A Test of Will: Why Taiwan Matters

TRANSCRIPT

Discussion

- Dan Sullivan, United States Senator, Alaska
- Miles Yu, Senior Fellow and Director, China Center

Disclaimer: This transcript is based off of a recorded video conference and breaks in the stream may have resulted in mistranscriptions in the text.

A video of the event is available: https://youtu.be/KH-fvzGQztM

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John Walters:

Welcome everyone to the Betsy and Wally Stern Conference Center at Hudson Institute. I'm John Walters, Hudson CEO and president. It's important to the work of Hudson on policy analysis to have leaders of the country share insights and views on key policy matters. We learn from them, we learned what we can do to help. This is a practice that has a long legacy at Hudson. Going back to Ronald Reagan and before and has included Senator John McCain more recently. Senator Cotton, Senator Joni Ernst. Today, Senator Dan Sullivan, who is a former colleague of mine in the George W. Bush administration and has been a friend of the institute. Among other areas of policies he has shaped in with the environment and many other programs is the policy and thoughtful leadership he's given to the Chinese Communist Party threat to Taiwan.

We are grateful for his leadership in this area as well as others, and we look forward to his remarks today. Miles, you, our senior fellow and director of Hudson's China Center will introduce Senator Sullivan, but I want to also personally thank him for being with us and for his many, many, many acts of service to the country and to the people of America. Thank you for being with US Senator Miles.

Miles Yu:

Thank you, President Walters. My name is Miles Yu, I'm a senior fellow and I'm the director of China Center here at Hudson. Before we start, I have just a few housekeeping matters. First of all, this is a livestream event, so please mute your electronic devices, right, and also the senator will speak for about 35, 40 minutes before we go to the Q&A. To save time, please write down your questions beforehand and then follow the instruction over there and send it to us. I will read, not screen your questions. Okay? Then if you are from Code Pink or other organizations, please just keep in mind we encourage a civilized exchange. We here at the Hudson, we also have, you have Code Pink, we have Code Red prohibiting disruptive behaviors.

I was supposed to introduce Senator Sullivan by telling you his career, but then I look at his career is very illustrious, too long. What we've done is we printed his detailed bio in your seat so you can have a reference there. I'm just going to highlight a few things that about Senator Sullivan. He is from Alaska, the AK, not AL or AZ. Alaska is a frontier state. Frontier state means he is not necessarily means a lot of bears or salmon. There's a reason why our enemy fly balloons and first enter Alaska because that's a frontier area of our national defense. If China shoots an ICBM to destroy America, all the ICBM will have to fly over Alaska. Our Alaska is the frontier of our national defense, but this is not just about China and America because the China threat is global and standing at the crossroads of that epic struggle between freedom and tyranny is Taiwan.

There's a no person better qualify to talk about this issue than Senator Sullivan. Sullivan is the eighth senator from Alaska and he has been a successful lawyer, government administrator. Mostly impressively, he is also a professional soldier. He is the only senator still serving in the US military today. He is an officer, Colonel Sullivan in the US Marine Corps Reserve. He knows the playbook of a war, he knows the importance and the grave nature of this struggle between freedom and tyranny. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Senator Dan Sullivan of Alaska.

Sen. Dan Sullivan:
Thank you, Miles. Okay, good morning everybody and thank you for that kind introduction. John, great to see you. Thank you for your tremendous leadership. I think some of Walter Lowman, where's Walter? He's doing a great job for me. I have a really wonderful team, but I can't thank Hudson enough. All great work that you do informing policy makers coming up with your own policies that help us. Trust me, it is tremendous. It is needed now more than ever. I really want to thank you. I know that your new fellows and people who are associated with Hudson. It's embarrassment of riches. Like John, many of us have served together. I was looking at it, Mike Pompeo, HR McMaster, Elaine Chow, your former president Ken Weinstein. I mean it is a great group. Continue that fantastic work and it really has an impact on so many of us. We need it now more than ever.

