



Strongly Stated Ambiguity

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“Because they know the consequences,” President Donald Trump [told](#) Norah O’Donnell on CBS’s *60 Minutes* the Sunday before last, after [meeting](#) with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in South Korea.

“The Chinese military is encroaching on Taiwan’s sea lanes, its airspace, its cyberspace. I know you have said that Xi Jinping wouldn’t dare move militarily on Taiwan while you’re in office. But what if he does?” asked O’Donnell.

“Would you order U.S. forces to defend Taiwan?”

Mr. Trump’s reply was ambiguous: “You’ll find out if it happens.”

Labeled “strategic ambiguity,” U.S. policy regarding a threatened Chinese invasion of Taiwan has long been undeclared, designed to keep China guessing as to our intentions without giving Taiwan a military guarantee.

But then the president added, “And he [Xi Jinping] understands the answer to that.”

The Chinese regime “knows,” Trump explained to O’Donnell, “they understand what’s gonna happen.” He further declared that Xi “has openly said, and his people have openly said at meetings, ‘We would never do anything while President Trump is president.’”

Mr. Trump’s most surprising disclosure was that Taiwan “never came up” in his two-hour talk with the Chinese ruler, with the president insisting that Xi “never brought it up” “because he understands” “very well” “what will happen.”

Indeed, military might is the only thing that Xi and the Chinese Communist Party *understand*.

As I [argued](#) on *Around the World With Dane Waters* last week, a Chinese takeover of Taiwan would be economically and strategically catastrophic for Asia and the world. Not to mention, disastrous for freedom.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.