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## ADMINISTRATION/PROGRAM SPECIFICS

### **EXCLUSIVE: Q&A with Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein**

8/4/2020 By National Defense Staff

Gen. David Goldfein was sworn in as the 21st chief of staff of the Air Force on July 1, 2016. On Aug. 6, he will retire after serving for more than four years as the service's top officer and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On Aug. 3, in what was expected to be his final interview before retirement, Goldfein spoke with Hawk Carlisle, president and CEO of the National Defense Industrial Association, and National Defense magazine Managing Editor Jon Harper about many of the key issues he had to address during his tenure as well as challenges the Air Force will continue to face in the years ahead. The following Q&A has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

**Q:** In what areas do you think you've been able to move the ball forward, and what's the biggest challenge that you faced that you may not have anticipated going into this?

**A:** We the team ... understand that the character of warfare is changing and the winners in the future are not the ones that buy the technology; they're the ones that adapt fastest to this new changing character of war. And so I'm pretty proud that we, I think in the Air Force, across the joint team, have helped as thought leaders on thinking about this new way of connecting the force that hasn't been connected at the speed that we have to operate in the future. And so I'm pretty proud of that. We've been really focused on moving that ball forward.

And it's not just about technology. It's about people. It's making sure that you build the joint leaders that can understand this new way of warfare and they have the right skill sets that we've developed over time to get out there and not only lead airmen, but lead our joint teammates and our allies and partners.

I'm obviously very, very proud of some of the work that we've been doing in the squadrons with pushing decision authority back down. ... We're not going to need a squadron commander team across the Air Force that feels like they have to ask for permission. We're going to need a squadron team that ... as they assess the situation, they are empowered to make decisions and they move out at the speed that the enemy just cannot match. In all those areas ... I'm hoping that we moved the ball forward. I feel like we did.

**Q:** How do you feel you're doing with Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) and Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS) initiatives to better connect the force?

**A:** I'm feeling pretty good about it. As part of my transition out, I did some out-calls with a number of CEOs ... and one of the things they share with me is that they are doing the work now on finding ways to make JADC2 profitable for industry. That's a rather significant sea change, because what that means to me is they've come to the belief that this is not a short-term idea, but this idea has roots in the institution, the organization. And we're going to continue on this path, not just in the Air Force, but across the Joint Force.

And if they want to do business with us, they're going to have to find a way to make it profitable.

That to me is a significant milestone that we talked about in the early days. ... The tipping point would be profitability. When industry determined that they could actually do what we were asking and show quarterly earnings in a way to maintain profitability, then this will take off. Until then most companies would be incentivized to sort of step back, wait and see if this really is going to last and [continue to] do things the old way. So I'm really happy that I believe our industry teammates have determined on their own that this is not a flash in the pan. This idea has staying power.

Q: The nuclear enterprise in the Air Force has had some struggles in the past, both in the missile and bomber communities. A lot of effort has been put into addressing that. How do you think they're doing and how is the morale of those folks? How do you assess the nuclear enterprise?

A: Before I took on the job, I checked in with all the former living chiefs ... and all of them gave me very similar advice. They said, **"Don't take your eye off the ball in the nuclear enterprise. Don't pay lip service to that being job one. It really is job one for the United States Air Force. It's the most destructive weaponry on the planet, chief. You're responsible for two of the three legs [of the nuclear triad] and most of the nuclear command and control. And it's no fail. You've got to get it right."**

What we were able to do was to build on [previous] work to really solidify not only the requirement to recapitalize and tell that story in various audiences. Because it isn't cheap, but the alternative is expensive beyond our wildest dreams — that's a major war with a nuclear power. ... My sense is the mood of the nation right now is in favor of the investment required to recapitalize our nuclear enterprise, especially given the fact that Russia — one of our nuclear competitors — has completed their recapitalization recently. In terms of morale, I would say it has improved.

I think we've made some headway on security forces. ... We put a significant amount of resources towards that, not just financially, but also personnel-wise in terms of getting the structure back to where it needs to be.

So I'm feeling pretty good about what we've been able to accomplish. **I will tell you though, that I don't think you want me as chief or the next chief to be satisfied because once we become satisfied, we take our eye off the ball and that's something we can never let happen.**

Q: Can you give us a little bit of a peak under the tent with the B-21 bomber program? How is it doing?

A: I actually visited [the Northrop Grumman facility in Palmdale, California] twice. I actually got there and took a look and touched the B-21 as it was being assembled. Of all the programs right now that we manage in our acquisition portfolio, I will tell you that — based on company performance and culture and what I've seen in the program — I put the B-21 right now at the top of the heap in terms of confidence that I have in it as chief. ... I'm very, very happy with where the B-21 is headed.

Q: How is the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent program progressing? Do you have any concerns there as we go forward?

A: I hope that as we build GBSD we will build in new ways of doing business in addition to what we build [for the platform]. Because what we do is provide a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent with that incredibly important leg of the triad. How we do it should evolve and mature because we don't recapitalize very often. If we're not careful we're gonna build a new weapon system to be managed in the exact same old way. ... Shame on us if we let that happen. ... Shame on us if we don't use robotics and technology and build that into GBSD.

What I want is the requirements to evolve with technology as industry solves challenges. I'd like it to get to a point where we're able to do a little bit of development ops, even in the nuclear business, so that as we achieve technological advances they can be brought into the GBSD without having us go through a two-year-long requirements review process. ... We've got to become more agile than that.

Q: How are you looking at the Next-Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) concept and capabilities?

A: We have to resist the tendency to want to focus very quickly on a platform solution because that will immediately limit our thinking and narrow our scope and we will produce a suboptimal design. ...

When you start looking at the key technologies that we know we have to develop that in some way, shape or form will come together to be able to accomplish the mission of air dominance, I'm not confident sitting here today that that's a single platform. I'm actually very confident it's not. I think it's a series of platforms — manned and unmanned, attributable and unattributable, penetrating, standoff, in the atmosphere, out of the atmosphere. And there will be members of our joint team, allies and partners that will contribute to the network required to achieve air dominance at the time and place of our choosing.

That [focus on joint capabilities] we would traditionally not factor in until way late in the process. ... We would eventually at the end maybe start thinking about how we can bring others into the game. That is not how we're thinking about [NGAD]. ...

If we get JADC2 right, we get the next-generation air dominance right. Oh, by the way, if we get JADC2 right, we get nuclear command-and-control right. And it's cheaper.

Q: We're in a hyper politicized environment. There is a tendency these days it appears to pull the military into the politicized environment and partisan fray. What are you telling your airmen about keeping the military apolitical and staying out of that fray?

A: I've actually now testified and sworn [to Congress] that I will give my advice, regardless of whether I agree with the administration or not. It's part of my duty. But not one civilian leader that I've ever worked with or for has ever had to raise their right hand and say they will take my advice. It's an important message. Sometimes when we think of national security, our [military] perspective is limited and our civilian leadership has got to fit our advice on military power into a much broader political and economic framework. ...

I can go through a number of things that are central to how America works but actually not in the job jar of the chief of staff of the Air Force. So when I bring in my perspective on the best use of military power, I've got to understand and be a little bit humble and understand that the civilian leaders I'm giving my advice to have to fit that into a much broader framework. ... It doesn't necessarily mean they have to take my advice. And I think we have to remember that.

And then the other thing I offer [airmen] is another visual. And that is the State of the Union. I've really enjoyed the times I've been able to attend that historic event. And there was some pageantry that goes on that is really important for us to remember in terms of civ-mil relationships. ... We actually key off of the Supreme Court in terms of when we, as Joint Chiefs, ever stand or applaud. You only do that when it's an apolitical situation that we feel like we can without showing political preference. During the rest of that we sit there and we're stone-faced. And it's a representation to America ... [that] the uniformed military is apolitical. ...

That trust and confidence [in our military] is not a birthright. It's actually a Fabergé egg that can be broken if we're not careful. And if we start delving into politics, if we start allowing the military to get involved in areas that, quite frankly, we're not responsible and accountable for, we could lose that trust and confidence. And shame on us if we do. So I think it's a responsibility of a chief of a service, a joint chief to use every day as a signal teaching moment to ensure that we stay on the tarmac. We don't let ourselves get off of our [apolitical] path.

Q: With the creation of the Space Force as an independent military branch within the Department of the Air Force, you've had a chance to start building this new relationship with the Space Force. What do Air Force leaders need to do to ensure the military's ability to continue to do joint warfighting throughout the entire spectrum of operations including space? How do we keep this relationship moving forward?

A: I've been on my own personal journey on this, as you know. Go back and take a look at my initial opening comments when this [effort to create a new Space Force] had started. I was worried that we were going to do that bureaucratic thing that sometimes the Pentagon does, which is when you set up a new organization, three things happen immediately. First thing you do is build a castle, then you build a moat and you fill the moat with dragons because you've got to defend yourself from all those that are coming after your money. It's just the way bureaucracies operate. And I was really concerned that ... to set up a separate service we would lose the integration of joint warfighting. ... Find me a mission that space is not integral to that. You will not find one. And I was worried that we would lose that integration in joint warfighting going forward.

And then I went down to Maxwell Air Force Base to speak with the Schriever fellows. And those are young majors and lieutenant colonels. They're there to get essentially a PhD after a year in space operations. And I could tell during the conversation that they weren't buying what I was selling. ... I could just tell from the body language they just weren't buying it. So I asked them. I said, ... "How many of you think we ought to have a separate service for space?" Every hand went up. ...

So as I listened to their reasoning, I started doing my own individual research and I thought, listened, read, watched, visited bases. And at one point it was some of the work I was doing with industry and seeing where commercial space was going both domestically and internationally ... which is increased access to launch. It was much cheaper and smaller payloads, which allowed you to put more things into space in a single launch. It changed the profit margin. I had to ask myself the question: "Alright, so who can advance space faster at the pace that the nation needs? A service chief that has everything from leaflets to nukes and everything in between, that has the most diverse warfighting portfolio of the services? Or a service chief singularly focused on space, space operations and space integration?" And I have to admit, I came to my own conclusion that [Chief of Space Operations Gen. John "Jay" Raymond] could do it a lot faster than I could. And at that point I became a believer and I've gotten behind it ever since. ... I'm really happy with where we are right now on that journey.

Q: As Gen. Charles "C.Q." Brown comes in as the next chief of staff of the Air Force, what advice are you going to pass to him?

A: I don't have to pass him much because he and I have been teammates and close friends for a number of years. It's really satisfying as you depart to be able to hand the service over to someone of his caliber. And he's just a brilliant strategic thinker, one of the finest leaders I think we've ever groomed for a position like this. He probably has the deepest Rolodex of anyone who's coming to the chief job.

He knows every air chief, minister of defense and chief of defense in Europe, Pacific, Africa and Central Commands' [areas of responsibility]. And he has operational credibility as a warfighter in every one of those commands. So there's not a lot that I've got to tell him because he and I have been talking about this change-over for literally months, actually over a year. When I looked at the four-stars to determine who I thought would be a

successor and I would recommend to the secretary, it became pretty clear to me that C.Q. Brown was a frontrunner. And I'm just thrilled to be able to hand over the service to such a quality team. And I say team because, Sharene, his wife, is just magnificent. And when the Air Force gets to meet our new chief and first lady of the Air Force, they're going to love them.

### **Chief Bass becomes 19th chief master sergeant of the Air Force as Wright retires**

AF Times Stephen Losey 14Aug 2020

Chief Master Sgt. JoAnne Bass on Friday became the 19th chief master sergeant of the Air Force at a ceremony at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland. Bass is the first woman to serve as the highest-ranking noncommissioned officer in any of the military services. She is also the first person of Asian-American descent to be the Air Force's top enlisted leader. She succeeded Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth Wright, who served in that role since February 2017 and retired at the ceremony.

Bass was previously the command chief of the Second Air Force. Her husband, Rahn, and their daughters, Jasmine and Jada, were present at the ceremony.

In her remarks, Bass noted the historic nature of her appointment as chief master sergeant of the Air Force, which followed the Aug. 6 swearing in of Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown as the first Black service chief in U.S. military history.

"It is a moment that could not have taken place without the efforts of many women who have gone before me," Bass said. She saluted Esther Blake, who in 1948 became the first woman to enlist in the Air Force, "on the first minute of the first hour of the first day when women were authorized to join the United States Air Force.

"Our Air Force today is on the right side of history," Bass said. "We are focused on setting a foundation for all Americans to see themselves in this great institution. Everyone has a place in our Air Force."

Bass pledged to create an inclusive culture in the Air Force that allows all airmen to reach their full potential. And she said the Air Force has to modernize and change to better compete and win against adversaries.

"It's our airmen that are the competitive edge that we possess," Bass said. "We cannot rest on our laurels while the future is still unwritten. We have a lot to do, folks, and a lot to get after. But the good news is, what we do is a team sport."

Brown said that Bass has been preparing to lead since she first enlisted.

"She is ready, and she is willing to serve," Brown said. "She has the passion, the skills and the strength of character we need to lead us, to face head-on the demanding challenges of today and the future.

“Without a doubt, Chief Master Sgt. Bass is the right chief — definitely the right chief to accelerate change and to grow airmen and leaders we need for the future,” Brown said.

Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett said Bass is well-prepared and a “worthy successor” to Wright. Barrett cited Bass’s work to improve airmen development by improving training programs such as basic training, technical training and distance learning.

Barrett saluted Wright for the changes he helped put in place for the 410,000 enlisted active, Guard and Reserve airmen. She highlighted his reforms to the enlisted evaluation system, elimination of junior enlisted performance reports, expanding high year of tenure, upgrading of developmental special duty assignments, simplifying base selections and eliminating promotion testing for senior noncommissioned officers.

