

US Senator Lott `backs' visits for progress on arms

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A top US Congressman said he would support official visits by Taiwanese leaders if Taiwan made substantial progress on a long-blocked arms procurement package.

Natalie Chang (張安琦), a student from Taiwan participating in the US-based [Formosa Foundation's](#) annual student [ambassador program](#), told President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) about Lott's comments yesterday when Chen met the group at the Presidential Office.

Chang told Chen that veteran Republican Senator Trent Lott told her he would be happy to throw his backing behind official visits if the arms budget could make headway in the legislature.

Lott also urged Taiwan to map out a more concrete and long-term plan for the military's procurement projects, Chang said.

The group was led by former senior adviser Wu Li-pei (吳禮培), founder and honorary chairman of the Los Angeles-based non-profit organization.

Thirty students participating in the program were chosen from across the US and Taiwan.

During the two-week program from June 18 to June 30, participants visited 159 members of the US Congress and voiced their concern over issues such as Taiwan's accession to the WHO, the US government's "one-China" policy and a possible US-Taiwan free trade agreement.

Chen complimented the group for accomplishing a "mission impossible" in explaining to US legislators the administration's resolve to uphold Taiwanese sovereignty and safeguard peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, as well as the difficulties that the administration faces.

Chen said he realized it would take the country a lot of time and effort to gain accession to international organizations and convince the US government to change its "one China" policy.

But he said that with persistence the hard work would eventually pay off.