Thank you very much for that. Miles, I appreciate the introduction, but also the reference to Alaska, right? Billy Mitchell, the father of the US Air Force called Alaska, the most strategic place in the world, and you are absolutely correct. Any threat to America, ICBM, hypersonics, cruise missiles that are targeted on Chicago or New York, they're all going to come over my state and then we're going to shoot them down and retaliate. That's a whole nother topic. Thank you for that. I think the last several weeks have just highlighted in people's minds the strategic importance of the great state of Alaska that I'm honored to serve as their senator. I'm going to go through a speech that I've been trying to give all over the place, and you have it right here. Do you have this? Okay, so you have the little handout, it's essentially the speech. You can use it. Take a look. We're going to have some slides up. I'm going to try and get it through it fairly quickly, but to save some time for Q&A, because one thing I like about the Q&A is that I and my team, we learn a lot too. This is a conversation, but the focus of my speech is the intensifying threat to Taiwan by the Chinese Communist Party and Xi Jinping. One thing I always like to do when I start this speech is I try to make it clear that today we're talking about the Chinese Communist Party. Xi Jinping, not the Chinese people who in my view in many ways are themselves oppressed. I think that's very important. It shouldn't be just China, it's the Chinese Communist Party, the PLA, Xi Jinping and the threat and what we should try to do about it.

I think it's one of the most important issues facing our nation and literally the world. Some of you may have heard of this exchange that I had with then Endo Paycom Commander Phil Davidson in March of 2021. It was a armed services committee hearing. I asked the question, "Hey, when do you think Xi Jinping and the PLA are going to make the move on Taiwan?" You might remember it made news all over the world because he was pretty adamant that this was a threat that wasn't very far away, but was pretty darn close. He said, "I think the threat of an invasion of Taiwan is manifest during this decade. In fact, within the next six years." As indopacom. That was two years ago, that's serious business. His current successor, Admiral Aquilino, who's doing a great job when I'm in my Marine Corps capacity, I'm the chief of staff on the reserve side for Marine Forces' Pacific Command.

Admiral Aquilino is like seven levels above me when I go out there but he's doing a fantastic job and he is agreed with that assessment. As a matter of fact, many in the Biden administration have also agreed, the Secretary of State, Secretary Austin. It's a threat right now. As we saw last fall in the annual meetings of China's rubber stamp legislature, Xi Jinping emerged as the ultimate supreme leader, surprising the assessment of even seasoned China hands with his audacity he's packed the Politburo Standing Committee. Whereas you know, the real power resides with loyalists party stalwarts with the focus on military intelligence and technology.
That came out right after the party congress, and I think it's this message. China is preparing for war and we need to take that threat very seriously. As I said, I'd like to lay out today essentially this threat and what we should be doing about it. Of course, I know that our eyes are on Ukraine, something that I believe we should stay focused on and that these threats are actually very interrelated. To me, this is a paramount threat right now. I'd like to begin my remarks by focusing on a different era in a different region of the world. It's a very famous photo. I think many of you know what it's from. That's in 1948 when the Soviets cut West Berlin off from food and fuel. The United States in our allies led by a powerful American military, responded with the Berlin airlift. Our allies flew round the clock flights at one point, literally landing one of these aircraft a minute for a year to save Berlin.

Think about that. Americans rallied our military and other institutions of government, and at home, even our citizens who were very war wary three years after World War II somehow understood that the stakes in Berlin mattered. Americans now look back on the Berlin airlift as a point of pride for our freedom loving nation. Years later, after the Berlin Airlift, president Kennedy came into office initially viewing the defense of Berlin as an irritant in US Soviet relations but following his visit there where he famously declared himself a Berliner, he recognized Berlin, quote, as an asset, not a liability in the wider struggle for Europe and global freedom. The United States defended the city and people of West Berlin during the 20th century because we as a people understood that this city and its citizens stood on the front lines of the struggle between the American led free world and a powerful expansionist authoritarian regime.

The same is true for Taiwan. Taiwan is the 21st century's West Berlin.