“Chief Wright, in a word, your tenure was consequential,” Barrett said.

Barrett recalled Wright’s well-known post in June about racial inequality following the death of George Floyd, a Black man who died at the hands of Minneapolis police, and said that afterward, he and Gen. Dave Goldfein, the now retired former chief of staff, “united their voices to set an inspired tone for the Defense Department’s response to racial inequality.”

“In his powerful reaction to the murder of George Floyd, Chief Wright encouraged everyone to fight, not just for freedom, justice and equality, but to fight for understanding,” Barrett said.

Barrett unveiled a new award, the Goldfein-Wright Inclusive Leadership Award, which will recognize the command team that best fosters an inclusive environment to achieve mission success.

Goldfein, wearing a civilian suit, paid tribute to Wright as his “wingman.”

“Of all the personnel decisions I made as the 21st chief [of staff], none was more important than the choice of my wingman for the journey,” Goldfein said. “Chief, we didn’t get everything done we set out to do. But we got a heck of a lot done together. And we always found a way to make it fun along the way.”

Goldfein also saluted Wright’s wife, Tonya, and their family.

“You’ve been an incredible leader and an advocate for airmen and their families, and a true voice to ensure they get the top cover they deserve,” Goldfein said.

### **STRATCOM Commander: No Time for Delay to Modernize**

Huntsville Business Journal Online, 10 Aug 20

The commander of the United States Strategic Command stressed that time is of the essence in modernizing U.S. defense capabilities.

Adm. Charles Richard highlighted the nation's preparedness in the most recent session of the Tennessee Valley Corridor Virtual Summit Series.

Some 400 government, industry, and education professionals from across the Tennessee Valley Corridor attended the session which focused on America's new national security challenges, highlighting the role the Tennessee Valley plays in defending against cyber, nuclear, and other combatant threats.

In his keynote address, Richard, a Decatur native, described how the post-Cold War strategies of the past few decades are no longer sufficient in this changing world. He also drew attention to the deteriorating materiel across all branches of the military, as the federal government is now working alongside industry partners to rapidly address these modernization needs.

"I – and we – must have the capabilities necessary to deliver a decisive response and do it with a combat ready force," said Richard. "Looking forward, there is no margin left for delay with our recapitalization and modernization timelines."

The session also included an overview of current threats to our nation's security from Sean Williams, president/CEO of Protection Strategies Inc. PSI is an East Tennessee-based firm engaged in contract security services nationally and internationally.

Ted Sherry, Vice President of CNS (operator of the Texas-based Pantex Plant and the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tenn.), led a discussion on how regional partners are working to meet these security challenges. Panelists included: Blake Scott, Director of Lithium Transformation at Y-12; John Stewart, President of Nuclear Fuel Services; Dr. Skip Bartol, Associate Dean of Research at Auburn University; and Jason Coker, Vice Director at U.S. Air Force Arnold Engineering Development Complex.

View the full session of the TVC Virtual Summit Series on the TVC YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uecxhKKllhM>.

### **Pompeo says China is a greater threat to the globe than Russia was during the Cold War**

'The CCP is already enmeshed in our economies, in our politics, in our societies in ways the Soviet Union never was'  
FoxNews.com, Aug. 12 | Caitlin McFall

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo argued that the economic power the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) holds over countries worldwide is a greater threat than what Russia posed during the Cold War.

"What's happening now isn't Cold War 2.0," Pompeo said in an address to the Czech Senate Wednesday. "The challenge of resisting the CCP threat is in some ways much more difficult."

"That's because the CCP is already enmeshed in our economies, in our politics, in our societies in ways the Soviet Union never was."

The comparison of the Cold War to the heightened tensions in the U.S.-China relationship started earlier this summer when U.K. officially reversed its agreement with China to allow Huawei to have a hand in developing the U.K.'s 5G capabilities.

China's ambassador to the U.K., Liu Xiaoming blamed U.S. interference for "seriously poisoning" the U.K.-China relationship and warned London officials against "Cold War" actors – referring to Pompeo who has worked to stop European countries from allowing Huawei to develop their 5G technologies.

U.S. security officials have warned against China's ability to demand access to the China-based telecom company's database, effectively allowing China a hand in anywhere Huawei is used to develop the next generation of cellular networks, 5G.

"The real reason behind Pompeo's animosity towards Chinese companies has nothing to do with national security or democracy, freedoms, fairness or reciprocity," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters late last month. "It's just because they are Chinese companies and also frontrunners in their lines of business."

U.S.-China ties have increasingly deteriorated over the last six months, something Pompeo noted in his address to the Czech Senate as he pointed to China's "cover up" during the coronavirus outbreak, the new security laws implemented in Hong Kong that have undermined the territory's autonomy and the human rights abuses against the Uyghurs, a minority ethnic group in western China.

"The detention of 1 million Uyghur Muslims living in internment camps in Xijiang...is the human rights stain of the century, sustained by companies like Huawei using technologies the secret police could only have dreamed of in times gone by," Pompeo said to the Czech Senate.

The Czech Republic, along with 32 other nations, joined together under the Prague Proposals in May 2019 to ban Huawei and commit to a "5G Clean Path," which is a program that safeguards nations' data from the CCP.

Pompeo said that it will take longer for other nations to recognize the threats from China.

"China's world dominance is not inevitable, we're the authors of our fate. Free societies have always been more attractive – your people know this," Pompeo said, speaking to the Czech Senate, noting his time in the U.S. Army when he served in Germany as the Berlin Wall came down.

The CCP is "paranoid about free societies," he added.

Pompeo's remarks in the Czech Republic on security in Eastern Europe, mark the first of several stops he will make in the region to address energy and cyber security, and the threats coming largely from Russia and China.

His visit to Eastern Europe comes just weeks after the U.S. announced they would be pulling 12,000 troops from longtime ally Germany, some of which will be redistributed in the Black Sea region.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper said the abrupt withdrawal of troops was a strategic policy shift to "strengthen NATO, [and] enhance the deterrence of Russia."

“The tide has turned, just as I see it turned here in Europe as well. The West is winning, don’t let anyone tell you about the decline of the West,” Pompeo said Wednesday.

“It will take all of us...here in Prague, in Poland, in Portugal. We have the obligation to speak clearly and plainly to our people, and without fear. We must confront complex questions... and we must do so together,” he added.

**President Trump is committed to defending the U.S., and Russia knows it**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/08/02/president-trump-is-committed-defending-us-russia-knows-it/>

By: Robert C. O’Brien for the WaPo // August 2, 2020 at 4:34 p.m. EDT

Ronald Reagan is looking down on us with a knowing smile. Like Reagan, President Trump strives for good relations with all nations, including Russia. But no nation, including Russia, should doubt the president’s commitment to defending the United States and our allies.

President Trump has demonstrated to Russia that he means what he says about putting “America First.” If recently [reported allegations](#) of Russian malign activity toward Americans in Afghanistan prove true, Russia knows from experience that it will pay a price — even if that price never becomes public. Two weeks ago, President Trump [imposed additional sanctions](#) against Russian oligarch Yevgeniy Prigozhin, who owns both the Internet Research Agency, a troll farm that spread disinformation around the 2016 election, and the [Wagner Group](#), whose mercenaries are deployed in Syria, Ukraine and Libya.

The president also [announced new guidance](#) to deter companies from assisting Russia with its Nord Stream 2 and TurkStream pipelines. Both projects would make our European partners more dependent on Russian energy, giving Moscow dangerous economic leverage over Europe. These steps are unfortunately necessary given Russian actions that threaten the United States and its allies. This includes interfering in Western democratic elections in 2016 and 2017; propping up brutal regimes in Syria and Venezuela; engaging in cyberattacks on America and its allies; violating important arms treaties; and [attempting to kill](#) Sergei Skripal, a British subject, with a military-grade nerve agent.

In response to this conduct, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on hundreds of Russian entities. These targets include key Russian oligarchs and their companies, senior Russian government officials and a state-owned Russian weapons trading company. President Trump has [also sanctioned](#) two branches of Rosneft, a Russian state-owned oil company, for operating in Venezuela in support of the illegitimate Maduro regime.

On the cyber front, the administration [charged](#) three Russians for the 2014 Yahoo hack, including two officers of the Russian Federal Security Service. It also [banned](#) the use of Kaspersky Lab software on government computers in light of the company’s ties to Russian intelligence. In 2018, the United States [publicized](#) Russian military involvement in the worldwide NotPetya cyberattack and [sanctioned](#) five Russian entities and three individuals for their roles in the incident. In 2020, the United States [publicly attributed](#) cyberattacks against the republic of Georgia to **Russian military intelligence (GRU)** and released a cybersecurity advisory against GRU malware.

In light of the Skripal attack and other intelligence operations, President Trump cracked down on Russian intelligence operations in the United States. In September 2017, the administration [closed](#) the Russian Consulate in San Francisco, a consular annex in New York and a chancery annex in Washington. In April 2018, the United States [shut down](#) the Russian Consulate in Seattle and expelled 60 Russian intelligence officers from the country.

When Russia violated two arms control treaty agreements, President Trump withdrew from them. The United States [exited](#) the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty in August 2019 and announced our withdrawal from the [Open Skies Treaty](#) in May. In doing so, President Trump made clear we will not remain in treaties violated by the other side. The president is also investing in U.S. capabilities at a level never before seen. His administration provided states with nearly \$800 million in election assistance. It also established [federal councils](#) to increase coordination among government and private-sector providers of voting and registration systems.

To deter Russian aggression and defend our NATO allies, President Trump has [provided billions](#) in additional funding for the European Deterrence Initiative. And to assist Ukraine, the administration [sent](#) critical self-defense weapons, including the long-sought-after Javelin antitank missiles. President Trump knows that peace comes through strength. Accordingly, his administration has embarked upon a historic rebuilding of the U.S. military. That includes the [largest military pay raise](#) in a decade and the [establishment](#) of the U.S. Space Force, the first new military branch since the 1940s, among other priorities.

In June, the United States [commenced talks](#) with Russia on the New START accord. The United States is cautiously optimistic that we can reach an agreement with Moscow and China on a framework for arms control that seeks to limit all nuclear weapons in a verifiable manner. President Trump and President Vladimir Putin had a [cordial call](#) July 23 during which both leaders pledged their best efforts to extend New START and make it even better.

Another area of potential cooperation with Russia is counterterrorism. Both Russia and the United States have had their homelands attacked by violent extremists. U.S. officials will likely engage with their Russian intelligence and law enforcement counterparts on such matters in the coming months. No president since Reagan has shown such resolve to Moscow. Like Reagan, President Trump seeks another path with Russia — one in which Russia refrains from aggression abroad and becomes a friendly partner to the United States and Europe. In such a world, sanctions on Russia would be unnecessary, and trade between our countries would flourish. Russians, Americans and the world would all benefit from such a relationship.

Robert C. O'Brien is the national security adviser to President Trump.

### **Team adaptability is key to Minuteman Task Force success**

30<sup>th</sup> Space Wing Public Affairs, 10 Aug 20 Michael Peterson

VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE -- Unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile tests are nothing new to Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, and the Western Range. Since its activation in 1991, the 576th Flight Test Squadron has partnered with Task Forces from the various Missile Wings to conduct ICBM test launches – a mission which continues to this day under Air Force Global Strike Command and with range support provided by the 30th Space Wing.

Typically, a Task Force is comprised of a team of operators and a team of maintainers from one of the Missile Wings in AFGSC. Members might be chosen for their specific skillsets, seniority and experience, work-based merit, or just fit within the team, with those pieces coming together in an effort to best execute each launch mission with the 576 FLTS at Vandenberg.

Facing a compacted launch calendar and mitigating risk from a global pandemic, both the 576 FLTS and the GT 235 Task Force from the 90th Missile Wing at F.E. Warren AFB, Wyoming, have relied on adaptability within their teams to continue that test launch mission at Vandenberg.

“Historically, we utilize operators and maintainers from the Missile Wings,” said Maj. Mark Carter, 576th FLTS assistant director of operations. “Although we are still using maintainers from the 90th Missile Wing, this will be the first launch in recent history utilizing a crew of 576th FLTS operators.”

While this launch was done by an airborne crew from the 625th Strategic Operations Squadron aboard a Navy E-6, members of the 576 FLTS provided backup crew on the ground. While using 576 FLTS operators mitigates risk by lowering the number of Task Force team members required to travel, it also marks a significant first for 576 FLTS members like Capt. Tanner Popp, who describes all that is involved for those who are eligible to pull alerts and will make up the rotation of two-person operator teams.

“There’s about a week and a half of spin up and training,” Popp said. “We bring up the capsule and get it on alert. Then the maintainers install the Missile Guidance System (MGS), Reentry System (RS), and get the missile started up.

“From that point on, we will run the necessary commands and calibrations that the missile requires in order to be considered launch-ready, at which point we will be standing by for the launch sequence,” Popp added. “Following a successful missile launch, we then accomplish capsule shutdown and remove all classified material from the alert facility before heading home for some rest and recovery.”

The 576 FLTS operators work in conjunction with a maintenance team from the 90th Missile Wing out of F.E. Warren AFB, whose job is to deprocess the missile once it arrives at Vandenberg AFB. The Missile Maintenance Team from F.E. Warren was responsible for aiding the 576 FLTS Missile Handling Team with emplacing the missile downstage and for installing the Post-Boost Control System (PBCS) and the Re-Entry System.

