

# Cooperation Outlook Between the U.S. National Guard and Taiwan Reserve Force

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## 1. News Highlights

The U.S. has proposed that Taiwan join the National Guard-based cooperation program for Taiwan's armed forces to participate in joint training exercises.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. proposal is based on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 (NDAA), passed by Congress in late 2021.<sup>2</sup> The bill requires the Department of Defense to submit a briefing to the congressional defense committees by February 15, 2022, on the feasibility of enhancing cooperation between the U.S. National Guard and Taiwan. Section 1249 of the Act specifies that the briefing will focus on: a. disaster

relief and emergency response; b. network defense and communications security; c. military medical cooperation; d. Chinese language education and cultural exchange; and e. planning for a program for the U.S. National Guard to assist in training Taiwan's reserve forces.<sup>3</sup> It is evident that the U.S. National Guard should also cooperate with Taiwan's National Fire Agency of the Ministry of the Interior (disaster relief and emergency response), the National Information & Security Information Taskforce of the Executive Yuan (network defense and communication security), the standing Reserve Forces (military medical cooperation), the Ministry of Education

1. "Taiwan's Military, U.S. National Guard Look to Formalize Training Program," *Taiwan News*, January 3, 2022, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4396477>.

2. "S. 1605 - National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022," *Congress. GOV*, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1605/text>.

3. See the above note.

(Chinese language education and cultural exchange), and, most importantly, to assist Taiwan's reserve forces so they can become a reliable force in defense operations.

The U.S. military forces are composed of the Active Force and the Reserves Force. According to Title 10E of the U.S. Code, the Reserves Force is divided into two branches: the federal Reserves Force and the state National Guard.<sup>4</sup> The federal Reserves Force include the Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve. The state National Guard has only two units, the Army National Guard, and the Air National Guard. Members of both the federal Reserves Force and the state National Guard have their civilian jobs and return to their units for training only one weekend a month plus two weeks every year. As of 2022, the U.S. state National Guard has about 444,000 personnel, of which 336,000 are in the

Army, and 108,000 are in the Air Force.<sup>5</sup> Every day, an average of 30,000 National Guard troops are deployed worldwide on federal missions, and 10,000 National Guard troops are on U.S. soil on federal or state orders.<sup>6</sup> In this background, the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act this year requires the Department of Defense to submit an assessment of the cooperation between the state National Guard and Taiwan, with the following security implications:

## 2. Security Implications

### 2-1. Reducing risk of being seen as overt military exchanges between Taiwan and U.S.

In 1979, the government of the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan officially terminated diplomatic relations with the U.S. With the "One China" policy framework in place, Taiwan-U.S. military exchanges have always been a sensitive

4. "U.S. Code: Title 10," *Cornell Law School*, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10>.

5. Erin Duffin, "Number of National Guard Members in the United States from FY 1995 to FY 2022," *Statista*, Jun 21, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/207392/national-guard-members-in-the-usa/>.

6. Joseph L. Lengyel, "2021 National Guard Bureau Posture Statement," *National Guard*, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/portals/31/Documents/PostureStatements/2021%20National%20Guard%20Bureau%20Posture%20Statement.pdf>.

topic, even though Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen was interviewed by the U.S. media CNN last year (2021) and confirmed information about Taiwan-U.S. military exchanges.<sup>7</sup> A few days later, Taiwan Defense Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng stressed that the U.S. military personnel in Taiwan were only to assist in training rather than being stationed as troops, in his answer to legislators.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act of 2022 only requires “local” National Guards to cooperate with Taiwan to reduce the risk of being seen as direct Taiwan-U.S. military exchanges. In addition, both the 2013 Hawaii National Guard Commander Major General Darry Wong<sup>9</sup> and the 2017 Hawaii National Guard Vice Commander Brig. Gen. Kenneth S. Hara have visited Taiwan.<sup>10</sup> In the 2019 Hawaii transit, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen was also accompanied by Major

General Arthur J. Logan, Commander of the Hawaii National Guard and Director of the Department of Civil Defense, to visit the Emergency Management Agency (EMA).<sup>11</sup> These are all open secrets, so the interactions (not stationing) between the U.S. National Guard and the Taiwan military should reduce the risk of the activities being seen as direct Taiwan-U.S. military exchanges.

