

# POWELL TO TAIWAN: DROP DEAD

By Don Feder

Secretary of State Colin Powell stepped in it once again – this time instructing the Taiwanese that their goal in life should be “reunification” with a murderous, police state.

For nearly four years, Powell has been the weak link in Bush’s foreign policy. Of all the administration’s top officials, he was the last to come on board in support of military intervention in Iraq.

Powell perfectly reflects the State Department mindset. In almost any situation, he favors appeasement over confrontation -- sacrificing U.S. allies (Israel, Taiwan) to win brownie points with thugs (Arab regimes, the People’s Republic of China).

But what Powell did on a trip to China last week went well beyond the usual State Department shenanigans. Like encouraging a pyromaniac to play with matches and gasoline, his comments were inflammatory, bordering on lethal.

In an interview with Hong Kong’s Phoenix TV, on October 25<sup>th</sup>, Powell said both China and Taiwan should “move forward towards the day when we will see a peaceful *unification*.”

Just to be sure he wasn’t misunderstood, in a CNN interview the following day, Powell opined that both sides should exercise restraint and do nothing to prejudice “a *reunification* that all parties are seeking.”

Aiming a few well-placed kicks at the groin of a former ally, Powell informed the Hong Kong station: “Taiwan is not independent” and “does not enjoy sovereignty as a nation, and that remains our policy, our firm policy.” Taiwan’s president, Chen Shui-bian hotly replied: “Taiwan is absolutely a sovereign and independent country. It does not belong to the People’s Republic of China.”

If not a nation in its own right, what does Powell think Taiwan is: a mythical place (like Never-Never Land), an uncharted and largely uninhabited island, or a rebel province (Beijing’s characterization of democratic Taiwan)?

Washington may say Taiwan isn’t independent, but invariably acts like it is. Between 1980 and 2002, the U.S. delivered over \$20 billion in arms to Taiwan. (Are we arming a province in revolt?) America doesn’t sell military hardware to the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. What’s the difference?

Our relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan are governed by the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which obligates us to provide the island with the weapons to maintain its independence.

If Taiwan doesn't enjoy sovereignty, as Powell claims, why are we pledged to its defense? America is under no obligation to protect Liverpool or Haifa, apart from the countries in which they are situated.

For the past 25 years, we have had de facto diplomatic relations with Taipei. Our embassy (in all but name) in Taiwan is called the American Institute in Taiwan. AIT has a staff of over 300, and is directed by diplomats on leave from the State Department. It issues visas to the United States, provides consular services and in every other regard represents U.S. interests on the island.

In America, the nonexistent government of Taiwan is represented by Taipei Economic and Cultural Offices in Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles and other major cities. They perform the same functions as AIT, including promoting trade. (Taiwan is the world's 14<sup>th</sup>. largest exporter and 16<sup>th</sup>. major importer.)

Every year, tens of thousands of Taiwanese enter this country as tourists or students with Taiwanese passports. If Taiwan isn't independent, why are its passports recognized by governments the world over?

Under international law, Taiwan has all of the attributes of sovereignty. The Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States, signed by the United States in 1931, says an independent state has the following characteristics: 1) a permanent population, 2) a defined territory, 3) a government that controls said territory and 4) the *capacity* to enter into relations with other sovereign states.

Taiwan has a defined territory (nearly 36,000 sq. miles). Its population of 23 million makes it larger than 60 percent of UN member states. Not only does Taiwan have a government in control of its territory (since 1949), but one freely chosen by the Taiwanese.

In that Taiwan is peaceful, prosperous, stable and democratic – it clearly has the capacity to enter into state-to-state relations.

The Montevideo Convention provides that “the political existence of a state is independent of recognition by other states,” also, “the recognition of a state may be express or tacit.” Only about two dozen countries officially recognize Taiwan's statehood. Almost every nation tacitly acknowledges the fact that Taiwan is a separate country.

Powell's nuttiest notion was his assertion that both sides seek “unification” or “reunification.”

The Taiwanese have less interest in being ruled by Beijing than the Irish have in being reunited with the United Kingdom. In 20th century, the Irish were ruled from London for 21 years. In the same period, the Taiwanese were controlled by Beijing for all of 4 years.

Citizens of Taiwan elect their leaders and shape government policy. Their rights – including freedom of speech, press, property and religion – are scrupulously protected by an independent judiciary.

In a 2004 report, Freedom House describes the status of human rights in the People’s Republic (non-existent) succinctly: “Ordinary Chinese enjoy few basic rights, opposition parties are illegal, Chinese jails hold thousands of political prisoners, torture is widespread in prisons and detention centers, and the judiciary is used as a tool of political control.”

Somehow, I don’t think that even Colin Powell really believes the free people of Taiwan are just dying to be part of this oppressive system. The Taiwanese remember Tiananmen Square, even if our State Department has forgotten.

Powell latter attempted to clarify his remarks, without actually retracting them. A State Department spokesman said America’s position continues to be governed by the One-China policy, in combination with the Taiwan Relations Act. But the damage was done.

For decades, Democratic and Republican administrations hewed to a carefully nuanced policy: There is one China (whatever that means). Taiwan is part of this undefined entity. We insist on a peaceful resolution of tensions between Beijing and Taipei (whatever the outcome may be). And we will defend Taiwan against the use of force.

Then in blunders Collin Powell and tells the communists that the eventual resolution must be Taiwan’s incorporation in a slave state – exactly what they want to hear.

China is determined to achieve that end. It needs to be restrained, not encouraged.

The party line, repeated endlessly in a string of speeches and communiqués is as follows: 1) China will crush any move toward Taiwan independence. 2) Reunification is a “sacred task” of the nation. 3) Taiwan’s President Chen is a separatist pushing the Taiwanese toward “a dangerous abyss,” and 4) If the Taiwanese won’t agree to be ruled by Beijing, the regime is fully prepared to use force to achieve that end.

Rhetoric aside, China continues to build a war machine (military spending increased 11.6% this year alone) geared toward one goal – the conquest of Taiwan.

In July, it conducted war games simulating an invasion of Taiwan – 18,000 troops, fighter jets and tank brigades took part in the exercise. PRC fighter aircraft violate Taiwan’s air space on an almost daily basis. Sometimes, Taipei is forced to scramble its own fighters in response. China’s arsenal of short-ranged missiles targeting Taiwan (now about 600) grows by around 75 to 100 a year.

Chen has repeatedly called for a lessening of tensions and offered to negotiate with the Mainland (as he did during Taiwan's National Day celebration on October 10<sup>th</sup>) but as an equal – not as a supplicant seeking terms of surrender, as Powell is urging.

The mistake the West made in the 1930s was not signaling Hitler that his territorial ambitions would be opposed. Our ambassador to Baghdad made the same error prior to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Clinton's weak response to a string of terrorist attacks in the '90s convinced bin Laden that we lacked the will to fight fire with fire.

Will history repeat itself in East Asia? China needs to be told – clearly and emphatically – that it's not going to get Taiwan, and that the Taiwanese aren't its property. Instead, we have Colin Powell fueling the delusions of Marxist megalomaniacs.

Powell has indicated that he will not serve as Secretary of State in a second Bush administration. He will be missed – by the Chinese Politburo.