In addition to their regular duties, GT 235 Task Force maintenance members are also helping fulfill some maintenance requirements for the next test launch while they are on site. For the next launch, they installed the PBCS, providing adaptability which helps Vandenberg AFB avoid having two overlapping maintenance teams on the installation at once, and streamlining Task Force construction in a higher-risk COVID environment.

Although the GT 235 Task Force team composition and roles were slightly different from the norm, the mission of ensuring professionally executed test launches remained the same – a testament to the men and women of the 576th FLTS and GT 235 Task Force members who continue to ensure the reliability of the nation’s ICBM program.

“For us on the missile maintenance side of the house, the launch is one of those things that you always look forward to,” said Staff Sergeant Andrew

O' Brien, 90th Missile Wing MMT Topsider. "It's not something that everyone gets to do in their career, so it's a pretty big deal in our world. Even in the midst of COVID where there was some uncertainty when we were going to be able to come out to execute this mission, we definitely appreciate it a little bit more now that we're finally able to get out here and do it, and hopefully when they light that candle, we'll watch it sail off into the distance and go back to our normal lives back up North."

### **Air Force announces GBSD locations at three existing missile bases**

Air Force Global Strike Command Public Affairs / Published August 14, 2020

The Air Force plans to begin military construction activities as early as 2023 at F.E. Warren AFB, Wyoming, as it moves forward in the process of replacing the aging Minuteman III ICBMs with the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent.

Malmstrom AFB, Montana, will be the second installation to begin military construction activities in 2026, with Minot AFB, North Dakota, beginning in 2029. The construction start dates are pending the completion of Environmental Impact Statements for each base in accordance with Federal laws and policies.

Military construction is phased ahead of the actual deployment of GBSD to allow time for initial beddown, ensure facilities are ready for any unique mission equipment, and support training and operational certification prior to the first sites obtaining operational status at each wing. Using infrastructure at current locations allows both the Minuteman III and GBSD weapons systems to continue meeting all nuclear surety and safety standards throughout their operational lives, particularly during the transition period.

"Ensuring missile bases remain missile bases makes the most sense for the taxpayer and the mission," said Gen. Tim Ray, commander of Air Force Global Strike Command. "The Minuteman III is 50 years old; it's past time to upgrade the missile systems. Our goal is ensure our systems remain fully safe, secure and effective in the defense of our nation and allies."

GBSD is the most cost-effective option for maintaining a safe, secure and effective ICBM leg of the nuclear triad. The GBSD program's objective is to deliver a low technical risk, affordable, total system replacement, starting in the late 2020s, to improve the ICBM's capabilities and provide more efficient operations, maintenance, and security at lower lifecycle costs.

Air Force Global Strike Command is comprised of more than 33,700 Airmen and civilians assigned to two numbered air forces, 11 wings, two geographically-separated squadrons and one detachment in the continental United States, and deployed to locations around the globe. The command oversees two-thirds of the Nation's nuclear weapons including all bomber and Intercontinental Ballistic Missile operations for the U.S. Department of Defense. More information can be found at: <https://www.afgsc.af.mil/Library/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/454593/air-force-global-strike-command-air-forces-strategic-air/>.

## News & Opinion

## **Why America Is Modernizing Its Nuclear Weapons Forces**

National Interest Online, 7 Aug 20 Kris Osborn

The Commander of the U.S. Military's Nuclear Weapons force could not have been clearer when he flatly stated that, "we didn't start an arms race."

"I don't understand the criticism that we are starting an arms race. Fifteen years ago Russia started to unilaterally modernize its nuclear fleet. China was not too far behind. Our response was to do nothing. No one has lowered nuclear weapons more than the U.S.," Admiral Charles Richard, Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, told The Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies in a recent video series interview.

While being clear to say, "we love the conversation," indicating that he welcomes criticism and debate, Richard was unambiguous that the U.S. has fallen way behind on nuclear weapons modernization.

To reinforce his claim, Richard offered some specifics. For example, he said that the U.S. Ohio-class, nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarines were designed to serve for thirty-years, yet they will be functioning for forty-two years. The Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) were initially intended to last only ten years. However, now, sixty years later, the United States is finally building a new generation of ICBMs.

The need for nuclear modernization has long been on the minds of U.S. military leaders and Congressional decision-makers, as few can believe that the U.S. is still fielding ICBMs built decades ago. While there has been some modernization and sustainment, there are clearly limits to how much any kind of increasingly-old weapons system can be modernized.

Richard was equally candid about the threat environment. While he specified that many details would not be available due to security reasons, he did speak broadly about Russian and Chinese nuclear weapons modernization.

He said China is completing its nuclear triad with the addition of air-dropped nuclear weapons and, perhaps of greater concern, has developed road-mobile launchers and silos. Russia, he said, has been modernizing "everything," and is almost 70% complete.

Furthermore, Russia claims to have nuclear-capable hypersonic weapons, and both Russia and China have newly emerging stealth bomber platforms.

Among the largest concerns is China's fast-growing fleet of nuclear-armed submarines, soon to be armed with new, long-range JL-3 nuclear missiles.

The Chinese have just added two new nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarines to their Navy, bringing the total number up to six. While America operates twice as many, the growing number of Chinese nuclear-deterrence submarines expands the ability of Beijing to hold the continental United States at substantial risk.

As recently as May of 2020, two additional Chinese "Type 094 SSBNs, had entered service," according to a Congressional Research Service Report called "China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities."

The newest type of SSBN, according to the Navy report, is armed with twelve JL-2 nuclear-armed, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, the CRS report explains. They are also armed with Anti-Ship Cruise Missiles, wire-guided and wake-homing torpedoes and mines.

Perhaps of greater concern, the Chinese have already test-fired an emerging JL-3 nuclear-armed ICBM with a reported range of more than 5,600 miles, according to a 2018 CSIS report. That missile is also solid-fueled, allowing easier and quicker launch preparation.

The United States has not had to confront the prospect of military confrontation with a nuclear-armed major power in nearly thirty years, Richard said, creating a circumstance wherein U.S. “strategic deterrence which has always been foundational, will be tested in ways that it has not been tested before.”

Yes, ultimately, the ability to harness unimaginable destructive power is aimed at preventing war. “The point of deterrence is the threat of imposing a cost that is greater than what the adversary seeks to gain,” Richard said.

-- *Kris Osborn is defense editor for the National Interest. Osborn previously served at the Pentagon as a Highly Qualified Expert with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army—Acquisition, Logistics & Technology. Osborn has also worked as an anchor and on-air military specialist at national TV networks. He has appeared as a guest military expert on Fox News, MSNBC, The Military Channel, and The History Channel. He also has a Masters Degree in Comparative Literature from Columbia University*

#### **50th Anniversary: First Minuteman III placed on alert at Minot**

Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center (Minuteman III System Program Office), Aug. 12 | Robert B. Cuthbertson, Jr.

HILL AIR FORCE BASE, Utah -- On Aug. 19, 1970, the very first Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile, known as ICBM, was placed on alert status at the 741st Strategic Missile Squadron, Minot AFB, North Dakota. The missile was emplaced in Launch Facility Hotel-02, just two months prior to its launch.

The ICBMs got their start in 1951 with Project Atlas which were later replaced with the Titan I and II missiles. The Minuteman missile development began in 1962 as a replacement to the Titan missile. The Minuteman missile was the first solid-fueled ICBM ever deployed and this technology brought about a revolution in missile development.

Throughout history there have been four versions of the Minuteman, the IA, IB, II and III. The Multiple Independently targeted Reentry Vehicle (MIRV) Minuteman III missile replaced the single-warhead Minuteman I and II models across six bases in the heart of our nation’s homeland. This transition started at Minot AFB in 1970 where the older missiles were taken out of the silos as part of a larger modification program to convert the 91st Strategic Missile Wing to the first Minuteman III wing in the nation.

The new Minuteman III represented the ultimate ICBM capability available in the field of ballistic war missiles at the time. The Minot Daily News described the Minuteman III as, “standing 59 feet and 3 inches in height, weighs 76,000 pounds and can travel at a speed in excess of 15,000 miles

per hour. Should the ‘balloon go up’ and the nation be forced to defend itself in an all-out nuclear conflict, the buried Minot missiles could be unleashed and be on their way to targets within a half-minute interval.”

The Minuteman III ICBM still stands as the backbone of our nation’s nuclear deterrence. These missiles are the most responsive leg of the nuclear triad, always ready and can be launched within minutes.

When it was deployed in 1970 it only had a planned ten-year service life, but through a series of much needed life extension programs, the Minuteman III has remained viable for fifty years and is expected to remain in service until the 2030s, when it will be replaced by the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent weapon system currently under development at Hill AFB. This makes the Minuteman III the oldest deployed strategic ballistic missile in the world.

The Minuteman weapon system is operated by and under the control of Air Force Global Strike Command, but is supported by the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center's Minuteman III System Program Office and the Air Force Sustainment Center's 309th Missile Maintenance Group and 748th Supply Chain Management Group at Hill AFB.

Here is a list of significant Minuteman III events that took place fifty years ago:

Date	Historical Significance
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Jan. 12, 1970	91st Strategic Missile Wing at Minot AFB, North Dakota, began converting its ICBM facilities from Minuteman I to Minuteman III.
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March 3, 1970	First operational Minuteman III was completed at Air Force Plant 77, Ogden, Utah.
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April 14, 1970	First Minuteman III missile accepted by the 91st Strategic Missile Wing.
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April 17, 1970	First Minuteman III missile emplaced in Silo LF H-02 at 741st Strategic Missile Squadron at Minot AFB.
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Aug. 19, 1970	First Minuteman III placed on alert status at 741st Strategic Missile Squadron.
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Sept. 16, 1970	Successful Minuteman III launch from Cape Kennedy, Florida, as part of the Special Test Missile Project, a post-research and development (R&D) effort to evaluate the Minuteman III’s performance and accuracy.
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Dec, 2, 1970	Successful Minuteman III launch from Cape Kennedy as part of the Special Test Missile Project.
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Dec. 14, 1970	Last unarmed Minuteman III, now named "LGM-30G," was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida (formerly Cape Kennedy).
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Dec. 29, 1970	741st Strategic Missile Squadron became the first operational Minuteman III squadron.
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Dec. 31, 1970 Force modernization and emplacement completed at Minot AFB.

### **Navy Program Review: Columbia SSBN on Track**

Seapower Magazine Online, Aug. 12 | Richard R. Burgess

ARLINGTON, Va. -- The U.S. Navy's top acquisition official said the Columbia ballistic-missile submarine is on track and ready for a fiscal 2021 official construction start.

Speaking Aug. 12 in a teleconference with reporters, James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, said the Columbia SSBN program went through a review Aug. 11 with program and shipyard teams.

"The design maturity of Columbia is exceeding 86% right now," Geurts said. "We're focusing on converting that design into manufacturing plans, instructions, [and] material parts. Advance construction is continuing on all of the super-modules."

The Navy announced on June 22 a contract modification with Electric Boat that featured an option — that already has been fully priced by the Navy — that would start construction of the first Columbia, SSBN 826, in October (the first quarter of fiscal 2021) and fund advance procurement, advance construction and 2024 construction start of the second Columbia sub, SSBN 827.

Geurts said at the time that the work of the Navy to price out the two SSBN contract options will help the service keep on schedule and achieve economies on materials and advance procurement for the Columbia class.

"We've got the Build 1 contract in place," he said in the latest teleconference. "We're ready to exercise that upon appropriation and authorization in fiscal year 2021. ... We're continuing to ensure that Columbia stays on track as our highest priority program."

He said that the COVID-19 pandemic "has not impacted Columbia in terms of readiness to proceed."

### **North Korea Has 'Probably' Developed Nuclear Devices to Fit Ballistic Missiles, U.N. Report Says**

<https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2020/08/03/world/asia/03reuters-northkorea-sanctions-un.html>

By Reuters for the NY Times // Aug. 3, 2020 Updated - 7:15 p.m. ET

**UNITED NATIONS** — North Korea is pressing on with its nuclear weapons program and several countries believe it has "probably developed miniaturized nuclear devices to fit into the warheads of its ballistic missiles," according to a confidential U.N. report.

The report by an independent panel of experts monitoring U.N. sanctions said the countries, which it did not identify, believed North Korea's past six nuclear tests had likely helped it develop miniaturized nuclear devices. Pyongyang has not conducted a nuclear test since September 2017. The interim report, seen by Reuters, was submitted to the 15-member U.N. Security Council North Korea sanctions committee on Monday.

"The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is continuing its nuclear program, including the production of highly enriched uranium and construction of an experimental light water reactor. A Member State assessed that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is continuing production of nuclear weapons," the report said. North Korea is formally known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

North Korea's mission to the United Nations in New York did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the U.N. report. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said last week there would be no more war as the country's nuclear weapons guarantee its safety and future despite unabated outside pressure and military threats. The U.N. report said one country, which it did not identify, assessed that North Korea "may seek to further develop miniaturisation in order to allow incorporation of technological improvements such as penetration aid packages or, potentially, to develop multiple warhead systems."

### **'LUCRATIVE' CYBERATTACKS**

North Korea has been subjected to U.N. sanctions since 2006 over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. While the Security Council has steadily strengthened sanctions in a bid to cut off funding for those programs. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump have met three times since 2018, but failed to make progress on U.S. calls for Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons and North Korea's demands for an end to sanctions.

In May 2018 North Korea followed through on a pledge to blow up tunnels at its main nuclear test site, Punggye-ri, which Pyongyang said was proof of its commitment to end nuclear testing. But they did not allow experts to witness the dismantlement of the site. The U.N. report said that as only tunnel entrances were known to have been destroyed and there is no indication of a comprehensive demolition, one country had assessed that North Korea could rebuild and reinstall within three months the infrastructure needed to support a nuclear test.

