

Appendix 84 -- Secretary of State Christopher on Improving Relations with China (1996)¹

May 17, 1996

Since 1972, the foundation for deepening engagement between our nations has been the "one China" policy that is embodied in the three joint communiqués between the United States and the People's Republic of China....

The United States strongly believes that resolution of the issues between the PRC and Taiwan must be peaceful.

We were gravely concerned when China's military exercises two months ago raised tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Our deployment of naval forces to the region was meant to avert any dangerous miscalculations. We are encouraged that both sides have now taken steps to reduce tensions.

On the eve of the inauguration next Monday of Taiwan's first democratically elected President, it is timely to reflect on the enduring value of our "one China" policy for both the PRC and Taiwan and on our common interest and responsibility to uphold it. I want to tell you publicly today what we have been saying privately to the leaders in Beijing and Taipei in recent weeks.

To the leadership in Beijing, we have reiterated our consistent position that the future relationship between Taiwan and the PRC must be resolved directly between them. But we have reaffirmed that we have a strong interest in the region's continued peace and stability and that our "one China" policy is predicated on the PRC's pursuit of a peaceful resolution of issues between Taipei and Beijing.

To the leadership in Taiwan, we have reiterated our commitment to robust unofficial relations, including helping Taiwan maintain a sufficient self-defense capacity under the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act. We have stressed that Taiwan has prospered under the "one China" policy. And we have made clear our view that as Taiwan seeks an international role, it should pursue that objective in a way that is consistent with a "one China" policy.

We have emphasized to both sides the importance of avoiding provocative actions or unilateral measures that would alter the status quo or pose a threat to peaceful resolution of outstanding issues. And we have strongly urged both sides to resume the cross-strait dialogue that was interrupted last summer.

¹ Shirley A. Kan, "China/Taiwan: Evolution of the 'One China' Policy -- Key Statements from Washington, Beijing and Taipei", Updated December 16, 2002. *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress* (Code: RL 30341), p. 43-44.