## **2-2. Building a long-term partnership**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War, the U.S. Department of State directed the National Guards to develop military cooperation and civilian exchanges with some countries (usually third-world ones) through the State Partnership Program (SPP) in accordance with foreign policy objectives to establish long-term

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7. “The President Confirmed that the U.S. Military in Taiwan to Assist Training. Experts: Reminding China that Taiwan is Prepared,” *CNA*, October 28, 2021, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aipl/202110280137.aspx>.

8. “Chiu Kuo-cheng: The U.S. Military Exchange is not Stationed in,” *UDN Online*, October 29, 2021, <https://udn.com/news/story/10930/5851365>.

9. “The Ministry of National Defense’s 102nd Annual Policy Performance Report,” *Bulletin of the Legislative Yuan*, May 30, 2014. <https://ws.ndc.gov.tw>.

10. “First in Trump Administration: U.S. Active-duty General Visited Taiwan Last Month,” *The Liberty Times*, September 4, 2017, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/1132359>.

11. “President Tsai’s Diplomatic Breakthroughs: Meeting with U.S. Generals in Hawaii,” *CNA*, March 28, 2019, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/201903280018.aspx>.

partnerships with Eastern European countries. As a result, the SPP has become an essential security cooperation tool for U.S. engagement with other countries that promotes collaboration in all aspects of military and other affairs and encourages civilian exchanges.<sup>12</sup> Under Title 32 of the United States Code, a state National Guard has two roles. It is under the command of the state government in peacetime, and the federal government may assume jurisdiction in case of war or emergency according to the law.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the commander of the state National Guard often serves in another role as Department of Defense adjutant general of the state. This year, the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act proposed that the state National Guards cooperate with Taiwan, probably taking advantage of the National Guards' dual identity and the purpose of establishing a long-term partnership with Taiwan following the Eastern European model.

### **2-3. Strengthening the effectiveness of “defense in depth”**

The defense concept of Taiwan's armed forces is always based on the order of “air superiority,” “sea superiority,” and “anti-landing.” The operational plan of the military's ground standing units is also focused on pursuing “decisive victory at the shore” and “eliminating enemies at the beach” as the guideline for its combat preparation. However, Taiwan's terrain is long from north to south (394 km) and narrow from east to west (144 km at its widest); the crossing from east to west is blocked by the Central Mountain Range, which further limits the combat depth in the west side. Assuming that the landing PLA troops are not eliminated at the beach and do get ashore, it is Taiwan's reserve forces which will be mainly responsible for urban defenses and defense in depth. For this reason, the U.S. has been asking Taiwan to strengthen its reserve forces through different channels. For example, at the 2019 U.S.-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference, the U.S. suggested that Taiwan consider developing a “combat-capable reserve force.” In 2020, James F. Moriarty,

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12. “State Partnership Program,” *National Guard*, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/leadership/joint-staff/j-5/international-affairs-division/state-partnership-program/>.

13. “Title 32 - NATIONAL GUARD,” *United States Code*, 2011 Edition. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title32/html/USCODE-2011-title32.htm>.



Chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), called on Taiwan to increase its “reserve deterrent force.” The National Defense Authorization Act of 2022, passed in 2021, directly calls for the U.S. National Guards to assist Taiwan in strengthening its reserve forces. These efforts aim to enhance Taiwan’s defense depth to delay the PLA’s attempts to make a quick, decisive attack and reinforce the effectiveness of the “layered deterrence” of Taiwan’s military.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Trend observation

#### 3-1. Signing of “State Partnership Program”

The U.S. National Guards of different states have established 85 State Partnership Programs with 93 countries worldwide.<sup>15</sup> The State Partnership Program is an exchange program between 54 U.S. states (including territories and