The U.N. experts said North Korea is violating sanctions, including "through illicit maritime exports of coal, though it suspended these temporarily between late January and early March 2020" due to the coronavirus pandemic. Last year the U.N. experts said North Korea has generated an estimated \$2 billion using widespread and sophisticated cyberattacks to steal from banks and cryptocurrency exchanges.

"The Panel continues to assess that virtual asset service providers and virtual assets will continue to remain lucrative targets for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to generate revenue, as well as mining cryptocurrencies," the latest report said.

(Reporting by Michelle Nichols; Editing by Sandra Maler and Tom Brown)

### **Democrats And Republicans Agree: Phase Out Land-Based Nuclear Missiles**

Forbes Online, Aug. 12 | Matt Korda

Although Democrats and Republicans increasingly seem worlds apart, when it comes to nuclear weapons issues, they're actually much closer than one might think.

According to a new report by the Program for Public Consultation at the University of Maryland, 61 percent of Americans—including both Democratic and Republican majorities—are in favor of phasing out the United States’ aging fleet of 400 intercontinental ballistic missiles. This finding is highly noteworthy, as it runs in direct contrast to the Pentagon’s current plan of spending approximately \$100 billion to buy a brand-new generation of ICBMs by 2030.

The survey, entitled “Common Ground of the American People,” is a compilation of studies conducted over the past five years, collecting data from nearly 86,000 individuals throughout the polling process. It specifically aimed to place the respondents into the shoes of a policymaker: respondents were first given an issue briefing, and were then asked to evaluate arguments for and against various policy proposals, before finally offering their recommendations.

The survey’s unique methodology is highly illuminating, because it allows readers of the report to see which arguments were deemed to be most or least convincing, and by whom. For example, Republicans preferred a proposal to phase out ICBMs while maintaining the same number of deployed warheads, while Democrats preferred a proposal to phase out ICBMs and reduce the arsenal to a lower number of deployed warheads.

The main takeaway though, is that—regardless of how the ICBM phase-out takes place—69 percent of Democrats and 53 percent of Republicans agree that the land-based leg of the nuclear triad should be eliminated entirely.

It makes sense that both Democrats and Republicans would agree on phasing out ICBMs: they are outdated, destabilizing, and very expensive.

Intercontinental ballistic missiles are largely relics of the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union alike feared a “bolt-from-the-blue” nuclear attack. At the time, it was believed that both countries having large land-based nuclear arsenals would prevent each other from launching a massive surprise attack. However, in today’s multipolar nuclear environment, the likelihood of such an attack is extremely slim, and so ICBMs no longer hold much strategic value. Given the abundance of more flexible options in the U.S. arsenal, U.S. Strategic Command would certainly turn to nuclear bombers or submarines—not ICBMs—in the event of a low-level nuclear crisis.

Additionally, the inherent vulnerability of the ICBM fleet actually creates a psychological pressure to launch them during a nuclear crisis, before an adversary’s missiles can wipe them out. This is why siloed ICBMs—like those deployed across the United States—are commonly referred to as “use ‘em or lose ‘em” weapons. In the event of a false alarm, accident, or miscalculation, this pressure to “use ‘em” could inadvertently trigger a nuclear war. No other nuclear weapon in the U.S. nuclear arsenal comes with this kind of destabilizing psychological pressure.

Perhaps knowing this, the Pentagon argues that ICBMs are necessary as a “hedge” in case technological advances suddenly render the United States’ nuclear-armed submarines vulnerable. However, the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review admits that “When on patrol, [ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs)] are, at present, virtually undetectable, and there are no known, near-term credible threats to the survivability of the SSBN force.” This condition is likely to continue as U.S. submarines get even quieter, thus making these fears seem relatively exaggerated.

On top of this, replacing the ICBMs with brand-new missiles would be extremely expensive. The latest estimate for the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent, as the replacement program is called, totals approximately \$100 billion. In reality, these costs are expected to rise, given that the contract will be sole-sourced to Northrop Grumman after Boeing pulled out of the competition last year. The chairman of the House Armed Services

Committee has called this development “very troubling,” and the sole-source contract has since triggered a Federal Trade Commission investigation into Boeing’s allegations that Northrop Grumman was engaging in anti-competitive behavior.

Given these underlying programmatic and strategic concerns—in addition to the new survey demonstrating that both Democrats and Republicans want to phase out ICBMs entirely—why is this \$100 billion project still moving forward? In the midst of an election, a recession, and a devastating pandemic, it seems like common sense to delay the program at the very least.

However, a robust lobbying effort by weapons contractors has impeded public scrutiny of the program. Northrop Grumman—the only bidder for the ICBM replacement contract—spent more than \$162 million on lobbying between 2008 and 2018, with the bulk of the contributions going to members of the “ICBM Caucus”—a coalition of Senators from states where ICBMs are deployed. In 2018, this lobbying effort helped kill an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act which called for a feasibility study on extending the life of the current ICBM force, rather than rebuilding it from scratch. This has had the effect of suppressing public debate over the future of the ICBMs; without studies like this one, the public is being asked to blindly swallow the pro-ICBM claims of those that would materially benefit from their replacement.

The University of Maryland's report offers a new tool to push back against the “business” of nuclear policy. The survey suggests that corporate lobbying and “special interests” are alienating the public from their elected representatives, and dividing the two political parties even further. Therefore, treating its respondents as neutral “policymakers” clearly demonstrates that without the presence of moneyed interests, Democrats and Republicans agree on much more than one might think. And in this particular instance it is clear: majorities from both parties want to phase out intercontinental ballistic missiles.

--Matt Korda is a Research Associate for the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, where he co-authors the Nuclear Notebook with Hans Kristensen. Previously, he worked for the Arms Control, Disarmament, and WMD Non-Proliferation Centre at NATO HQ in Brussels. He is also the co-director of Foreign Policy Generation—a group of young people working to develop a progressive foreign policy for the next generation

### **Can China’s Military Win the Tech War?**

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-07-29/can-chinas-military-win-tech-war>

*How the United States Should—and Should Not—Counter Beijing’s Civil-Military Fusion*

By [Anja Manuel](#) and [Kathleen Hicks](#) for Foreign Affairs // July 29, 2020

As the Chinese government has set out to harness the growing strength of the Chinese technology sector to bolster its military, policymakers in the United States have reacted with mounting alarm.

U.S. officials have described Beijing’s civil-military fusion effort as a “malign agenda” that represents a “global security threat.” And as China’s defense capabilities have grown, some Western policymakers have started to wonder whether the United States needs to adopt its own version of civil-military fusion, embracing a top-down approach to developing cutting-edge technologies with military applications.

Chinese President Xi Jinping formalized the concept of civil-military fusion as part of the extensive military reforms laid out in his 2016 five-year plan. He established a new Central Commission for Integrated Military and Civilian Development, with himself as its head. The commission's goal is to promote the development of dual-use technology and integrate existing civilian technologies into the arsenal of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The United States and its allies should take seriously Beijing's efforts to militarize China's technological base. Yet they should also recognize the strategy's limitations, to avoid overreacting in ways that would prove counterproductive. China's bureaucratic and authoritarian approach to civil-military fusion is likely to waste considerable time and money. By trying to control innovation, Beijing is more likely to delay and even stifle it.

The United States will fare no better if it tries to mimic China's model of civil-military fusion. Instead, it should build on existing U.S. advantages in research and technology—advantages that are increasingly at risk not because of China but because of a lack of agility and creativity among U.S. planners and policymakers. Washington does need a strategy to strengthen its national security technology and industrial base, but it should be one that is centered on collaborative disruption that generates the right incentives for innovators, scientists, engineers, venture capitalists, and others. With forward-looking changes in the Defense Department and smart investments across government, the United States can secure the edge in defense capabilities on its own terms.

#### **CATCHING UP**

Four types of Chinese entities participate in civil-military fusion. There are traditional Chinese state-owned defense contractors and their many subsidiaries (some of which also sell into the commercial market); private dual-use manufacturers contributing research and development (R & D) and producing subcomponents for the main defense contractors and for the PLA directly; 43 PLA-supervised universities and at least a dozen state-run think tanks conducting research that feeds directly into Chinese weapons systems; and six quasi-private venture capital and private equity firms that invest in cutting-edge technologies.

Civil-military fusion sets off alarm bells in Washington for several reasons. Because Chinese dual-use R & D funding often falls outside the formal PLA budget, it can be hard to track and may be quite high. One recent study of the Chinese defense supply chain by the research firm C4ADS noted that at least six quasi-private investment vehicles partially or wholly own at least 232 companies involved in China's defense-procurement network.

And in the opaque Chinese system, it is virtually impossible to find a budget for civil-military fusion initiatives. (It is worth noting, however, that civil-military fusion may bring a degree of transparency to PLA procurement, since by broadcasting their desire to sell to the military, Chinese companies give Western analysts a sense of which technologies the PLA is targeting.)

What is more, unlike their Western counterparts, Chinese companies don't have the option of turning down government requests to share technology. And it is all too easy for Western companies and institutions to unwittingly contribute to the PLA's advancement, given the bewildering array of contractors, subcontractors, academic institutions, and semiprivate investment vehicles involved in civil-military fusion. In one famous case, after 75 percent of the British company Dynex Semiconductor was acquired by a Chinese civilian locomotive company, an advanced technology developed by Dynex ended up in the aircraft launch systems on China's first domestically built aircraft carrier.

It is all too easy for Western companies and institutions to unwittingly contribute to the PLA's advancement, given the bewildering array of contractors, subcontractors, academic institutions, and semiprivate investment vehicles involved in civil-military fusion. Still, China isn't ten feet tall. For one thing, it is coming from far behind. Historically, the PLA has depended almost entirely on 11 large state-owned enterprises for procurement and R & D.

Until recently, many of these were Maoist-era relics, largely cordoned off from the actual economy. In 2010, only an estimated one percent of Chinese tech firms were involved in defense. The PLA is in "urgent need of improving its informatization (i.e. applying the digital revolution to the military)," a recent PLA white paper on defense strategy specifically warned. "China's military security is confronted by risks from technology surprise and growing technological generation gap."

To catch up, China's military in some ways seeks to emulate the United States. The U.S. military has cooperated extensively and effectively with universities and private companies for decades. In the 1930s, it founded national labs that proved critical in the field of supercomputing. It collaborated with Texas Instruments and Fairchild Semiconductor to develop microprocessors.

**In 1958**, it created the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which helped develop GPS and the Internet. Most recently, the Silicon Valley-based Defense Innovation Unit, founded in 2015, has helped innovative startups gain a foothold at the Pentagon. China seeks to create similar institutions. Its Central Commission for Integrated Military and Civilian Development has been likened to DARPA, and Chinese reporting has compared a new PLA outpost in Shenzhen (a Chinese tech center) to the United States' Defense Innovation Unit (DIU).

Yet in its quest to catch up, China's authoritarian system is prone to missteps and overreach. As it has with other Chinese initiatives (Belt and Road, Made in China 2025), the Communist Party encourages officials, university administrators, and private companies to parrot a slogan and show Beijing that they are doing something in service of it. Often, this means a significant amount of money is wasted, since provinces lavish subsidies on favored companies and technologies without first thinking through where or even if they are needed.

### **COLLABORATIVE DISRUPTION**

The U.S. response to civil-military fusion has so far included ideas that risk being counterproductive. For example, the Trump administration and several members of Congress have called for broad visa restrictions to prevent Chinese students from studying science and technology in the United States. The Trump administration recently revoked the visas of Chinese students and researchers affiliated with any "entity in the PRC that implements or supports the PRC's 'military-civil fusion strategy.'"

Narrowly defined, this makes perfect sense. It is essential to strictly limit access to some research programs in order to protect national security. Broadly interpreted, however, the visa move could affect thousands and thousands of Chinese students and researchers who have no relationship at all with the PLA. Encouraging a substantial brain drain from the United States to China or other markets seeking to attract the best and the brightest will only undermine U.S. competitiveness.

Washington has also—wisely—tightened both export controls and restrictions on Chinese investments in cutting-edge U.S. tech companies through the Foreign Investment Risk Review Modernization Act. If interpreted too broadly, however, these laws could also undermine U.S. research and

innovation. Recent U.S. Commerce Department regulations, for example, restrict the export of any items that could conceivably be used by the militaries of China, Russia, or Venezuela. This potentially affects overly broad swaths of otherwise commercial technology, taking away key markets and thus making U.S. companies less competitive.

Rather than focusing on blocking Chinese advancement, the United States should push its own defense sector to be more agile and innovative—not by emulating civil-military fusion but by working with, rather than dictating to, actors outside of government. Such collaboration is especially crucial given the likelihood of significant and sustained pressure on the federal budget: partnering effectively with the private sector can save taxpayer dollars. It also reflects the reality that the U.S. military can at best hope to be an early adopter, rather than an originator, of critical technologies.

Yet at a time of rapid technological development, even that will require a revolution in the U.S. government’s acquisitions and budgeting culture. The Defense Department’s long lead times and slow decision-making remain significant obstacles to innovation. A 2018 study found that the presence of new entrants to the defense industrial base had declined from 2007 through 2013 and then stagnated through 2016. A more recent bipartisan assessment by the Reagan Institute noted that “beyond initial strides in narrow circumstances, the government has not shown a willingness to provide major contracts to nontraditional players.”

Partnering with the private sector on collaborative disruption will require upfront investments and streamlined approaches for getting the best commercial technology into the Department of Defense. There is broad bipartisan support for such approaches, and good ideas are already on the table; small experiments such as the Defense Innovation Unit, the Defense Digital Service, and service-specific innovation efforts have shown success. Yet needed shifts in operational approach and investment in cutting-edge military capabilities remain far behind where they need to be given China’s technological push, even with the limitations of civil-military fusion.

