

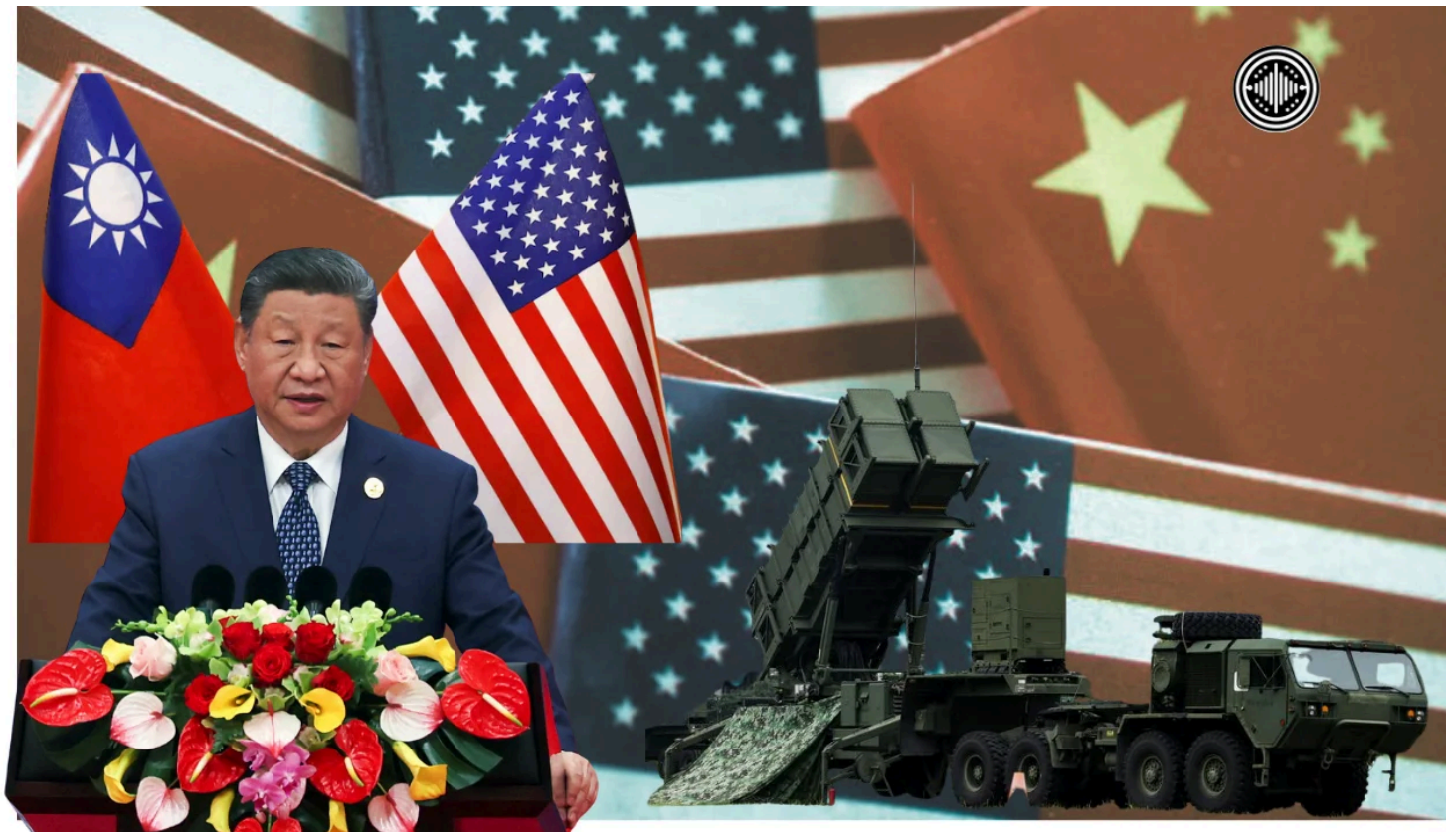
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US Seeks Firm Commitments from Allies on Taiwan Conflict Role

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The United States is pressing key allies Japan and Australia to define their roles in the event of a potential conflict with China over Taiwan, according to a report by the *Financial Times* published on Saturday. This push for clarity from the Pentagon signals a strategic shift as tensions in the Indo-Pacific region intensify, with Taiwan at the heart of growing geopolitical friction.

Elbridge Colby, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development, has reportedly raised the issue in recent discussions with defence officials in

Tokyo and Canberra, according to sources familiar with the talks cited by the Financial Times. The request has reportedly surprised both nations, given that the US itself has not committed to an unequivocal defence of Taiwan. This ambiguity underscores the delicate balance of alliances and military posturing in the region.

The US remains Taiwan's primary arms supplier, despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations. Taiwan has faced escalating military pressure from China, including repeated war games, as Beijing asserts its claim over the island. Taiwan, however, firmly rejects China's sovereignty claims, maintaining its status as a self-governing democracy. The Financial Times report highlights the Pentagon's desire for explicit commitments from allies as part of a broader strategy to counter China's regional ambitions.

Colby, who served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development during Donald Trump's first term, is now a private sector defense strategist and remains a prominent advocate for reorienting US military priorities towards competition with China. He has long argued that the US should reduce its focus on the Middle East and Europe to bolster its presence in the Indo-Pacific. His current efforts reflect a continuation of this strategic vision, pressing allies to align with Washington's objectives.

The reported discussions have sparked debate about the expectations placed on Japan and Australia, both key members of the Quad alliance alongside the US and India. Neither Tokyo nor Canberra anticipated such direct calls for clarity, particularly as the US maintains its policy of "strategic ambiguity" regarding Taiwan's defence. This policy, which avoids a firm commitment to military intervention, has long defined Washington's approach to the Taiwan issue.

While the Financial Times report sheds light on these behind-closed-doors talks, Reuters was unable to independently verify the details. The US Department of Defense did not immediately respond to requests for comment, leaving some questions unanswered about the precise nature of the discussions. As China's military activities around Taiwan grow more assertive, the US appears to be recalibrating its alliances to prepare for potential flashpoints.

The pressure on Japan and Australia to clarify their roles underscores the high stakes involved, as the Indo-Pacific becomes a focal point of global security concerns. For now, the region watches closely as these diplomatic and strategic manoeuvres unfold.

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