Now, it's not as if American political leaders have disregarded the importance of Taiwan to the contrary, I've recently re-read President Eisenhower's outstanding memoirs. If you look at these memoirs and read them, Taiwan and its defense and its important is weaved throughout the 1950s during the Eisenhower administration. Of course, it's not just been the executive branch, you look at what the congress has done during the darkest time for Taiwan, when the US switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing, it was congressional leaders bipartisan, by the way, like Senators Barry Goldwater and Bob Doll, as well as Democrats like Representative Lester Wolf, who worked to establish the Taiwan Relations Act. The Taiwan Relations Act is literally one of the most remarkable pieces of foreign policy legislation in American history. Think about it.

A president in the United States, Jimmy Carter, wanted to abandon a long-standing ally, Taiwan, and Congress said "No." We used our constitutional authorities and said "No." And in the process we, the Congress, when it was passed by 84 US Senators, including a young senator named Joe Biden, who voted yes, laid down the Taiwan Relations Act, which among other things, committed Congress and the United States to consider any use of force against Taiwan a threat to peace, insecurity, and grave concern to the United States. That's in statute. Congress declared that the US decision to switch diplomatic relations from Taipei to Beijing rested on the expectation that Taiwan's future would be determined by peaceful means. Congress committed in the Taiwan relations Act to provide Taiwan the means to defend itself and for the US to maintain its own capacity to help. We collectively, as a government, have been very focused on Taiwan executive branch, legislative branch.
Of course, given this history, it's not surprising that the fate of Taiwan has been weaved in and out of the personal histories of thousands, if not tens of thousands of Americans, including my own personal history. 27 years ago, I was a young Marine on that good looking ship. The USS Bella Wood. I was a young infantry officer, and this was during what is now referred to as the Third Taiwan Strait crisis. 1995 and '96, the last time the Chinese Communist Party seriously threatened Taiwan. They moved the PLA up to the straight, they started shooting missiles over the island all on the eve of Taiwan's first presidential election. President Clinton, to his credit, sent two carrier strike groups and a marine amphibious ready group, and I was part of that. That was actually the ship that went through the Taiwan Strait at the height of that crisis.

That demonstration of American power and resolve was very important and still remembered in the region today, our commitment to a partner in the region saying, "You're not going to do this, Chinese Communist Party." Many years later on a CODEL that I went on with Senator McCain when I first became a US Senator, and I miss John McCain, he was a great mentor of mine. We were in a meeting with the new president, President Tsai Ing-wen, and she was asking each senator, "Have you ever been to Taiwan?" She got to me and she said, "Senator Sullivan, have you ever been to Taiwan?" I was like, "Hmm, well, yes, madam President, I have been to Taiwan. I've just never been to Taiwan on land." This, as I mentioned, is part of so many Americans' personal history.

Another personal moment in my experience with Taiwan, another demonstration of commitment of the United States was about a year and a half ago at the height of the pandemic, when the Chinese Communist Party was struggling Taiwan from the ability to get western vaccines, I led a CODEL with Senator Duckworth and Senator Coons coordinating with the White House to deliver almost a million Western vaccines. We flew in that C-17, which irritated the heck out of the Chinese Communist Party. That was probably a good thing. That was another demonstration of our commitment, America showing up, saying, "We have vaccines for you Taiwan, don't worry. We know the Chinese Communist Party is trying to choke that off."

Let me just give you kind of a final, very moving moment in my career, like I said, on that first CODEL I went to Taiwan with Senator McCain and a few other senators when we landed a State Department official who was working at the American Institute in Taiwan, got on the bus as we were going to meet with the president. I'll never forget his welcome, he said, "Welcome to Taiwan, a vibrant democracy of 24 million people with one of the most innovative economies in the world, a hub of trade and cutting edge technology. The only reason this place continues to exist on the map as such is because of the sacrifice and commitment of the United States of America, our people, our military, our government to its survival. All Americans should be very proud of this." That's how I was greeted on that bus, and I like repeating that because most Americans don't know if it weren't for us, that island would've been gobbled up a long, long, long time ago.

