

China sanctions US arms company Lockheed Martin for sales to Taiwan

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Body

The deterioration of the China-U.S. relationship increases almost daily. On Tuesday, Beijing announced the imposition of sanctions against Maryland-based arms company Lockheed Martin for its role in Washington's latest arms sale with the Taiwanese government. Hours earlier, President Donald Trump's administration gave Xi Jinping in one of the most painful spots: the South China Sea, which Beijing considers one of its key interests. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced a change in the U.S. position, to reject most of China's claims of sovereignty in those waters.

So far, Beijing has not specified the nature of the sanctions it will adopt against the aeronautical giant, although this in itself is not new. Already in other cases of selling U.S. arms to Taiwan he announced retaliation against the supplying companies, although it has never been clear what kind of exact measures he eventually took.

In this case, Lockheed Martin is one of the main beneficiary companies of last week's announced sale, where that the United States will modernize Taiwanese Patriot surface-to-air missiles, in an operation amounting to \$620 million.

At the daily Foreign Office press conference in Beijing, at which he announced retaliation, ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian urged the United States to "avoid continuing to harm both Chinese-American ties and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait." "To safeguard national interests, China has decided to take the necessary steps and impose sanctions on the main supplier."

China considers Taiwan an inalienable part of its territory and does not forgo unification by force. From his point of view, sales of American arms to the island of democratic rule represent an intolerable interference in their internal affairs.

The United States does not maintain official diplomatic relations with Taipei, although it is the island's chief supporter on the military, and its legislation requires it to provide the island with means to defend itself from a hypothetical invasion.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who won re-election in January with a promise to set distances from an increasingly assertive China in her foreign policy, promised in her inauguration speech in May to strengthen the local military. "As we increase our defensive capacity, the development of future combat capability will also place an emphasis on mobility, countermeasures, and non-traditional asymmetric capabilities."

The People's Liberation Army (PLA, Chinese armed forces) is the third largest in the world, while Taiwan's is in position 26, according to the specialized website GlobalFirePower.com.

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