# U.S. Launches Replicator Initiative to Strengthen Taiwan's Defence Against Potential Chinese Invasion



### U.S. Announces Replicator Initiative to Bolster Taiwan’s Defense Against Potential Chinese Invasion

On August 28, 2023, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks announced the launch of the Replicator Initiative. This program aims to mass produce thousands of drones within 18 to 24 months to counter a potential amphibious assault by Chinese armed forces, focusing on surface, subsurface, and aerial drones. The initiative aims to delay and disrupt any invasion attempt on Taiwan, buying critical time to reinforce its defense.

The program has secured $500 million from the fiscal year defense budget and plans to procure various uncrewed aerial and surface vehicles from both traditional and non-traditional vendors. The initiative is inspired by the successful use of inexpensive and mass-produced drones in the Ukraine conflict, where Ukrainian forces use commercial drones to destroy expensive military equipment at a fraction of the cost.

China, under Xi Jinping, has set a target date of 2027 for the possibility of a military invasion of Taiwan, driven by a desire to unify the island with the mainland. In response, the U.S. has restructured its Marine Corps and sent Green Berets and contractors to enhance the Taiwanese military’s capabilities. Arms transfers to Taiwan have also been continually approved.

The Replicator Initiative aims to use AI-enabled systems to offset the numerical superiority of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA). With over 2 million active personnel and a navy of 355 vessels, China’s military build-up poses a significant challenge.

The initiative's primary strategy includes using drone swarms to target and disable key Chinese assets during an amphibious assault. Additionally, drones would ensure communication continuity in the event of an invasion, where Taiwan's networks are likely to be compromised.

Taiwan has also been developing its own defensive capabilities, including prototype drone boats capable of substantial autonomous operation and payload delivery, similar to innovative tactics seen in the ongoing Ukraine conflict.

The Replicator Initiative is part of broader U.S. efforts to assure the defense of Taiwan and maintain stability in the region.