Just look at the history. That's not an exaggeration, that is a fact. As I mentioned, American commitment and resolve on Taiwan has been part of our law, heritage, trade, economics, and military deployments for decades. Too few Americans actually know this history. We need to rebuild this understanding and be ready ourselves for the test of wills that I believe is approaching. This starts with a better job of explaining to the American people collectively why Taiwan matters. That's why we're getting this speech out. That's why I'm giving this everywhere, the Senate floor, think tanks in Washington D.C., I've been doing this and I've been actually asking and I've asked, and a lot of this speech is based on the material I've received. Many of
our intel agencies, our think tanks, our combatant commands, this very simple question, "What would the world look like in the aftermath of a successful invasion of Taiwan by the CCP?"

Okay, now this is actually very little studied. You'd be surprised. I was surprised that there was very little study. I tasked all these agencies, "Hey, help me think through what does it look like? What does the world look like? How are America's interests impacted? How are the interests of our allies impacted?" I think it's little studied because let's face it's a very depressing assignment to think about a scenario, and I don't go into it here, one of three scenarios. The Chinese Communist Party launches an invasion and we don't do anything. We let Taiwan fight alone and they lose, or we show up but too late. We, the United States and our military and our allies. Or we show up on time and have a big battle in the Taiwan Strait and lose.

What I am trying to do in these remarks today is paint that picture, not how it happens, but in the aftermath, what the world would look like. Of course, it is not a world that is favorable to the interests of Americans, the West or those of our allies. Let me go through a couple of the main reasons why. This is information, a lot of it's pretty obvious, but that I got back from all these different groups to explain why Taiwan matters. The first is that, and by the way, if there's going to be a war in a Taiwan Strait, we know it's going to be launched by one entity, Xi Jinping, the Chinese Communist Party and the PLA period. No one else is looking to launch a war. This would be an aggressive action from the entities that I just mentioned.

The number one issue in terms of, well, not the number one issue, but one of the key issues is the blow to the US global economy. A successful PLA invasion and takeover of Taiwan would be a massive blow to the commanding heights of the technology that powers our digital age. We all know Taiwan dominates the production of the world's most advanced semi-conductors. In fact, Taiwan is home to 92% of the most advanced semi-conductor production in the world. Imagine what would happen if that was not only taken offline, but controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. If you look at the impact of the current chip shortage that started with the pandemic, these were the low kind of tech chips. The Commerce Department estimated alone that the US economy suffered damage of about 240 billion just from this lower chip shortage that we're seeing with regard to automotive production trucks and other things.

Imagine what that would do with regard to the US and global economy if the most advanced chips in the world were not only taken offline, but controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. If you look at the impact of the current chip shortage that started with the pandemic, these were the low kind of tech chips. The Commerce Department estimated alone that the US economy suffered damage of about 240 billion just from this lower chip shortage that we're seeing with regard to automotive production trucks and other things.

Let me give you another area of undermining American strategic interests and those of our allies. Taiwan's geostrategic value, if it was invaded and occupied by the Chinese Communist Party would be shattered. In President Eisenhower's memoirs, he devotes pages and pages to this at one point. He says, if the capture of Taiwan's offshore islands should in fact lead to the loss of Taiwan, the future security of Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and even Okinawa would be placed in jeopardy in the United States' vital interests would suffer severely. Last year, assistant Secretary of Defense For Indopacom security affairs, Eli Rattner, who
hopefully has come to Hudson to speak if you haven't had him. He's doing a great job, in my view, made essentially the same point as President Eisenhower and his memoirs. Critics rung him up for it, apparently calling Taiwan a critical node within the first island chain in an anchor of our network of US allies and partners in the region risks offending Beijing's sensibilities.

Of course, Assistant Secretary Rattner and President Eisenhower were correct. Taiwan in the CCPs hands breaks China out of the constraints of the first island chain. You're all familiar with that. A line running from Japan through Taiwan in the Philippines to the Straits of Malacca. A successful invasion of Taiwan has the potential to push the US further into the Pacific to what's called the second island chain. This includes American territories in Guam and the northern Mariana Islands. These just aren't some points on a strategist map. Residents in Guam and the Marianas are American citizens. They send representatives to Congress. Guam has an enormous US military presence with tens of thousands of US service members and their families. With the first island chain broken, these Americans will come under direct threat from an emboldened China with the massive and growing military.

