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Prepared Remarks
Formosa Foundation Conference “Ensuring Free and Fair Elections: Taiwan 2012”
December 1, 2011

I want to thank Terri Giles and the Formosa Foundation for inviting me to address this timely seminar on the upcoming presidential and legislative elections in Taiwan.

I would like to point out that an International Committee for Fair Elections in Taiwan has been formed to draw attention to this important event being held today. This committee was formed to safeguard the tremendous gains in democracy and human rights that the Taiwanese people have fought so hard to achieve over the past 3 decades. It is particularly fortunate that the co-founder of this Committee, Ambassador Joseph Wu, is here with us today.

This seminar is being held to assist in assuring that there is no backsliding in the achievement of democracy in Taiwan. In the past few years there have been increasing concerns expressed by civil libertarians about such backsliding. Freedom House’s 2010 *Freedom in the World* report, for example, downgraded Taiwan’s civil liberties ranking from one to two.

This seminar is being held in part to ensure that free and fair elections, unmarred by outside interference of any kind, will be carried out next month.

The January 14th elections will mark another important step forward in democratic Taiwan’s quarter century evolution from a garrison state under martial law to a full-fledged democracy.

When Taiwan ended the unprecedented 38 years of martial law in 1987, few predicted that the island would emerge as a model for democracy and the rule of law in East Asia. But we have arrived at that point today and that is something that freedom-loving people throughout the world can join in celebrating.

Taiwan’s young democracy is still fragile with the first popular election of a president only taking place in 1996. That year, the red dragon across the strait sought to influence the electoral outcome, first through threats and intimidation and later through the firing of missiles. Yet, despite that crisis atmosphere, Taiwan’s citizens bravely went to the polls with their heads held high and freely elected their own president.

Beijing has not lessened its attempts to interfere with Taiwan’s democratic institutions and electoral process in the years since that first eventful election.

For that and other reasons, my colleagues in Congress and I will be watching the conduct of these elections very closely. We wish to assure that Taiwan remains that vital beacon of democracy shining as a bright light across the Taiwan Strait to the imprisoned people of China.

And our other allies in Asia know full well that our commitment to democracy in the Pacific is most tested by the degree of our commitment to democratic Taiwan. Thus, we in Washington must remain vigilant to uncover any signs of the continued attempts by Beijing to bully Taiwan or to again interfere with its electoral process.

I am considering holding yet another Taiwan hearing during the second session of the 112th Congress next year. The upcoming elections and their aftermath would constitute a major focus of any such hearing.

We in the Congress should also call on the Administration to refrain from speaking and acting in any way that can be identified as supporting any particular candidate. Doing so would put the U.S. government on equal footing as China, appearing to ally itself with Beijing against Taiwan's democracy.

That is why I found the comments made in September by an unidentified "senior U.S. official" to the *Financial Times* so disturbing. Any indication that any one candidate for the presidency of Taiwan is preferable to another represents not only gross interference in the internal political affairs of Taiwan but is a violation of democratic ideals.

The U.S. official in question allegedly said that the Administration had concerns that the election of the opposition candidate to the presidency in Taiwan could raise tensions with China.

Well, this Administration official needs to realize that these are elections for TAIWAN'S president, not for China's -- which, in any event, have never taken place in the almost 5 thousand years of Chinese history.

These remarks also represent a violation of one of President Ronald Reagan's six assurances guaranteeing that the United States would never pressure Taiwan nor its people in their dealings with communist China.

As we meet here today, the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Rajiv Shah, is making an official visit to Taiwan. While we all welcome the first such visit by a high-ranking U.S. official in over a decade, I would add a word of caution. With Taiwan's presidential and legislative elections only 6 weeks away, Dr. Shah should be careful to conduct his activities on the island in a manner which projects strict political neutrality.

And if Dr. Shah is to meet with one of the candidates for president of Taiwan then he should be sure to meet with all of the candidates. Otherwise there is a danger that he will project an Administration preference for one particular candidate. And he could also become embroiled in charges of interference in the internal democratic process of another country.

Rather than expressing timidity with regards to Beijing's possible reaction to the elections, I would urge the Administration to publicly express support for Taiwan's

democracy and its willingness to work with the democratically elected government of Taiwan.

Support for democracy, freedom and human rights throughout the world remain core American values, regardless of what the communist Chinese may think.

The holding of free and fair legislative elections on January 14th, free of all coercion, will mark a wonderful day in Taiwan's democratic evolution.

Taiwan's friends in Washington, both in the Congress and in the Administration, should stand together in applauding this stellar achievement.

There can be no retreat from Taiwan's democracy! There can be no abandonment of the Taiwanese values of human rights and the rule of law!

January 14th will be the day to affirm these principles and America's shared commitment to them!

Thank you.