Expert warns Pentagon report a front for further arms sales to Taiwan

By Xinhua writer Yan Hao

BEIJING — Chinese military and international relations experts on Wednesday said that the Pentagon report playing down Taiwan’s aerial combat capability was a front for more advanced arms sales to the island, which would seriously violate Sino-U.S. agreement that Washington endorsed 28 years ago.

“The Pentagon’s report came as Taiwan continued to voice its need for advanced U.S. weaponry such as F-16 C/Ds, a substantial improvement model on Taiwan’s current F-16 A/Bs. But the U.S. side excluded the fighters from the latest arms sale package.

According to media reports, Taiwan currently operates 60 U.S.-made F-5 fighters, 148 F-16 A/Bs, 56 French-made Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets and 126 locally produced Indigenous Defense Fighter (IDF) aircraft.

“If the U.S. equips Taiwan with new F-16s, replacing the second-generation F-5s, it would significantly increase the island’s aerial combat effectiveness for F-16’s compatibility to other U.S.-made weapon systems such as airborne early warning and control aircraft through Link-16 Multifunctional Information Distribution System,” said Prof. Tan.

According to the Communi- que jointly issued by the Chi- nese and U.S. governments on Aug. 17, 1982, the U.S. side states that “its arms sales to Tai- wan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and China.”

“Comprehensive performance of the F-16s is far beyond that of the F-5s and the qualitative parameters of the F-16 C/Ds also exceed those of the F-16 A/Bs,” said Tan.

Selling such arms would be “an overt offense” against the Aug. 17 Communique, and promoting such a move by an elaborate report would not give any justification for the U.S. since the F-16 C/Ds would not be considered as a defensive weapon in any case, he said.

Guo Zhenyun, a researcher with the prominent thinktank China Institute of International Studies, told Xinhua that previous U.S. arms sales to Taiwan were covered by the front of “providing Taiwan with arms of a defensive character” to ease the backlash to the bilateral relationship from the Chi- nese side.

“The U.S. side should know that the sooner it stops selling arms to Taiwan, the more willing China would be to work with it on global and regional issues,” Prof. Jin Camrong with Renmin University of China said.

Xinhua writer Li Hanfang contributed to the story. (Xinhua)