To start, Washington must invest more in key emerging technologies. Direct federal investment is vital to progress in quantum computing, synthetic biology, semiconductors, and military-use artificial intelligence. Although the Trump administration’s fiscal year 2021 budget request holds defense research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) funds essentially flat, this is not enough. Congress should expand this segment of the budget. Senator Charles Schumer’s (D-N.Y.) bipartisan and bicameral Endless Frontier Act, which would vastly increase federal R & D funding for critical technologies, is a promising first step; some of its \$110 billion in new funding should be directed to Pentagon innovation.

Just as important is scaling and speeding up procurement of emerging capabilities. The 2021 budget request cuts overall procurement. Still, there might be space to fund more innovative projects at the expense of older, legacy systems. Congress should push the Defense Department to use that space, especially in areas where China is investing heavily and the United States is moving too slowly—such as autonomous undersea vehicles and counterhypersonic missile capabilities.

The Defense Department’s painful and lengthy acquisition process is particularly problematic when it comes to what is known as “crossing the valley of death”—making the shift from research and development to full-scale procurement. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, additive manufacturing, and unmanned systems, are especially vulnerable to the valley of death; new approaches, including faster purchasing and rapid prototyping processes, will be needed to improve the prospects for these kinds of nontraditional defense programs.

So will increasing budget flexibility. Warfighters seldom know two years in advance where the next critical innovation will come from or the precise form it will take. Congress can help spur advanced capabilities by narrowly defining what constitutes a new program start—that is, the threshold when upgrades to an original design (such as in a software package) are considered so significant that a program is viewed as wholly new. Under existing procedures, programs deemed as new starts require congressional notification or approval, typically achieved only through the national defense authorization process.

Waiting for the next weigh station in the congressional appropriations process can take up to two years, a cycle time that may have worked fine for twentieth-century programs but is far too rigid and slow when it comes to integrating new technology quickly today. Congress has at times more loosely defined a new start during combat operations—for example, the Reaper drone program, although really an evolution of the Predator drone, was allowed to move quickly from prototype to the field because U.S. troops in Iraq needed it. That same sense of urgency should apply to today’s competitive defense environment.

Finally, the defense workforce needs to have the right training and incentives. Government contracting typically takes too long, requires specialized knowledge to navigate, and creates significant barriers to entry for new players. There are ways to deter waste and abuse and still reward innovation that efficiently advances military effectiveness. Rewarding technological know-how and agile problem solving in military and civilian acquisition can help change the culture. So can more opportunities to hire people directly from industry or research institutions into the senior civilian government or even the military ranks and expanding the number of temporary fellowships for private-sector experts to spend a year or two in government.

With such concrete steps, the United States can secure the advantage in defense capabilities on its own terms. It is to the United States’ benefit that China is looking backward: its approach risks delaying innovation by trying to control it. There is no reason why the United States should make the same mistake.

**CORRECTION APPENDED (July 30, 2020) ----** An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that some Chinese papers on civil-military fusion specifically argue for China to imitate U.S. institutions such as DARPA. Comparisons between the two countries’ institutions have been drawn, but China has not explicitly called for replicating U.S. institutions.

### **Flournoy: Next defense secretary needs ‘big bets’ to boost ‘eroding’ deterrence**

Defense News Online, Aug. 10 | Aaron Mehta

WASHINGTON -- The next U.S. defense secretary must be prepared to invest heavily in game-changing technology, even if it comes at the cost of existing capabilities, in order to maintain a credible deterrent for China and Russia, according to former Pentagon official Michèle Flournoy.

“Our ability to deter is — it’s not gone, but it’s an eroding asset,” Flournoy, who is seen as a top contender for the job of defense secretary should former Vice President Joe Biden win the November presidential election, said at the Aspen Security Forum on Aug. 6. “And we’ve got to pay attention now to making sure that we attend to that and invest in” needed capabilities.

“I think there’s, sort of, two parallel efforts that have to happen. One is investments that may take a decade to be fully realized and integrated into the force. Another is the question of, what can we do in the next five years with what we have, but use it differently,” she explained.

And that requires what she termed “big bets” that may take a while to come to fruition, but which need investment in the near term to get moving — investment that may require cutting legacy forces to free up money from a defense budget that has likely peaked.

“Defense budgets are probably going to flatten in the coming years, no matter who wins the election,” Flournoy said. “That means you have to make trade-offs and you have to make hard decisions, which means you probably need to buy fewer legacy forces in order to invest in the technologies that will actually make the force that you keep more relevant, more survivable, more combat effective, and better able to underwrite deterrence.”

While noting there is a “whole laundry list” of future technologies on which to make big bets, Flournoy highlighted two she considers particularly important. The first is a “network of networks” for secure communications as well as command and control that can survive an attack from any domain — space, air, naval, land and cyberspace — that China could seek to use.

“We need a command-and-control system that is powered by artificial intelligence to enable that kind of resilience in a much more contested environment,” Flournoy explained.

The second is greater investment in unmanned systems in order to augment manned capabilities.

“China has created a set of threat rings that are very, very lethal places for U.S. forces to go,” she said. “We want to augment our manned forces with unmanned systems that are still controlled by a human being, but that dramatically improve ... our ability to project power to defend an interest or an ally who’s under threat.”

As to the second track, Flournoy said “it’s really about changing our mindset and how we imagine using what we have. And so I think there are ways in which new operational concepts that could take, you know, platforms — we have munitions, we have intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance resources ... you put them together in new ways to get a better deterrent effect than what we have today.”

In an April op-ed published by Defense News, Flournoy and co-author Gabrielle Chefitz argued that the Pentagon needs to break a logjam with Congress and find ways to build greater trust with legislators. She picked up on that theme with her Aspen comments, noting the Defense Department needs to improve relations with Capitol Hill for this plan to work.

“Sometimes when the department is trying to make those trade-offs to move money from one program to another, if they don’t do a good job explaining that to Congress they sort of get the hand from Congress,” Flournoy said.

“We really have to make Congress much more of a strategic partner in this exercise. They need to understand why, [that] we know what we’re facing, the urgency. They need to be invited into the war games and to the simulations and to the experimentation, and understand why these trade-offs are being made ... to try to get better buy-in and frankly leadership from some of the key champions on the Hill.”

## **Biden advocated 'no first use' policy as VP. Would he change nuclear doctrine as president?**

Washington Examiner Online, Aug. 13 | Jamie McIntyre

Just nine days before President-elect Trump took the oath of office in 2017, then-Vice President Joe Biden gave a speech in Washington in which he advocated a fundamental change in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy: a public declaration that America would never be the first to use nuclear weapons in a future conflict.

“Given our nonnuclear capabilities and the nature of today’s threats, it’s hard to envision a plausible scenario in which the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States would be necessary or make sense,” Biden said.

“The next administration will put forward its own policies,” he said, but he argued, “President Obama and I are confident we can deter and defend ourselves and our allies against nonnuclear threats through other means.”

“Deterring, and, if necessary, retaliating against a nuclear attack should be the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal,” he added.

Trump and his initial national security team, which included his defense secretary, retired Marine Gen. Jim Mattis, and national security adviser Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, did indeed go another way, not only rejecting any idea of forswearing the first use of nuclear weapons but expanding the conditions under which adversaries might be subject to a nuclear strike from the U.S.

The language was included in a rewrite of the Pentagon’s Nuclear Posture Review, published in February 2018, which said the U.S. reserved the right to respond with nuclear weapons to a conventional, chemical, biological, or cyber attack in “extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States, its allies, and partners.”

Under the revised nuclear doctrine, “extreme circumstances” would include “significant nonnuclear attacks” on strategic assets, including targets such as population centers, critical civilian infrastructure, or any attack on U.S. or allied nuclear forces, command and control facilities, or early warning radars or satellites.

The precept that the U.S., the world’s premier nuclear power, should never rule out the first use of nuclear weapons is one that previous presidents, including George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama, have questioned but never changed.

Most but not all of the four-star commanders who have been in charge of America’s strategic arsenal have flatly rejected the idea of a no-first-use declaration.

“I think the current policy is exactly right. It's been that way through multiple administrations. I think it's important to continue that policy. It improves our strategic deterrent. It improves the support that we give to our allies,” testified Air Force Gen. John Hyten in April 2019 when he was still head of U.S. Strategic Command.

“When I travel overseas, the extended deterrent message I bring from the United States is hugely powerful to our allies that have chosen not to build their own nuclear weapons and to trust that the United States nuclear umbrella will cover them,” he told a House Armed Services subcommittee.

But Marine Gen. James Cartwright, who served as STRATCOM commander under President George W. Bush, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs under Obama, and went on to become a member of the arms control group Global Zero, came to view “no first use” as the only rational doctrine.

“A no-first-use policy would ... reduce the risks of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons,” he wrote along with fellow arms control advocate Bruce Blair in a New York Times op-ed in 2016.

“Although a no-first-use policy would limit the president’s discretion by imposing procedural and physical constraints on his or her ability to initiate the use of nuclear weapons, we believe such checks on the commander in chief would serve the national interest,” they wrote. “Nuclear weapons today no longer serve any purpose beyond deterring the first use of such weapons by our adversaries.”

Given his public statements and the failure of his mentor Obama to make any progress on his vision of “a world without nuclear weapons,” Biden may find the argument for a no-first-use declaration persuasive, as laid out in a new book by former Clinton Defense Secretary William Perry.

In *The Button*, co-written with Tom Collina of the Ploughshares Fund, Perry argues that there is a realistic scenario in which the world’s dominant conventional military power needs nuclear weapons to deter or respond to nonnuclear threats. “How can the United States possibly convince other nations that they do not need nuclear weapons if the United States itself says it needs them for nonnuclear threats?” he asks.

But military commanders argue that the point of maintaining the option of first use is to add another level of deterrence, to ensure no adversary miscalculates or underestimates the willingness of the U.S. to protect itself and its allies.

“I think anything that simplifies an enemy's decision-making calculus would be a mistake,” Gen. Joseph Dunford, then the Joint Chiefs chairman, told Congress last year. “I’m very comfortable with the policy that we have right now, what creates a degree of ambiguity.”

Of course, because historically, the president, in his role as commander in chief, has had the sole authority to launch nuclear weapons, each president can have an individual policy about when to launch. The president doesn't have to announce it to anyone. It can just remain a personal conviction.

Which brings up a second argument from Perry and Collina: It’s time, they say, to reconsider whether a single person should have the power to end the world.

“No president should have to make that awesome decision quickly, without deliberation and consultation; no president should have the sole authority to launch nuclear weapons first,” they argue. “In the case of first use, we support current legislation to require a declaration of war by Congress that specifically authorizes a nuclear attack before the president can use nuclear weapons.”

History provides a cautionary tale.

“The president could be emotionally unstable or under the influence of drugs or alcohol and could impulsively choose to initiate nuclear war at any time,” they write, and here they are thinking of one president in particular: Richard Nixon, who they say had a well-documented “tendency to drink alcohol to excess.”

In 1969, when a U.S. spy plane was downed by North Korea over the Sea of Japan, killing 31 Americans, “Nixon became incensed and ordered a tactical nuclear strike,” Perry and Collina recount, citing George Carver, the CIA’s top Vietnam specialist at the time.

“The Joint Chiefs were alerted and asked to recommend targets, but [national security adviser Henry] Kissinger got on the phone to them. They agreed not to do anything until Nixon sobered up.”

Both Russia and China have some version of a declared "no first use" policy. In the case of Russia, its military doctrine calls for the use of nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction against it first.

But those declarations aren’t worth the paper they are written on, Adm. Chas Richard, the current U.S. strategic commander, told Republican Sen. Josh Hawley earlier this year.

“Senator, I think I could drive a truck through that 'no first use' policy,” Richard testified at an Armed Services Committee hearing in February, noting that Beijing doesn’t have the same definition of “first use” as the U.S. does.

“They are very opaque about what their intentions are,” Richard said. “So, what constitutes first use? Where might they say, 'That's our territory,' right? 'Therefore, it doesn't count as an attack against you.'”

In a presidential debate in September 2016, then-candidate Trump was asked directly if he supported the current policy.

“I would certainly not do first strike. I think that once the nuclear alternative happens, it's over,” Trump said, but then he added the caveat that all prior presidents have cited. “At the same time, we have to be prepared. I can't take anything off the table.”

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### **North Korea’s deterrence strategy and bargaining tactic**

<https://nuclearnetwork.csis.org/inferring-from-signaling-north-koreas-deterrence-strategy-and-bargaining-tactic/>

[What might Pyongyang’s continued missile tests, public statements, and military exercises signal ahead of the 75th anniversary of the Workers’ Party of Korea?](#)

The level of open-source information regarding North Korea is limited, often selective, delayed, and ambiguous.

Although its state media conveys Pyongyang's propaganda on a daily basis, much of this is "noise" to sustain an (intended) image of North Korea's self-reliance and continuous fight against surrounding imperialists. Kim Jong Un's rhetoric in 2019 and 2020, the increase and nature of high-level statements as well as missile tests present purposive signals. In adversarial relationships, states signal strategically in line with bargaining contexts; signaling nevertheless provides clues for analyzing the logic of apparent behavior.