Here's the thing, and some of the reports I got back indicate this, it is highly unlikely if the CCP invades and conquers Taiwan that it will stop there. If history teaches us anything, it is that the appetite of an aggressive authoritarian regime on the march increases with each meal. For decades, the CCP and PLA have focused almost exclusively on building a military with the objectives of conquering Taiwan. Take a look at the next slide. This is the military balance that's Taiwan is facing across the Strait. I won't go into what each symbol means, but it's not a very positive balance of forces. Here's the thing, again, as I said, the Chinese military has been focused on Taiwan. With a successful invasion of Taiwan, it is very unlikely that that massive force stays put. There will be pressure and opportunities from the Chinese Communist Party and the PLA and Xi Jinping to push that very massive force out into other regions of the world.

Already the PLA Navy has a base in Djibouti and is scouting out locations for other naval bases all over the world from Africa to South Asia. According to the 2023 DOD China military power report released a few weeks ago, some 17 countries are now under consideration for the PLA's military basing and logistic facilities. Let me give you another area of our interests that I think would be negatively impacted. As President Eisenhower stated in his memoirs, he was deeply concerned about the impact the successful invasion of Taiwan would have on American alliances in the region and our ability to credibly meet our defense treaty obligation to our treaty allies. That concern continues today, whether it's Japan who is doing a great job with regard to building up their military or South Korea or even Australia, it is of course hard to predict the future.

But there's little doubt that a Chinese communist party taker of Taiwan would call into question American alliance commitments by our treaty allies. It could cause some of them to build up their own military capabilities including nuclear deterrence or choose a more accommodating middle kingdom posture toward their powerful aggressive neighbor. Either way, this should concern all Americans. The questioning of our Pacific network of alliances that has undermined the security of the American homeland by bouncing and deterring dangers far from our shores would certainly make the United States less safe. Finally, let me just make one final point on our interest. A Chinese Communist Party takeover of Taiwan would give a global boost to the CCPs model of authoritarian governance that Xi Jinping has been offering the world. In the 1930s during a time of global upheaval of which there are striking parallels today, many around the world thought that the future lay with fascism, such a future was alluring to millions.
Democracy can be messy. It's still messy. Disagreements, sometimes ferocious disagreements, is the hallmark of representative government. Because of the transparency inherent in the democratic process of our governments, it's there for all the world to see. The good, the bad, and the ugly. The United States, along with other democracies around the world, ultimately prevailed against the rise of fascism during World War II. We did so by the force of arms, but also by the appeal to the university in immutable desire for freedom and self-governance. A military takeover of Taiwan in the current global climate by the CCP could lead many to believe that as Xi Jinping himself has put it, the CCP’s totalitarian vision of a new choice for humanity, one that relies on techno-authoritarian control rather than self-government is on the march around the world. We can not be blind to those implications or the extraordinary new legitimacy the CCP would gain at home and abroad. With that would come new forms of Chinese Communist party aggression, not just in the region but throughout the world.

The next slide I have, I took from a slide deck during my Marine Corps duty out at Indo Paycom. By the way, it's unclassified, so don't worry. That is a good summary of the issues that we just talked about, what China would gain, what we would lose in the event of a successful military invasion by the CCP. It's in your pamphlet here, so I won't go through it, but take a look. This is a good summary of why Taiwan matters. My purpose today was to paint a picture of what the US and the world would look like in the aftermath of a violent CCP takeover of Taiwan.

However, I do not want to just end the presentation here. As you can see, it’s a world that none of us or our allies would want. Certainly, the 24 million people on the island democracy of Taiwan don't want it either. As I mentioned, to be clear, this would be an event fully launched by Xi Jinping and his buddies wearing those fatigues. What should we be doing about it? Well, obviously none of us want this. I believe enhancing deterrence should be the top priority for US policy. I've often talked about deterrence being established in Taiwan in three levels. The first of course is making sure Taiwan has the capability to defend itself as laid out in American law, in the Taiwan Relations Act, and that they're acquiring the weapons they need as well as advancing overall military readiness. The ability to have the weapons to defend themselves as we are seeing in Ukraine with an inspiring example of heroic resistance against Russia is a critical element of this first level of deterrence.

