

March 21, 2023

**Remarks by Robert C. O'Brien at the Presidential Palace, Taipei, ROC
On the occasion, of receiving the Order of Brilliant Star with Special
Grand Cordon**

Madame President, I am deeply humbled to receive the Order of Brilliant Star with Special Grand Cordon. It is an incredible honor for me and my family. Thank you.

Your government has rolled out the red carpet for our delegation. Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, Ambassador Bi-Khim Hsiao and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs team, have provided us with extraordinary support. Your hospitality is unmatched.

It is wonderful to be back in Taiwan. I am here as Chair of the Global Taiwan Institute's Task Force on US-Taiwan Relations. Our delegation is comprised of ambassadors, generals, experts and former executive branch officials. We are here to listen. Our work will culminate in a report this summer that will provide recommendations on how we can strengthen bilateral ties across all facets of the US-Taiwan relationship.

Our countries have enjoyed a long friendship – starting with the World War II summit between FDR, Chiang Kai Shek and Churchill, which resulted in the Cairo Declaration. That close relationship continues to this day.

My team at the NSC sought to strengthen our partnership and to promote a free and open IndoPacific. Alex Gray, Matt Pottinger, as well as Allison Hooker and Ivan Kanapathy – who are with me here today – among others, share in this recognition.

During our time in office, we worked to implement policies that would deepen our ties, including such steps as the declassification of documents detailing the Six Assurances, making these principles an explicit part of U.S. cross-Strait policy; taking measures to allow for increased high-level engagements between our two governments; and, approving more than 18 billion dollars in arms sales to Taiwan, including Harpoon anti-ship, and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, among other systems.

In important ways, my successor, Jake Sullivan and the Biden Administration, have followed these policies

Madame President, thank you for your support of the United States at the outset of the COVID pandemic. Taiwan provided surgical masks to the White House and National Security Council staff at a time when all of our domestic PPE was being used by hospitals. Your gift allowed us to safely perform our duties especially in the crowded watch floor of the Situation Room.

Taiwan is a shining example of what democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty mean for a land.

A strong defense deters aggression. Thus, I am pleased to see Taiwan is spending more on its security, lengthening the conscription enlistment period and deploying asymmetric platforms to discourage an attack on the island.

Should an attack take place, which we hope never happens, I believe the United States will stand with Taiwan. During our time in office, President Trump conveyed this message clearly and, now, President Biden has stated publicly no less than four times that the US will defend Taiwan if the island is attacked.

Our two daughters serve in the US armed forces – so when we talk about defending Taiwan, it has personal meaning for Lo-Mari and me and for many American families.

To be very clear, America is not attempting to change the status quo with regard to Taiwan – not President Trump; not President Biden.

America and its partners have committed that the world will not go back to a century ago, when a big country could invade and subjugate a smaller neighbor for glory, economic gain or territorial expansion.

We watched as Saddam's Iraq invaded Kuwait, as the junta's Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands; and as Putin's Russia invaded Ukraine. It did not end well for the first two regimes, and it is not going to end well for Russia either.

Putin's ambitions have only led to muddy fields full of dead Russian soldiers; a degraded Russian military; Moscow having to go hat in hand to Tehran for weapons; all while its economy has been cut off from the West. Russia's The invasion also has led to the expansion of NATO in a way that no one could have predicted a year ago.

Russia is at risk of becoming a vassal state to its eastern neighbor – I expect that the 1860 Treaty of Peking will soon be renegotiated by the CCP Secretary General – at Russia's expense.

Ukrainians inspire us all with their bravery and determination defending their homes. I believe the people of Taiwan would do the same if faced with similar circumstances.

Madam president, the United States and Taiwan want and pray for peace in this beautiful region. Peace results in the free flow of commerce, culture, friendship, and prosperity. Our adversaries must

know that we will not sacrifice our way of life in exchange for peace. Instead, we will secure peace through our strength.

Again, thank you for bestowing this high honor from Taiwan upon me.

May God bless you, the ROC/Taiwan and the United States of America.

Thank you.