Pyongyang's missile testing serves domestic, bargaining, and technological purposes. In March and mid-April North Korea conducted five flight-tests of ballistic missiles as well as seven army, air force, and artillery drills between the end of February and mid-April. Considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, testing activities and military exercises project images of normalcy and enduring strength – although the regime denies any (past or present) cases of infection, public health remains an urgent issue.[1]

In the context of North Korea's general economic and political situation, missile testing serves to mobilize domestic support and prove to internal and external audiences that sanctions do not have intended effects of desperation and surrender. 2020 is the third year under harsh sanctions.[2] It is also the last year of Kim Jong Un's five-year plan and the ruling Worker's Party Korea (WPK) celebrates its 75th anniversary on October 10, 2020.[3] Preparations of a major military parade for that occasion appear underway.

In terms of bargaining with the United States, Pyongyang's tests (and other weapons activities) illustrate that the regime does not accept restrictions on its nuclear and missile programs in the absence of concessions from Washington. What is being launched, how this is portrayed in state media, and how this supports Kim Jong Un's major announcements serve as the basis for establishing North Korea's apparent deterrence strategy and bargaining tactic.

### **Latest ballistic missile improvements**

North Korea conducted its last flight test of an inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) in November 2017. Kim Jong Un's declaration of long range ballistic missile and nuclear test moratoria in April 2018 set the stage for its diplomatic talks with South Korea and the United States. Starting from May 2019, however, Pyongyang resumed flight-testing shorter range systems and conducting engine tests.

Its recent testing activities continue a trend of improving flexibility and mobility, a trend that focused in 2016 and 2017 on medium-range ballistic missiles. Between May 2019 and March 2020, North Korea conducted tests of three systems of short-range missiles: KN-23, which has external similarities to the Russian Iskander-M and South Korean Hyunmoo-2B,[4] KN-24 with external similarities to the US Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS), and KN-25, a system that is described as a multiple missile launch system or long-range artillery system.

All these systems are road-mobile using transporter erector launchers (TEL) as well as solid-fueled (solid-fueled missiles can be deployed faster and better hidden since they can be transported in a fueled state). Pyongyang appears to have successfully developed solid-fuel engines for short-range and medium-range ballistic missiles, but not for intermediate- and long-range missiles (yet).

KN-24 and KN-25 were tested in August and September 2019 as well as March 2020. A comparison of available information shows an improvement of multiple launch rapidity: Only 20 seconds elapsed between two launches of the KN-25 system (previously requiring up to 17 minutes between launches); the multiple launch time of KN-24 was reduced from 15 minutes to 5 minutes.

Both systems plus the KN-23 are likely to be operational; they can potentially strike targets anywhere in South Korea, including US troops and missile defense systems deployed there. It is difficult to assess whether these systems can carry only conventional warheads or nuclear warheads, as well as biological/chemical warfare agents; warhead ambiguity serves here to increase the perceived threat from short-range missiles. As an example, the possibility that KN-24 can technically carry a nuclear warhead cannot be completely dismissed.

In October 2019 Pyongyang tested the Pukguksong-3 (KN-26) for the first time, a sea-based solid-fueled system of up to 1,900 kilometers range. North Korean state media claims to have successfully conducted the test from a submarine; according to the Pentagon, however, Pukguksong-3 was launched from an underwater platform. Its sea-based predecessor, Pukguksong-1 (KN-11), was tested six times between May 2015 and August 2016, once from an undersea platform and the other launches from a submarine.

Such a course of testing is also conceivable for Pukguksong-3. Pyongyang possesses a Sinpo B-class submarine which can be used for the deployment of ballistic missiles.[6] Since October 2017, North Korea has been working on a successor model, the Sinpo-C class, which was likely showcased in state media imagery in July 2019. Even though the operational status of its submarines is questionable, Pyongyang's ambitions to possess submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) cannot be underestimated; determination for a sea-based dimension to its nuclear deterrent are apparent.

In fact, commercial satellite imagery from early April 2020 outlines ejection tests at Sinpo Shipyard, potentially in preparation of sea-based launches.[7] While Pyongyang resumed short- and medium-range missile testing, it refrains from testing longer range missiles or conducting engine tests for ICBMs. Satellite imagery from January 2020 outline no relevant activity at the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground. North Korea also continues to abstain from testing nuclear explosive devices as regular satellite imagery show caretaking activities but no indications of site reactivation at Pyunggye-ri. Instead,

Pyongyang continues to improve its ballistic missile infrastructure: it completed construction of a facility for the manufacture of mobile launch vehicles; previously, TELs were imported as vehicles for civilian use such as logging and construction, then assembled and modulated for military purposes. The regime is also constructing a facility at Sil-li presumably for the assembly and accommodation of missiles and launchers, in the vicinity of an underground facility, a rocket manufacturing facility, and an engine manufacturing facility.

### **Pyongyang's deterrence strategy**

North Korea's military is inferior in quality to the South Korean military, even more when supported by US forces. The large amount of ground forces, the location of artillery along the DMZ and its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) provide Pyongyang with asymmetrical advantages. While its biological and chemical weapons programs remain largely unknown,

North Korean state media continuously emphasizes the deterrence purpose of its nuclear weapons programs, a truly credible deterrent of war (진짜 믿을수 있는 전쟁 억제력).[8] The overriding priority is regime survival; nuclear weapons serve to deter invasion or disarming strike by the United States. Deterrence by denial or deterrence by punishment are no certain options for Pyongyang: North Korea cannot prevent attack by making it infeasible for Washington to attain its objectives of a strike, nor can it retaliate massively.

Pyongyang can, however, increase the costs of attack to a significant level; the regime's strategy of minimal nuclear deterrence bases on deterrence by risk and encompasses three components: the risk of direct threat to the continental United States, second strike capabilities, and resolve.[10] North Korea possesses two different ICBM models (see Table B, above); it flight-tested its Hwasong-14 twice in July 2017 and Hwasong-15 once in November 2017.

The technical reliability of these systems, particularly of re-entry vehicles and guidance systems, remains uncertain. ICBM-tests (and nuclear tests) present a redline for Washington, however; resuming such provocative testing would also strain good relations with Beijing (and Moscow), relations that include the support of sanctions relief in the Security Council (and assistance in sanctions evasion).

Although flight-testing would improve ICBM credibility, the technical possibility to deliver a nuclear explosive to the U.S. mainland already poses a significant risk to Washington – especially considering the regime's paranoia and willingness to defend itself. From Pyongyang's point of view, it has acquired the capability to harm its arch enemy, its militarily-superior and geographically distant adversary.

Compensating for technical uncertainties of its ICBMs, Pyongyang has showcased other advancements of its nuclear program: The Yongbyon nuclear reactor complex includes plutonium reprocessing, high enrichment of uranium as well as the production of tritium. Other probable fissile material production facilities remain undisclosed; the uranium enrichment facility in Kangson is known through open source intelligence.[11]

The regime is likely able to produce both fission and fusion bombs; the last nuclear test in September 2017 exceeded a yield of 140 kilotons, suggesting the ability to build a thermonuclear bomb (or boosted fission bomb). The US intelligence community believes Pyongyang to have mastered the miniaturization for nuclear warheads, which is necessary to equip ICBMs with nuclear explosives.

Possessing a (reliable) second strike capability is a difficult technological endeavor as well, but one that Pyongyang is able to improve while remaining below the redline of not conducting ICBMs or nuclear tests. In contrast to other states' second strike capabilities, a retaliatory strike by the Kim regime would likely target U.S. military bases in Japan, South Korea or elsewhere in the Pacific, with conventional warheads or WMD.

Assuming that a preventive, disarming first strike would first and foremost aim to destroy North Korea's ICBM capability, the rest of its ballistic missiles would need to survive and be operationally ready. To achieve this goal, a diverse arsenal of mobile ballistic missiles and their storage underground are essential. Pyongyang's latest improvements of rapidly deployable multiple launch rocket systems increase the likelihood of circumventing missile defense; a reliable ability to launch ballistic missiles from sea would contribute to evading detection and interception as well.

These latest weapons developments are all solid-fueled. In 2016 and 2017, Pyongyang conducted a number of flight-tests of medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, such as Hwasong-12, Musudan and Nodong. These systems are all road-mobile and liquid-fueled; though solid propellants are certainly of interest, the regime then already declared successful weapons developments and the mass-production of systems.

Last, but certainly not least, Pyongyang has cultivated an image of resolve over decades. The regime's internal propaganda as well as its reporting of military exercises and high-level meetings consistently feature the determination to fight, constant mobilization and acclaimed martyrdom for national defense. State media reports framed missile testing events in March 2020 as military exercises, activities not for weapons development but for weapons improvement and operability.

The state of war is the main theme of every military-related reporting; high-alert, reliability and surprise are thus continuous, important elements in North Korean signaling.[12] Whereas short-range systems as tested in 2019-2020 serve to launch reliable counter-strikes in response to surprise attacks, long-range missiles provide the capability to strike "any region and place any time".[13]

Projecting an image of (regime) cohesion, sure retaliation for the sake of regime security and defense, reports of some missile tests emphasize the absence of Kim Jong Un and his on-site guidance.[14] The regime's image of resolve encompasses operational readiness, regime cohesion and determination. It also remains ambiguous regarding a possible first use of nuclear weapons:

Pyongyang is reportedly determined to use nuclear weapons in response to an existential attack; a conventional decapitation strike could therefore be met with a nuclear retaliatory strike. In this context, the proclaimed objective of nuclear war deterrence (핵전쟁억제력) reads as nuclear deterrence of nuclear war rather than nuclear deterrence of war, presuming nuclear first-strikes by North Korea or by the US.[15]

### **Signaling and Bargaining Tactics**

Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program increased international condemnation, isolation, and enforced punishment, but it also provides the regime with an asymmetric military asset and bargaining leverage. Besides the frequently emphasized deterrence purpose, Kim Jong Un referred to nuclear weapons as means to "control the political situation" (주변정치정세의 통제력).[16]

Testing activities can have bargaining purposes vis-à-vis the United States: for example, Pyongyang conducted the Pukguksong-3-test a few days before working level talks in October 2019, the last direct negotiations between US and North Korea. Kim Jong Un's presence was, however, removed from media reporting. In December 2019, Pyongyang conducted two engine tests at the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground, heightening fears of solid-fuel engines for long-range missiles and a looming ICBM test.

According to U.S. and South Korean media reports, Kim Jong Un had promised the dismantlement of the Sohae facility during summitry in June and September 2018. Outside experts expected major testing events around mid-April 2020; according to South Korean reporting, Pyongyang indeed launched surface-to-ship cruise missiles and air-to-ground missiles from fighter jets, but in absence of Kim Jong Un and North Korean state media reporting.

Threats are an elemental part of Pyongyang's rhetoric, often in order to relay a sense of urgency and compel accommodation by Washington. In his New Years' speech, Kim Jong Un proclaimed a "new way" for 2019 and set an ultimatum for negotiations with the US by the end of the year.[17] Foreign Ministry officials' statements on a looming "Christmas gift" aimed to reconfirm and increase the perceived menace of this ultimatum.[18]

This threat was "specified" at the end of 2019 when Kim Jong Un suggested his consideration of resuming long-range missile tests and promised that "the world would soon witness a new strategic weapon".[19] If, when and how these threats are implemented remains to be seen; conceivable are a new solid-fueled (intermediate-range) ballistic missile or submarine to be tested or shown e.g. at the military parade in October.

Irrespective of the specificity or credibility of military threats, Pyongyang fosters its posture of intransigence: Kim Jong Un linked the permanence and further development of the regime's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs with the fait accompli of the sanctions regime.[20] A recent meeting of the Central Military Commission contributed to the narrative of increasing "nuclear war deterrence" and "putting strategic armed forces on high alert"; continuous weapons development and readiness are "in line with the general requirement for the building and development of the armed forces".[21]

This does not suggest imminent military hostility, but the regime's continued improvement of its deterrence by risk. In addition to weapons developments and verbal posturing, personnel changes contribute to signaling resolve. Although personnel turnover stems also from generational shifts and other domestic reasons, the timing to change key government and diplomatic positions in April 2019 and January 2020 – after the Hanoi summit and the ultimatum for negotiations – is notable.

As an example, long-standing career diplomat Ri Yong Ho, who was involved in negotiations with the U.S. since the 1990s, was replaced as foreign minister by former military and intelligence official Ri Son Gwon. Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong was present at all summits with Donald Trump and South Korean president Moon Jae-in; North Korean state media first issued statements in her name in March and June 2020.

While her actual power in policy-making remains speculative, the regime established a new level of addressor for signaling, a level between "normal" top tier officials and the supreme leader, attributing statements with peculiar authority without exhausting ultimate authority.[22] Two of Kim Yo Jong's four statements addressed US-North Korea relations while the other two were directed against South Korea.

Her March statement served as a response to the received letter from Donald Trump to Kim Jong Un. While lauding the good relationship between the two leaders, she argued that their personal relations do not automatically improve hostile relations between the two countries.[23] Her July statement reaffirmed this argument by outlining the discord between the US president and his administration as well as the continuity of US "hostility".[24]

This statement responded to discussions in South Korea and the US concerning the possibility of a US-North Korea summit in 2020.[25] Kim Yo Jong elaborates her "personal opinions" that summitry is beneficial for Washington, not for Pyongyang, and that the proposal made in Hanoi is off the table. Her statement presents a well-constructed bargaining signal that employs images of strength, resolve and autarky while reassuring benign

intentions and the possibility of denuclearization as a long-term reciprocal process. Strikingly, Kim Yo Jong's statements are the only texts that mention Donald Trump by name.

Other high-level statements in North Korean media do not explicitly address the White House; Pyongyang's foreign minister mentioned only U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo by name in his unforgiving statement in commemoration of the Singapore summit.[26]

### **Political hostility towards South Korea**

While missile testing has been paused since mid-April 2020, North Korea made headlines in June 2020, with Pyongyang announcing it had ceased all communication lines with Seoul – except for intelligence channels. It also destroyed the liaison office at Kaesong that was established in 2018 and provided for regular working-level talks between the two Koreas, with dramatic explosions.