We made some significant progress in this direction during last year's National Defense Authorization Act, but I will say unfortunately, the Biden administration did not step up with the appropriators the way they needed to. The most critical elements of the package that we had in the NDAA remains unfunded. For as much as we seem to be on the same page, Congress and the administration with regard to Taiwan's security, the administration in my view is still not getting the support and information we need in Congress to meet Taiwan's military and defense needs. The second level of deterrence, of course, is what we've been talking about would be America's response and those of our allies, as I've already mentioned for decades, that has been the key level of deterrence that has prevented in dissuaded the Chinese Communist Party from invading Taiwan.

This certainly should not be taken for granted either. For two years in a row now the Biden administration has put forward defense budgets that are inflation adjusted cuts to our defense. Now, we in the Congress dramatically reject that, by the way, in a bipartisan way and significantly increase the President's budget. I've been told by a senior administration official that they do that to appease the left and the progressives who hate big defense budgets
knowing that we will bolster it. By the way, that is the opposite of leadership, if that's true. The current budget shrinks the Navy. The current budget shrinks the Marine Corps. The current budget shrinks the Army. Okay? We're not going to let that happen in the Congress even though the Republicans are in the minority. Who is emboldened by that kind of budgetary military posture? Of course, Xi Jinping and Putin.

That's the second level, and we can't take that for granted. I want to just mention the third level of deterrence, which is rarely discussed, but when you read the reporting, it might be the most important level of deterrence, maybe even more powerful than the first and second levels. That is employing all instruments of American power beyond our military with regard to our economic, trade, financial and in particular energy strengths that we have as a country and layout of package of sanctions now, preemptive sanctions to say the Chinese Communist Party and Xi Jinping, "If you invade, here's what your economy's going to get, here's what your people are going to get." This is why I introduced what's called the Stand with Taiwan Act. This is a very powerful package of sanctions that would be triggered by a military invasion of Taiwan.

I think one of the things that we've learned from the brutal invasion of Ukraine by Russia is that comprehensive economic and financial sanctions have the best chance of deterring a conflict when they're clearly defined and ready to go before the conflict begins. I have been working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to get this passed. Not only that, on CODELs all around the world in Germany, at Munich, in Brussels, in London, in Korea, in Japan, I've been pitching our allies to do the same. Could you imagine if all of our key allies had similar legislation to that? 60% to 70% of the world's GDP saying to Xi Jinping, "If you do it, here's what you're going to get." I think and many others, including some in our intel services, believe that could have a huge deterrent effect on a Chinese military invasion of Taiwan.

Let me conclude with this. With the invasion of Ukraine, it is clear we have entered a new era of authoritarian aggression led by Putin and Xi Jinping like we saw in the 1930s. For nearly a century, American presidents of both parties have seen Asia and Europe's theaters, which if under hostile control, would put US national security interests at extreme risk. Generations of Americans have fought and died so that East Asia and Europe would not fall under the dictatorial control of US adversaries. Both of these theaters are at risk today. The free world can not be neutral in this contest between freedom and authoritarianism, especially in the Indo-Pacific region.

American allies power and ingenuity helped build a world that provided more freedom and prosperity to more people than ever before. In fact, United States and our democracy bolstered by a strong military, has done more to liberate humankind from oppression and tyranny, literally hundreds of millions of people than any other force in human history. We Americans don’t realize that sometimes, and we should take pride in that. The Chinese Communist Party has clear plans to reverse all of this. It knows exactly what it wants to accomplish to make the world safe for its tyrannical to profit off the export of its authoritarian model to other countries, to separate America from our democratic allies, and to erode US leadership in the region. A world governed by Xi Jinping's totalitarian of vision would be a world unsafe for America and our friends.

