

Explore the new **Cryptofinance** hub - the intelligence you need on the digital asset industry

[Visit the hub](#)

US-China relations

Taiwan fears fallout from planned Nancy Pelosi visit threatens US security commitment

Taipei officials warn of 'chilling effect' of China's intimidation tactics if Biden administration cancels trip



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's plan to visit Taiwan has been opposed by US national security officials because they believe it could escalate tension in the region © J Scott Applewhite/AP

Kathrin Hille in Taipei YESTERDAY

The pushback from the White House against House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#)'s plan to visit Taiwan has sparked anxiety in Taipei that the controversy will further compromise its security.

Several people involved in national security policy in [Taiwan](#) said the country was trapped between the risk that China would “punish” Taipei for Pelosi's planned visit next month and the risk that Washington would cancel the trip and effectively give China a say in US-Taiwan policy.

Three people in Taipei familiar with the situation said the US administration's public [opposition to the trip](#) threatened to embolden Beijing. “If the visit is called off, that means China's intimidation tactics works,” said a senior official. “That will have a chilling effect as others will shy away from engaging with us.”

But officials also said they were concerned China might retaliate against Taiwan if [Pelosi](#) went ahead with her trip.

As the Financial Times reported at the weekend, China has [strongly warned](#) the US against Pelosi's trip in private, and Jake Sullivan, national security adviser to president Joe Biden, and other national security officials oppose her trip because they believe it could escalate tension in the Taiwan Strait.

Biden said last week that the US military did not think it was a [good idea](#) for Pelosi to visit Taiwan at this time.

While the Chinese government has not elaborated on what steps it could take, the foreign ministry last week said Beijing would “take forceful measures to resolutely respond and counteract” a visit by Pelosi, and added: “Our words will be matched by action.”

Two people familiar with the situation said the Biden administration had not discussed its considerations about Pelosi’s planned visit with the Taiwanese government nor shared details on what is leading the US military to worry that Beijing could respond to the visit with open aggression.

“A lot of discussions are quite speculative and hypothetical. We haven’t had much info from the Biden administration,” said a senior official.

That has raised suspicions in Taiwan that Washington’s reference to Chinese warnings could be an excuse to avoid engagement with Taipei for the sake of improving ties with China.

“We know that Biden is due to have a phone call with [Chinese president] Xi Jinping, and maybe they are anxious that nothing should disrupt that,” said one person briefed on the Taiwanese government’s thinking. “We know that the Biden administration would like to improve trade ties, and maybe they don’t want that to be derailed by a Pelosi visit.”

Chen Fang-yu, an expert on US-China-Taiwan relations at Soochow University in Taipei, said Washington needed to reassure the Taiwanese public. “There is so much public scepticism here that the US could abandon Taiwan, a lot of conspiracy theories, because the China threat is so real,” he said. “Therefore, the US needs to issue more public information about its engagement with Taiwan.”

Alexander Huang, the opposition Kuomintang’s representative to Washington, said it was up to the US government and Pelosi’s office to determine whether a visit was in the overall interests of the US and Taiwan, “but the entire episode is not constructive at all for either party”.

“If Pelosi comes then when China reacts, we need to respond to that even though we are not the initiator,” Huang said, adding that he was speaking in his capacity as an expert in cross-Strait relations and security affairs and not on behalf of the KMT.

“If she decides not to come, it would raise suspicions whether China now has stronger

if she decides not to come, it would raise suspicions whether China now has stronger power to influence American decisions.”

[Copyright](#) The Financial Times Limited 2022. All rights reserved.
