

US-China ties will not come at expense of Taiwan: ex-U.S. official



Taipei, Oct. 24 (CNA) The United States will not sacrifice Taiwan's interests in exchange for improved ties with China, a visiting former senior U.S. official said Tuesday in Taipei.

Daniel Russel, a former U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs made the comments amid the ongoing 19th Chinese Communist Party Congress in Beijing and an upcoming first ever trip to China by U.S. President Donald Trump. The remarks were also directed at continued speculation that Beijing's increased importance to U.S. foreign policy could pose a problem for Taipei.

Russel said that China has undergone major changes over the past five years under the leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping, underscored by the country's growing economic strength and more active role in regional and global affairs.

Against this backdrop it is not surprising that China has become more important to U.S. foreign policy, he added.

"But should that be a problem for Taiwan? The common interests, the shared values, the institutional linkages, and

the strong people-to-people ties and all the things I just described are like anchors, bonds that help ensure that improvements in U.S-China relations will never come at Taiwan's expense," he stressed.

Although the occupants of the White House and the Presidential Office have changed in recent years, what has not changed is the deep-rooted friendship between American and Taiwanese people, he said.

"What has not changed is U.S. policy, which is based on the Taiwan Relations Act and the Three Joint Communiques. What has not changed is America's enduring interest in the continued success, prosperity and self-determination of the people of Taiwan," he added.

Having said that, Russel also reiterated that the U.S. will not serve as an intermediary between Beijing and Taipei.

"One of my predecessors, Ambassador Winston Lord once said, 'Americans aren't smart enough to mediate between Chinese.'"

"At the end of the day it falls to the people of Taiwan and to those on the mainland to muster patience, creativity, flexibility and effective communications necessary to manage relations and to resolve your differences," he concluded.

Russel made the comments during a speech at National Chengchi University during his first-ever trip to Taiwan. He arrived on Sunday and is scheduled to leave on Wednesday.

During his stay, Russel will also visit government departments where he will learn about Taiwan's political and economic development and government policies in the areas of diplomacy, national defense cross-strait relations, and exchange views on U.S-Taiwan links and future cooperation, according to Taiwan's Foreign Ministry.

A career senior diplomat, Russel served as assistant secretary

of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs from July 2013 to March 2017. Before that, he served at the White House as special assistant to the president and National Security Council senior director for Asian affairs.

In April, he joined the Asia Society Policy Institute (ASPI), a think tank that tackles major policy challenges confronting the Asia-Pacific, where he serves as diplomat-in-residence and a senior fellow.

(By Joseph Yeh)

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