That's why Taiwan is so central to the future of the free world like Berlin last century. It is a thriving, prosperous Chinese democracy that holds free elections with power bounded by the
rule of law. For that reason, it threatens the CCP's central premise that one man ruling and perpetuity by crushing all dissent knows what is best for 1.4 billion people. The Chinese Communist party has already crushed Hong Kong, once a bastion of liberty and the free world barely raised a voice in protest. Should America and the world stand by as China does something to Taiwan, a peaceful democracy of 24 million people, that would not simply undermine the security of the Western Pacific region as the Taiwan Relations Act says, but would undermine America's role in the world and the values we as Americans have infused in it and it would deeply and adversely affect concrete American national security and economic interests.

I want to thank all of you again, Miles, John, the Hudson Institute, who believe in peace through strength. This is a critical issue. I'm very honored that you allowed me and my team to present on what I think is probably the most important national security issue facing our nation and those of our allies. We need to make sure more Americans understand why Taiwan matters. Thank you very much.

Miles Yu:

Two questions. One's an easy one and other one is a tougher one. The easy one is did the Chinese spy balloon flew over Fort Greeley in Alaska?

Sen. Dan Sullivan:

I was tracking this quite closely. By the way, I want to give an example of the US military in Alaska. There's a lot of talk about a woke military and of course I don't believe in that. There's problems with regard to the Biden civilian leadership. Some of our uniform military leadership has kind of fallen to that temptation. I'm not sure why, but I will tell you the average soldier, marine sailor, airman, coast guardsmen, guardian, they're warriors. Right? We should be proud of them. In Alaska, our 11th Air Force tracked that first spy balloon from far away. We went up and intercepted it with our F 30 fives and F 20 twos. By the way, in Alaska, we have over a hundred fifth gen fighters, F-22s and F-35s stationed in Alaska, no place on the planet earth as a more than a hundred supersonic stealth fighters like we do.

We tracked it, Northcom, our Alaska commanders requested permission to shoot it down, was denied. I'm not sure that's public, but it's a fact. It floated over the Aleutian Islands, then came back through central Alaska. It was probably, I'm almost positive it was north of Fort Greeley where we have our ground-based missile interceptors that protect the whole country. I believe it was north of some of our radar systems that also protect the whole country in terms of missile defense. Again, because we're so important but just very quickly because I like to brag about our military. In addition to that, young men and women in Alaska's military tracked several, it wasn't just a couple, several of these smaller balloons that were coming in around the same time. The Biden administration has been not truthful on that issue. I know this is a fact as well, frustrating because I've been trying to get them to be truthful to the American people. We scrambled and tried to intercept those. We shot down two of those.

We then launched a very difficult recovery mission to go find them in 55 below zero, all dark, flying on NVGs, helicopters, C130s. Then the Russians decided to probe us and we had two different bear bomber sorties with fighters that came into our ADIZ in Alaska. We went up and intercepted those guys, turned them away, go back to Russia all within three weeks. These are really tough missions. These are really complex missions. A lot of time flying at night on MVGs.
You have to be retanked. Several tanker missions to get refueled. Our men and women, young men and women in their twenties did all that. We got the best damn military in the world by far. China sees that and they should be scared. They're growing, but they're nothing like the US military and we want the world to know that.

Miles Yu:

Thank you. I promised a tougher question here. Here it comes. Vladimir Putin's justification primarily is about the denial of the independent nationhood and sovereignty of Ukraine. Because Ukraine, as you said, share ethical linguistic heritage with Russia and there's no such thing called the independent sovereign Ukraine. The issue about Taiwan, the Chinese also use almost exact justification.

Sen. Dan Sullivan:

Yeah.

Miles Yu:

They deny Taiwan has a sovereignty, has a nationhood. While in reality most Taiwanese believe they have independent nationhood, identify themselves as an independent country. There is no need for Taiwan to declare independence of a new entity, new reality because Taiwan in reality is an independent country. This was keenly felt by many Americans. We just don't have the political courage to recognize reality. A week after Russian war on Ukraine, a former Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo and I arrived in Taipei. Everybody was talking about Ukraine. The whole issue is precisely because of that he so emotional because of the issue of sovereignty and nationhood. Is there any congressional will to recognize Taiwan as an independent country? Because it's not the recognition of any future independent state. It's a recognition of reality, just like the world is defending a sovereignty and nationhood of Ukraine.

