

Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ted Yoho (R-FL), Chairman**
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Hearing:
“Renewing Assurances: Strengthening U.S.-Taiwan Ties”
June 15, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon. Taiwan has not received significant attention in Congress since last year. At that time, the focus was on the campaign and later the victory of President Tsai Ing-wen, and the mood was optimistic and celebratory. Since that time, unfortunately, Taiwan’s international outlook has become increasingly cloudy.

Diplomatic Pressure and International Space

Just this week, Panama severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan and recognized the People’s Republic of China, a gut wrenching loss for Taiwan’s dwindling diplomatic recognition. Last month, the PRC blocked Taiwan’s delegation from attending the World Health Assembly in Geneva, the annual gathering of the World Health Organization, despite the fact that Taiwan has regularly attended the summit and has been an international force for good in the health space. It is not only Taiwan’s loss, but the world’s as diseases know no borders.

Since President Tsai’s election, the PRC has escalated a global campaign to squeeze Taiwan’s international recognition out of existence.

Security and Economic Environment

Taiwan’s security situation is being challenged alongside its diplomatic presence. The PRC has undertaken unprecedented military provocations around Taiwan in recent months. In November of last year, China flew aircraft around the perimeter of Taiwan’s Air Defense Identification Zone for the first time. In January, the PRC sailed the Liaoning, its first aircraft carrier, through the Taiwan Strait.

These actions, the PRC’s increasingly global military ambitions, and its belligerence in the East and South China Seas have contributed to an environment of instability. However, the United States has *not* completed an arms sale to Taiwan since 2015, though the Taiwan Relations Act requires the United States to offer the necessary equipment for Taiwan’s self-defense capability.

Successive administrations have shown a lack of resolve in executing our defense commitments to Taiwan, emboldening the PRC, which remains uncommitted to a peaceful resolution of Taiwan’s status. Our most recent arms sale was in 2015, and the prior sales were years apart. Since 2008, sales have been delayed so that they can be bundled together and their timing can be manipulated.

The arms sales process has become a political calculation designed to minimize friction with the PRC. Not only does this concede to Beijing a degree of influence over our arms sales process, it seems to contravene President Reagan's assurance that the PRC would not be consulted on arms sales to Taiwan.

Economic pressure on Taiwan is increasing as well. Taiwan has long been a developed, high-tech economy, and is especially dependent on international trade for its prosperity and economic growth. But the PRC's massive and growing economic clout grants it the ability to exclude Taiwan from trade agreements, and to use economic pressure to change other nations' policies towards Taiwan. It is astonishing to think that the backwards, isolated PRC of 1979 could someday bring this level of diplomatic, security, and economic pressure to bear.

The Future of U.S. Policy for Taiwan

The geopolitical reality that held when we established our "One China" policy has changed. The People's Republic of China is no longer the third party to a great power competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. It has become a challenger, seeking to attain great power status for itself by overturning a peaceful unipolar order.

Despite this, our "One China" policy has remained virtually unchanged since 1979. It is important for Congress to consider whether our policies are still serving us well, and how we might improve them. In particular, renewing our assurances to Taiwan of continued and steadfast U.S. support is especially important. We've convened this hearing today to work towards these goals, and I thank the witnesses and my colleagues for joining me today to help strengthen U.S.-Taiwan ties.