The (North) Korean People's Army further threatened to (re)install guard posts within the Demilitarized Zone and deploy troops to two areas of previous inter-Korean economic cooperation, the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mount Kungang Tourism Zone.[27] Inter-Korean cooperation had already deteriorated since the failed Hanoi summit in February 2019, when Pyongyang disregarded Seoul's proposals for high-level political and military-to-military talks, temporarily withdrew its staff from the Kaesong liaison office and agreed to only working-level talks.

Actual military escalation remains absent (for now); the Kim regime reversed military tension reduction and political confidence-building measures. The resumption of sending counter-propaganda leaflets by South Korean activists serves here merely as a convenient trigger; Pyongyang's actions mount pressure on an accommodating administration in Seoul with parliamentary majority, two North Korean defectors in conservative parliamentary opposition and in disagreement with Washington over defense cost-sharing.

North Korea's hostility against South Korea might attempt to exploit this alliance rift or cause a stir to increase relevance without risking severed ties to the White House. Pyongyang's actions might well have domestic reasons since there are little economic successes to showcase at the major party anniversary in October 2020 and enemy images are serviceable for propaganda.

The fact that North Korean state media issued statements that personally insulted Moon Jae-in in Kim Yo Jong's name might relate less to her role in policy-making and more to the purpose of increasing severity without escalating in the name of the supreme leader: Kim Yo Jong was the first member of the ruling Kim family to set foot on South Korean soil since the Korean

War as a member of the North's delegation to the PyeongChang Olympic Games – the sports diplomatic context that set the basis for inter-Korean summitry in 2018. Her association with a “charm offensive” and “smile diplomacy”, positive depictions according to South Korean newspapers, adds more injury to the insults relayed in her recent statements.

### **Nothing to celebrate**

North Korea's apparent deterrence strategy and bargaining tactic illustrate the regime's intransigence and preparation to play for time. Its weapons developments, belligerent signaling, and calibrated hostility towards South Korea aim to maintain a level of (media) attention and of threat without

risking actual (military) escalations. On the one hand, the lack of negotiations with (and concessions by) Washington disappoint Pyongyang's desire for improved relations, trade resumption, and economic development through sanctions relief.

On the other hand, the White House's downplaying of short-range ballistic missile tests and current disinterest in deal-making provide the Kim regime with enough leeway to continue weapons developments and improve its deterrence posture. Although reliability of its ICBM capability requires flight-tests, this would endanger favorable ties with Washington as well as with Beijing (and Moscow).

The level of sanctions on Pyongyang and its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities are unprecedented. North Korea has shown perseverance in economic hardships and "creativity" in procuring revenue through sanctions evasion, money laundering, and other criminal (cyber) activities. Still, considering continued international isolation and absent trade – aggravated through issues of public health – it will be difficult for the Kim regime to formulate victory narratives that boost the regime's political legitimacy before the 75th anniversary of the Workers Party Korea in October 2020.

### **Iran Is Our Top Priority, Says Senior US Commander In Middle East**

*Shiite military attacks have made it harder to fight ISIS, Gen. Kenneth McKenzie said.*

<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2020/08/iran-our-top-priority-says-senior-us-commander-middle-east/167651/>

BY KATIE BO WILLIAMS for Defense One // AUGUST 12, 2020 01:42 PM ET

Countering the threat from Iran is the U.S. military's top priority in the Middle East, America's top commander in the region said Wednesday, blaming rocket attacks from Shiite militia groups in Iraq for hampering U.S. efforts to defeat ISIS in the region.

"As I look at the theater, we remain focused on Iran as our central problem. This headquarters focuses on Iran, executing deterrence activities against Iran, and doing those things," U.S. Central Command head Gen. Kenneth McKenzie said at an U.S. Institute for Peace event. "The threat against our forces from Shiite militant groups has caused us to put resources that we would otherwise use against ISIS to provide for our own defense and that has lowered our ability to work effectively against them," McKenzie said.

In March, U.S. forces began pulling back from bases across Iraq, turning them over to Iraqi security partners. At the time, Pentagon officials insisted that the base hand-offs were part of a long-planned consolidation that reflected the success of the anti-ISIS fight — not concerns over the ongoing rocket attacks by Iran-linked proxy militias. On Wednesday, McKenzie reiterated that justification, saying that Iraqi security forces had improved their ability to fight ISIS and that "the fact that we're getting smaller is actually a sign of campaign progress."

But the CENTCOM commander also explicitly linked the withdrawals to the threat from Iran. "Over the last seven or eight months, we have had to devote resources to self-protection that we would otherwise devote for the counter-ISIS fight and we've had to pull back and our partners have had to pull back," he said. "At the same time we've done things to harden our positions to make it more difficult for Iran to attack us in Iraq — but it has had an effect."

Rocket attacks have continued to target U.S. military and diplomatic installations in Iraq during the spring and summer, although tensions have ebbed since January, when the United States killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani. The Trump administration has made constraining Iranian military adventurism in the Middle East a cornerstone of its foreign policy.

In 2018, the president withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal struck by his predecessor, in part over concerns it didn't go far enough to restrain other bad behavior from Tehran. Critics say Iran is now closer to acquiring a nuclear weapon, while continuing to lash out militarily as it struggles under pressure from withering sanctions applied by the Trump administration.

McKenzie cautioned that a final "defeat" of ISIS is unlikely — because there will always be pockets of fighters enamored with the ideology — but that the hope is that the United States will eventually be able to hand off the fight to local security forces. "There's not going to be a significant victory celebration. There's not going to be a clear-cut military victory," McKenzie said.

He also acknowledged that the U.S. military presence in Syria has no clear end in sight. "I don't think we're going to be in Syria forever. I don't know how long we're going to be in Syria," he said. "That's going to be a political decision, not a military decision." But, he added, "As long as we remain, we're going to work very hard to finish off ISIS."

# CONGRESSIONAL

*By Susan Cornwell*

## The Senate is in recess until September 8

- No agreement was reached on COVID 19 relief bill

## SASC

**July 23: The Senate passed the SASC bill 86 to 14**

**June 11: SASC completed markup of FY21 SASC Bill**

- ***ALL ICBM PEs at PB***
- Total of \$740.5 Billion.
  - Base Budget of \$636.4 billion for the Department of Defense and \$25.9 billion for national security programs within the Department of Energy.
  - OCO Budget of \$69 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations and \$8.15 billion for military construction

## AUTHORIZATION CONFERENCE

**November: Tentative timeframe for markup**

## HAC

**July 31: House passed the HAC bill as part of a spending bill package (217-197 vote)**

- It included the spending bills for **defense**; labor, health and human services, and education; commerce, justice and science; energy and water; financial services and general government; and transportation and housing and urban development.
- From “The Hill” article dated 7/31/20 : **More than half the funds in the bill were devoted to defense. It includes a 3 percent pay increase for troops, \$9.3 billion for 91 F-35 fighter jets, \$22.3 billion for nine new Navy ships and \$758 million to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on subcontractors in the defense industrial base.**

**The bill would also provide the Army with \$1 million for renaming assets named for Confederate figures and block funding for President Trump’s border wall.**

**July 14: The Full HAC passed the FY21 Defense Bill with a vote of 30-22**

It provides \$694.6 billion in new discretionary spending authority for the Department of Defense for functions under the Defense Subcommittee’s jurisdiction, an increase of \$1.3 billion above the FY 2020 enacted level, and \$3.7 billion below the President’s budget request.

- This includes \$626.2 billion in base funding, an increase of \$3.5 billion above the FY 2020 enacted level, and \$3.5 billion below the President’s request.

- It also includes \$68.4 billion for OCO/GWOT funding in title IX, a decrease of \$2.2 billion below the FY 2020 enacted level, and \$200 million below the President's request.

## SAC

TBD: Markup

## APPROPRIATION CONFERENCE

TBD: Markup

**July 8:** HAC-D Marked up the FY21 Defense Bill

- *GBSD lost \$60M*
- *Missile Repl/Eq Ballistic lost \$1.53M*
- *ICBM Fuze Mod lost \$3.458M*
- *MM Mods lost \$23.684M and transferred \$4.173 to another line*

## AROUND THE WORLD



### RUSSIA:

#### **Russia warns it will see any incoming missile as nuclear**

Associated Press, 7 Aug 20 Vladimir Isachenkov

MOSCOW -- Russia will perceive any ballistic missile launched at its territory as a nuclear attack that warrants a nuclear retaliation, the military warned in an article published Friday.

The harsh warning in the official military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star) is directed at the United States, which has worked to develop long-range non-nuclear weapons.

The article follows the publication in June of Russia's nuclear deterrent policy that envisages the use of atomic weapons in response to what could be a conventional strike targeting the nation's critical government and military infrastructure.

In the *Krasnaya Zvezda* article, senior officers of the Russian military's General Staff, Maj.-Gen. Andrei Sterlin and Col. Alexander Khryapin, noted that there will be no way to determine if an incoming ballistic missile is fitted with a nuclear or a conventional warhead, and so the military will see it as a nuclear attack.

"Any attacking missile will be perceived as carrying a nuclear warhead," the article said. "The information about the missile launch will be automatically relayed to the Russian military-political leadership, which will determine the scope of retaliatory action by nuclear forces depending on the evolving situation."

The argument reflects Russia's longtime concerns about the development of weapons that could give Washington the capability to knock out key military assets and government facilities without resorting to atomic weapons.

In line with Russian military doctrine, the new nuclear deterrent policy reaffirmed that the country could use nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear attack or an aggression involving conventional weapons that "threatens the very existence of the state."

The policy document offered a detailed description of situations that could trigger the use of nuclear weapons, including the use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction against Russia or its allies.

In addition to that, the document states for the first time that Russia could use its nuclear arsenal if it receives “reliable information” about the launch of ballistic missiles targeting its territory or its allies and also in the case of “enemy impact on critically important government or military facilities of the Russian Federation, the incapacitation of which could result in the failure of retaliatory action of nuclear forces.”

U.S.-Russia relations are at post-Cold War lows over the Ukrainian crisis, the accusations of Russian meddling in the U.S. 2016 presidential election and other differences.

Russian officials have cast the U.S.-led missile defense program and its plans to put weapons in orbit as a top threat, arguing that the new capability could tempt Washington to strike Russia with impunity in the hope of fending off a retaliatory strike.

The Krasnaya Zvezda article emphasized that the publication of the new nuclear deterrent policy was intended to unambiguously explain what Russia sees as aggression.

“Russia has designated the ‘red lines’ that we don’t advise anyone to cross,” it said. “If a potential adversary dares to do that, the answer will undoubtedly be devastating. The specifics of retaliatory action, such as where, when and how much will be determined by Russia’s military-political leadership depending on the situation.”

### **Rogozin expects rapid commissioning of Sarmat ICBM**

Interfax (Russia), Aug. 10 | Not Attributed

MOSCOW -- Russia's new intercontinental ballistic missile Sarmat may be commissioned shortly, Roscosmos head Dmitry Rogozin said.

"I'm personally overseeing and addressing the details of the work we're doing to create the new strategic intercontinental missile system Sarmat. After it's commissioned, and I hope that will happen shortly, I will deem one of my life's missions to have been fulfilled," Rogozin said on journalist Yury Kostin's Lichnyye Svyazi (Personal Connections) YouTube program.

Rogozin noted that Voyevoda-type missiles were designed during the Soviet era, but are highly resilient.

As reported earlier, Russia is working on a new intercontinental ballistic missile Sarmat. The RS-28 Sarmat will replace the world's most powerful silo-based missile RS-20V Voyevoda (NATO code name SS-18 Satan) operated by the Uzhurskaya division (Krasnoyarsk Territory) and the Dombrovskaya division (Orenburg region) of the Russian Strategic Missile Forces.

The rearming of forces with this system is due to begin in 2021 in missile regiments of the Uzhurskaya Missile Division. As reported, the Sarmat missile has successfully passed ejection tests and preparations for test launches have begun.

### **Extension of New START Treaty critical to global security, presents opportunity to involve China in talks – German FM**

Interfax (Russia), Aug. 11 | Not Attributed

BERLIN -- The extension of the New START Treaty is critical for global security and will present an opportunity to involve China in strategic stability talks, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in an interview with Interfax.

"It is critical for global security that Russia and the U.S. extend the New START Treaty as quickly as possible," Maas said ahead of his visit to Russia.

"This presents an opportunity to involve China in particular in the future, thereby strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a whole. We have called for this on numerous occasions, including with our partners in the Stockholm Initiative," he said.

He criticized the termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, saying that "the end of the INF Treaty is a blow to security in Europe."

"We have criticized Russia for having played an instrumental role in the failure of the INF Treaty by breaching it. As a result, Europe - and I include Russia here, of course - has become less secure. That cannot be in the interests of the Russian people," Maas said.

He also believes that the U.S. withdrawal from the Treaty on Open Skies is a mistake.

"There have also been shortcomings in Russia's implementation of the Open Skies Treaty in recent years. Nonetheless, we believe that the withdrawal by the U.S. is wrong. We must now look to the future so that we do not forfeit further trust and so that we do not inflict further damage on the global arms control architecture. The termination of the Open Skies Treaty by the U.S. Government will not take effect until November. Germany will continue to implement the Treaty on Open Skies and to do everything it can to preserve it," Maas said.



