department remains committed to maintaining the capacity of the United States to resist the resort to force or other forms of coercion that may jeopardize the security of the people on Taiwan. Let me be clear that this is an absolute priority: The PRC is the Department's pacing challenge and a Taiwan contingency is the pacing scenario. We are modernizing our capabilities, updating U.S. force posture, and developing new operational concepts accordingly.

I should also underscore that the Department's efforts to deter PRC aggression and enhance Taiwan's defenses will not be in isolation. Countries throughout the Indo Pacific and beyond recognize that PRC aggression against Taiwan would have serious consequences for their interests, and are increasingly voicing concerns about PRC coercion and potential aggression against Taiwan. As evidenced by a number of recent multilateral operations and exercises, the Department is focused on enhancing our regional cooperation as a means of bolstering deterrence.

Finally, I'd like to close by thanking all of you for your strong, bipartisan support for Taiwan. It is my firm belief that this bipartisanship is one of our most powerful assets in the defense of Taiwan, and should be nurtured and treated as such. In that context, the Department's partnership and bipartisan collaboration with Congress are critical to ensuring that we continue to meet our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act. Please be assured that the Department of Defense understands the growing threat from the PRC and its military, and we are committed, in line with our longstanding policy, to ensure Taiwan's ability to deter and defend its successful and prosperous democracy.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I look forward to your questions.