Sen. Dan Sullivan:

Yeah, I think it's a hard question as you signaled to me it would be a hard question. As a background on that, I think that when I mentioned this new era of authoritarian aggression, the similarities between Xi Jinping and Putin are very similar. One is they are driven by paranoia about their democratic neighbors. The other is that they're also driven by historical grievance and almost victimhood. The third is that they're working very closely together, their no limits partnership. People are looking at analogies as you are in the question between what's happening with regard to Ukraine and Taiwan. I think they're very connected as the Japanese Prime Minister Kishida said, and I've certainly heard from world leaders what's going to happening in what's happening in Ukraine and the end result will be very much reflected in what might happen across the Taiwan Strait.

As a matter of fact, Prime Minister Kishida called them inseparable. With regard to Taiwanese independence, that's not something that I believe congress should be making a declaration on. I think what has kept the peace, what has been the definitive declaration of American policy that I covered in my remarks is the Taiwan Relations Act. I think that should be the guiding light that continues to guide Congress and the executive branches approach to Taiwan. As I mentioned, there's a lot in there that talks about the need for peace across the Taiwan Strait and the ability to provide Taiwan's ability to defend itself and our ability to defend them. I think continuing the
focus where we have been with regard to the Taiwan Relations Act should be the guiding star with regard to our policy on Taiwan.

Miles Yu:

All right. Next question. What would you say to the Taiwanese and in particular President Tsai, how should they be preparing domestically to meet this challenge?

Sen. Dan Sullivan:

Well, I think it's a really important question, and I will tell you there are some, I've been in meetings very recently who say the United States can't want Taiwan freedom more than the Taiwanese. Okay? We can't. They need to want it more than us. Now there's a big question as there was in Ukraine, if this horrible event that I talked about for most of the morning actually happens, will the Taiwanese fight? Will they fight? We had this question, I was in the Munich Security Conference literally on the eve of the Ukrainian invasion last year. I met with a number of parliamentarians and I met with the now very famous mayor of Kiev who you can't miss because he's like 6'10" and a world heavyweight boxing champion. We were in a meeting with him, several US senators and somebody asked him, "If this happens, will you fight? We need to know."

He looked at all of us, he's got a very big fist, and he said, "We will fight." He pounded the table on all the glasses went up and okay, well guess what? He was serious, right? I wonder if Vladimir Putin would've been in that meeting seeing this very formidable mayor of Kiev pound the table and say, "We will fight literally to the death." If he would've invaded. We need to make sure, and this is really important, and I work very closely with our Taiwanese friends. There's some members of Congress who are like, "I'm not sure they'll do that." Is it going to be Ukraine, which is what we want? Or is it going to be Afghanistan where the American people and the American soldiers, let's face it, were fighting a hell of a lot harder than the Afghans for the most part. There were a lot of brave Afghans too. I don't want to besmirch them.

I think that's the most important thing that they can do is whenever there's people over demonstrate if there's an invasion, we'll fight to the death because America can't want it more than Taiwan. That won't work. We will support our allies who are determined to defend their freedom and their homes, but I think that's the most important thing. The second, of course, is getting the weapon systems and training. A couple years ago, to be perfectly blunt, and I've been over there a lot, the training of the Taiwan military was not that impressive. They need to train, they need to be ready. They need to have a reserve force that can get in and fight. The weapon systems that they're also requesting need to be much more focused on asymmetric warfare, not the big ticket items like F-35s and tanks. It needs to be more things like harpoons and counterinsurgency capabilities.

These are all important, but I will tell again, the will to fight, and you never know. Who knows? But I do think, and you're seeing in Ukraine, it's one thing to invade another country. It's another thing if you're invaded in your house with your wife and kids is susceptible to brutalization from a foreign invader. I think most people will fight them.

Miles Yu:
Unfortunately, we are literally running out of time because we have another major event coming up. Many of you are planning to go there. Hopefully this is the beginning of a further engagement with Hudson, Senator.

**Sen. Dan Sullivan:**

Yes.

**Miles Yu:**

Thank you so much for your very insightful comments.

**Sen. Dan Sullivan:**

Thank you very much everybody.

**Miles Yu:**

Great.