



## ***Hearing on “Deterring PRC Aggression Toward Taiwan”***

*Thursday, February 18, 2021*

### **Opening Statement of Commissioner James M. Talent**

Good morning, and welcome to the second hearing of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission’s 2020 Annual Report cycle. Thank you all for joining us, and thank you especially to our witnesses for the time and effort they have put into their testimonies.

The Commission holds this hearing as China’s hostile rhetoric and provocative military actions have created an increasing threat to our partners in Taiwan and throughout the Indo-Pacific. As tensions rise, Taiwan’s ability to deter China from using military force, even with the help of like-minded countries, is more and more uncertain.

Taiwan has always been a particular focus of the Commission; we include a chapter on it in every Annual Report to Congress. Normally, we assess the relationship between Taiwan and China, as well as Taiwan’s significant economic, political, and security ties with the United States and other countries.

In last year’s Report, the Commission noted China’s increasing use of military coercion and provocations to put pressure on Taiwan’s government and public. The PLA’s aggressive maneuvers, such as flights by military aircraft into Taiwan’s air defense identification zone, may reflect a view in Beijing that the results of its expansive military modernization campaign allow it to use its military power with increasing impunity. There is no question that the cross-Strait military balance has become more favorable to China in recent years, and particularly in the last ten years. Where that balance now rests is open to question, but that the balance has altered in China’s direction is not.

In addition, China under General Secretary Xi Jinping, and especially since the election of President Tsai Ing-wen, has become more overtly hostile, in word and deed, towards Taiwan. With an upended military balance, the prospect of outright coercion is greater now than it has been in the past.

Taiwan, a vibrant democracy of 23 million people and an important partner of the United States, is now facing a growing threat from a more hostile and risk-tolerant China. We are therefore holding this hearing to examine the nature of this risk, and how best it might be deterred, in a comprehensive manner.

Our hearing today will look first at the state of the cross-Strait military balance. The hearing’s second panel will look at political factors underpinning deterrence from the standpoint of China and Taiwan. Our final panel will consider the U.S. interests at stake and the policy options available to the United States, Taiwan, and U.S. allies and partners.

I will now turn the floor over to my colleague and co-chair for this hearing, Commissioner Carte Goodwin.