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U.S. Cancels Taiwan Defense Meeting as Trade Talks with China Take Priority

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The United States recently canceled a planned defense meeting with Taiwan's Defense Minister Wellington Koo, raising concern in Taipei over a possible shift in Washington's diplomatic priorities. The meeting, set for June with the U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Elbridge Colby was abruptly canceled as high-stakes trade negotiations with China intensified.

The administration's official reason cited increased military activity in the Middle East, though unnamed sources suggest the cancellation was also motivated by a wish to avoid upsetting Beijing ahead of critical trade talks and a prospective Trump–Xi summit.

Taiwanese officials were reportedly unsettled by the cancellation, viewing it as a troubling indication that the U.S. may be placing economic interests above its security commitments. The cancellation followed Washington's earlier rejection of a planned transit stop in New York by Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te, fueling Taipei's anxiety over what it perceives as a softening U.S. posture toward China.

Analysts warn that such diplomatic signals could weaken U.S. deterrence in the Taiwan Strait. Evan Medeiros, a former national security adviser, cautioned that the cancellation could send dangerous mixed signals to allies and adversaries.

Taiwan is reportedly negotiating a multibillion-dollar arms package with Washington, although figures range between \$7 billion and \$10 billion, and is seeking tariff relief from proposed U.S. reciprocal tariffs of roughly 32 percent. U.S. trade officials have paused most tariffs on Taiwanese goods for 90 days while high-level talks continue. These negotiations, ongoing in Washington, involve Taiwanese leaders, including Vice Premier Cheng Li-Chun.

U.S. officials indicate the defense meeting may be rescheduled at a lower level of engagement. For Taiwan, the abrupt cancellation has heightened concerns over reliability and the depth of U.S. security commitment amid increasing regional complexity.