Washington, DC) and other countries; each state is usually responsible for conducting regular exchanges with the reserve or standing forces of more than one friendly country. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), primarily responsible for defense in the Asia-Pacific region, maintains State Partnership Programs with ten countries in the region. The State of Hawaii, for example, signed the programs with the Philippines in 2000 and Indonesia in 2006. Recently in 2019, Nepal established a State Partnership Program with the State of Utah.<sup>16</sup>

#### 3-2. Deepening of the all-aspect engagement model

The State Partnership Program is not about U.S. soldiers training military personnel from other countries but about sharing concepts, ideas, and the experience learned. In other words, the Program provides not only military

14. “Evil Neighbor Next Door! Reserve Call-up Training Loses Badly to Singapore, Israel,” *The Liberty Times*, September 29, 2020, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/paper/1402770>.

15. “State Partnership Program,” *U.S. Department of State*, March 3, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-ukraine/>.

16. “State Partnership Program,” *National Guard*, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/leadership/joint-staff/j-5/international-affairs-division/state-partnership-program/>.

contact through the National Guards but also uses civilian identities and capacities to facilitate broader contacts across military, government, economic, and social sectors.<sup>17</sup> Due to the uniqueness of the National Guard and its combination of military and civilian status, in addition to military exchanges with partner countries, it has extensive access to civilian security cooperation programs such as disaster preparedness and relief, humanitarian operations, civil support, NBC (nuclear, biological, and chemical) protection, cybersecurity, anti-narcotic, border/port security, and public/private partnerships.<sup>18</sup> And, most importantly, to assist partner countries with reserve force reform. This year, the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act designated the state National Guards to evaluate cooperation with Taiwan, hoping that a long-term partnership can be established with Taiwan and expand from single points to comprehensive collaboration based on the existing foundation.

### **3-3. Strengthening Taiwan's "defense in depth" capability**

The "defense in depth" concept covers "urban defenses," "mountain warfare," and "civilian resistance." During World War II, the Soviet Union established multiple layers of defensive zones within a depth of more than 300 kilometers west of Moscow, effectively preventing the German army from "blitzkrieg" offenses. On February 24, 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine began; Ukraine is 1,300 kilometers long from east to west (about nine times the depth of Taiwan). On March 29, Russia announced the withdrawal of troops sieging Kyiv for more than a month.<sup>19</sup> The Russian force failed to occupy Kyiv after prolonged attempts, and its supply lines were too long and could be easily attacked. Meanwhile Ukraine borders EU countries in the west and has a constant provision of military supplies. This deepening of Ukraine's depth has effectively retarded Russia's blitzkrieg tactics. In comparison, Taiwan's western

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17. See the above note.

18. "The State Partnership Program," *U.S. Embassy in The Czech Republic*, <https://cz.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/state-partnership-program-spp/>.

19. Nathan Hodge, "Russia Says it will Reduce Military Operations Around Kyiv following Talks with Ukraine," *CNN*, March 29, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/29/europe/russia-reduce-assault-kyiv-plan-intl/index.html>.

region, blocked by the Central Mountain Range, has a combat depth of only about 80 kilometers, so strengthening Taiwan's "defense in depth" capability is a matter of great urgency. After the war broke out in Ukraine, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Mara Karlin told a Senate hearing on March 11 that Taiwan could learn from Ukraine's reform of its reserve forces (territorial defense forces) and their people's will to fight the enemy.<sup>20</sup> Her implication was that Taiwan must prepare to defend itself and that heaven will help those who help themselves. The U.S. National Defense Authorization Act of 2022 calls for an evaluation of the cooperation between the U.S. National Guards and Taiwan's reserve forces. With the Act, Taiwan's military is expected to reference Ukraine's experience and strengthen its reserve forces on the current foundation to perform "defense in depth" with mobilized civilians to defend its territory, making their "layered

deterrence" strategy more effective.

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(The contents and advice in the assessments are the personal opinions of the authors, and do not represent the position of the Institute for National Defense and Security Research.)

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20. "Taiwan must Enhance Defense: U.S.," *Taipei Times*, March 12, 2022, <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2022/03/12/2003774629>.