

## China to raise 2017 defense budget by around 7 pct: spokesperson



Fu Ying, spokesperson for the fifth session of China's 12th National People's Congress (NPC), speaks during a press conference on the session at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, March 4, 2017. The fifth session of the 12th NPC is scheduled to open in Beijing on March 5.

China's 2017 defense budget will expand by around 7 percent, a spokesperson for the annual session of the country's top legislature said Saturday.

Fu Ying, spokesperson for the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) annual session, said the increase is in line with China's economic development and defense needs.

The country's defense budget rose by 7.6 percent in 2016.

The fresh raise could be the country's slowest defense budget rise in more than a decade, and mark the second time that defense budget dip to single-digit increase since 2010. In 2009, the figure was about 15 percent.

U.S. President Donald Trump last month pledged to further strengthen his country's armed forces.

In his first address to Congress after taking office, Trump proposed a huge 54-billion-U.S.-dollar surge in the country's military spending, up 10 percent from the previous year.

Fu, meanwhile, noted that China's defense spending accounts for about only 1.3 percent of the country's gross domestic product, as compared with NATO

members' pledge to dedicate at least 2 percent of GDP to defense.

"You should ask them what their intentions are," Fu told reporters.