## **CHINA:**

### **PLA drills a warning to 'Taiwan secession' forces**

Global Times (China), Aug. 14, Pg. 5 | Editorial

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theater Command on Thursday announced that it held consecutive live-fire drills in the Taiwan Straits and its northern and southern ends. It said that "a certain major country" has been continuously making negative moves on the Taiwan question, which has sent the wrong signal to "Taiwan independence" forces. Therefore, the drills are aimed at the current security situation in the region and to safeguard national sovereignty, according to the spokesperson of the PLA Eastern Theater Command.

The PLA often carries out exercises in the East China Sea. But it is rare for the Eastern Theater Command to talk about the regional situation directly, and single out a particular major country. It is also the first time that we see in media reports that the drills cover the Taiwan Straits and its northern and southern ends.

US Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar just wrapped up his Taiwan visit. The new National Defense Authorization Act includes a proposal to invite Taiwan to join the US-led Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises next week. These constitute a trend, as the US and Taiwan upgrade ties and take even more dangerous steps.

This is a salami-slicing tactic that is destroying the status quo in the Taiwan Straits. The Tsai Ing-wen authorities keep coordinating with the US Indo-Pacific Strategy to contain the Chinese mainland.

The drills of the PLA Eastern Theater Command send a clear warning to Taiwan and the US, which declare the Chinese mainland's firm will that it will not sit still in the face of US and Taiwan provocation, and erosion of the "one China" principle. Taiwan and the US should abandon their illusion that they can smoothly upgrade their official ties, as this process is bound to be accompanied by the risks they could hardly bear.

Military actions are the ultimate card the mainland plays to deter "Taiwan independence" forces. The Anti-Secession Law has put the Democratic Progressive Party in awe. The recent drills by the Eastern Theater Command sends a clear message that the mainland's military pressure on Taiwan will increase together with the increasing collusion between the US and Taiwan, and that as long as the US and Taiwan can bear the worsening situation in the region, the Chinese mainland fears no "shake."

The PLA has more options to impose military pressure, including fighter jets flying around the island, passing the "middle line" of the Straits and even flying over Taiwan Island, testing ballistic missiles over the Taiwan Island, and carrying out military exercises in the eastern waters of Taiwan, until Taiwan is completely haunted by the thought that a war will break out anytime.

The Chinese mainland will not allow Taiwan to increase its bargaining chip to seek "independence" by acting as a strategic US pawn. The increasing collusion between Taiwan and the US will only lead to greater risks for the island, including severe turbulence and uncertainties in its economic environment. The comprehensive losses of doing so will far exceed the gains, and Taiwan will likely push itself to the dangerous brink of war.

The US must not overestimate the deterrence it could pose by military intervention in the Taiwan Straits. The Chinese people generally no longer believe that US military could dominate the battlefield once a war breaks out there. The Chinese people have enough courage to safeguard their national sovereignty by engaging in the military showdown with the US across the Straits, when all the other options fail. And we are confident we will win. We don't want to go that far, but no country should think about separating Taiwan from China using salami-slicing tactics or intimidating the mainland.

Taiwan authorities can choose between a peaceful developing island and a place filled with severe military confrontation, where a hot war could be detonated by a tiny spark. In the past, the PLA's military drills took place in the Taiwan Straits. Currently, they are occurring in the Straits and its

northern and southern ends. If Taiwan authorities go further in the future, the PLA's military exercise will emerge in the Straits, in its northern and southern ends and in eastern water of Taiwan, as part of around-the-island drills. Then, PLA fighter jets will carry out exercises above Taiwan.

The drills of the Eastern Theater Command show that the PLA is capable of launching a general offensive from all directions in the Taiwan Straits, and seize the island in hours. DPP authorities should use their final rationality. They should know that being a piece in the US chessboard could lead to checkmate. The day may come suddenly when they get swellheaded.

### **South China Sea warning: Beijing brags its nuclear-tipped missiles can sink US ships**

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1319682/south-china-sea-world-war-3-china-us-america-nuclear-missiles-df26-donald-trump>

*CHINA has showcased missiles it dubs "aircraft carrier killers" in a chilling warning after the United States sent USS Nimitz and USS Ronald Reagan to the disputed South China Sea - with one expert warning US President Donald Trump: "Don't underestimate us."*

By CIARAN MCGRATH for the UK Express // PUBLISHED: 20:48, Thu, Aug 6, 2020 | UPDATED: 21:28, Thu, Aug 6, 2020

The People's Liberation Army's Rocket Force recently launched a DF-26 intermediate-range anti-ship ballistic missile - which can be equipped with nuclear warheads - as part of an ongoing exercise, after the US sent the vessels to the disputed waterway for exercises.

They subsequently took part in joint naval drills with India, Japan and Australia in the Indian Ocean and Philippine Sea. The DF-26 is capable of striking moving targets at sea, the state-run newspaper the Global Times said. Experts hailed the move as a demonstration of China's determination to "safeguard national sovereignty", it added.

The PLA Rocket Force missile brigade had recently started a cross-regional confrontational exercise, maneuvering through forests and simulated hostile chemical attacks in disguised missile vehicles to avoid satellite detection.

Eventually, upon reaching a desert area, troops were given the order to launch the missile. The report cited CCTV as suggested the exercises had "honed the fast-reaction capabilities of the Rocket Force troops". Speaking in 2018, Defense Ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian said the DF-26 had been commissioned into the Rocket Force, could be equipped with either nuclear or conventional payloads, and was capable of launching precision strikes on land targets and medium and large vessels at sea.

Song Zhongping, a Chinese military expert, said: "The US should fully understand that the PLA is not what it was in 1995 or 1996. "China has the capability to make the US lose its aircraft carriers, and this is a key deterrent China should display, and can show China's firm determination in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity." The DF-26 has an estimated range of 4,500 kilometres, putting US military facilities in Guam, Darwin and on the British overseas territory of Diego Garcia in range, a report by Chinese news site china.com.cn claimed in 2015.

US Defense Secretary Mark Esper expressed concerns about Beijing's "destabilising" activity near Taiwan and the South China Sea in a call with Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe, the Pentagon said today. Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman told reporters: "Secretary Esper also communicated the importance that the PRC (People's Republic of China) abide by international laws, rules and norms and meet its international commitments."

During the call, which lasted an hour and a half, Mr Esper also reiterated the importance of a "constructive, stable and a results oriented" relationship. Tensions in the region have been increasing steadily in recent months. Speaking last month, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said: "Today we are strengthening US policy in a vital, contentious part of that region — the South China Sea.

"We are making clear: Beijing's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful, as is its campaign of bullying to control them." He added: "The world will not allow Beijing to treat the South China Sea as its maritime empire." China hit back at the weekend, with Senior Colonel Ren Guoqiang telling reporters: "China has indisputable sovereignty over South China Sea islands and their adjacent waters, which has full historical and legal basis.

"At present, with the joint efforts of China and Asian countries, the situation in the South China Sea is generally stable, and positive progress has been made in relevant consultations. "China urges the US to stop making false remarks, stop taking provocative military actions, and stop sowing discord among countries in the region."



## **NORTH KOREA:**

### **North Korea nuclear reactor site threatened by recent flooding, U.S. think-tank says**

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-nuclear-floods-idUSKCN25908S>

By: Josh Smith for Reuters News Wire // AUGUST 12, 2020 / 11:00 PM

**SEOUL (Reuters)** - Satellite imagery suggests recent flooding in North Korea may have damaged pump houses connected to the country's main nuclear facility, a U.S.-based think-tank said on Thursday.

Analysts at 38 North, a website that monitors North Korea, said commercial satellite imagery from August 6-11 showed how vulnerable the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center's nuclear reactor cooling systems are to extreme weather events. The Korean peninsula has been hammered by one of the longest rainy spells in recent history, with floods and landslides causing damage and deaths in both North and South Korea.

Located on the bank of the Kuryong River about 100 km (60 miles) north of North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, Yongbyon is home to nuclear reactors, fuel re-processing plants and uranium enrichment facilities that are thought to be used in the country's nuclear weapons programme. The five-megawatt reactor - believed to be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium - does not appear to have been operating for some time, and an Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR) has not yet come online, but such flooding in the future would likely force a shutdown, the 38 North report said.

“Damage to the pumps and piping within the pump houses presents the biggest vulnerability to the reactors,” the report said. “If the reactors were operating, for instance, the inability to cool them would require them to be shut down.” While there was further flooding downstream, it did not appear to reach the Yongbyon facility’s Uranium Enrichment Plant and by August 11 the waters appear to have somewhat receded, 38 North said.

North Korea’s state media has not mentioned any damage to Yongbyon, but reported this week that senior leaders had been touring flood-stricken areas, delivering aid and providing guidance on how to prevent the high waters from damaging crops. South Korea’s Ministry of Defence declined to comment on the 38 North report, but said it is always monitoring developments related to North Korea’s nuclear and missile programmes and maintaining close cooperation with the U.S. government.

At a summit with U.S. President Donald Trump in Vietnam in 2019, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un offered to dismantle here Yongbyon in exchange for relief from a range of international sanctions imposed over North Korea’s nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes. At the time Trump said he rejected that deal because Yongbyon is only one part of the North’s nuclear programme, and was not enough of a concession to warrant loosening so many sanctions.

Reporting by Josh Smith. Additional reporting by Hyonhee Shin. Editing by Lincoln Feast.



## **SOUTH KOREA:**

**South Korea is building its first aircraft carrier, complete with US-made F-35B fighter jets**

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/south-korea-is-building-its-first-aircraft-carrier-complete-with-us-made-f-35b-fighter-jets/ar-BB17R907?ocid=uxbndlbing>

By Brad Lendon and Yoonjung Seo, for CNN // 1 day ago

South Korea plans to start building its first aircraft carrier next year, and acquire fighter jets to operate on it, the country's Defense Ministry has announced.

Last year, South Korea hinted at its interest in an aircraft carrier, saying it would build a "multi-purpose large transport vessel." But in its national plan for 2021-2025, published this week, the government for the first time explicitly committed to building the billion-dollar equipment. "The 30,000-ton level aircraft carrier can transport military forces, equipment and materials and can operate fighter jets that are capable of vertical take-off and landing," said the Defense Ministry release.

"It will enable the military to more effectively suppress threats and dispatch forces and materials to a disputed region in the sea by playing a role of a controlling vessel for the navy unit." It is expected South Korea will purchase [US-made F-35B fighter jets](#), which have short takeoff and vertical

landing capability, compatible with a small aircraft carrier. F-35Bs are the only short take-off and vertical landing fighter jets in production in the world.

The country will join Japan and the United States in deploying F-35Bs on light aircraft carriers in the western Pacific. All three nations have contentious relationships with North Korea, which [resumed missile testing](#) after the country's leader, Kim Jong Un, and US President Donald Trump failed to reach a nuclear deal. In December 2018, Japan announced it was refitting its Izumo-class helicopter destroyers to carry the F-35Bs -- a landmark move as the country [hasn't put aircraft carriers to sea](#) since World War II.

Conversion of the JS Izumo was among the projects Japan listed in its most recent defense white paper as scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2020. The US also bases an amphibious assault ship, as the US Navy calls its small carriers, with F-35Bs in Japan. With its 30,000-ton displacement, the size of the South Korean ship will be closer to that of its Japanese counterpart rather than to the 43,000-ton USS America, which is deployed to Japan. China has also been constructing large, amphibious assault ships. However, Beijing doesn't yet have fighter jets with the short takeoff and vertical landing capability to use on them.

### **A costly arsenal**

South Korea didn't give a cost estimate for the light aircraft carrier, but US government reports price a new version of the USS America -- which is 25% to 30% bigger than the South Korean ship -- at almost \$4 billion. F-35B fighter jets cost about \$122 million each. Chun In-bum, a retired three-star South Korean Army general, questioned if Seoul is making a wise investment.

"Cost and benefit analysis really needs to occur. Is it worth it to invest this kind of money?" Chun said. "Another aspect to this cost is, if we invest in this capability, are we not going to divert from other prioritized capability?" He said areas like logistics, training and even better radios for the South Korean military should take priority. In acquiring the F-35Bs, South Korea joins the US, Japan and the UK as the only countries with the versatile stealth fighters, which manufacturer Lockheed-Martin says "redefines the multi-role fighter."

F-35Bs are fifth-generation stealth jets, capable of flying at Mach 1.6 -- more than one-and-a-half times the speed of sound -- and landing vertically. The planes can carry two air-to-air missiles and two 1,000-pound guided bombs in their internal weapons bays. The planes come with software suites which, in theory, allow them to communicate in real time in battle not only among South Korean forces, but also with other nations operating F-35s, such as the US, Japan and Australia, which has the F-35A model.

Lockheed-Martin says their short takeoff and vertical landing capability allows them to operate from roads or small airports as well as ships -- meaning they can be closer to the battlefield and have a quicker turnaround time on missions than conventional fighter aircraft. "The primary advantage a small carrier offers South Korea is its use as a mobile airfield," said Carl Schuster, a former US Navy captain and a former director of operations at the US Pacific Command's Joint Intelligence Center.

"If North Korea targets South Korea's air bases ashore, being able to maneuver and attack from ever-changing locations has tactical and operational advantages." The carrier can also expand the reach of the South Korean military, Schuster said -- possibly as far as the Indian Ocean. "It signals the ROK Navy intends to operate farther from home than it does now," he added. Besides any possible combat roles, the South Korean military said the

new carrier "will also work as a multi-purpose military base in the sea in a non-military threat situation such as a rescue operation for citizens when disasters or accidents occur."

### **S. Korea to Develop Nuke-Powered Submarine**

[https://www.defenseworld.net/news/27628/S\\_Korea\\_to\\_Develop\\_Nuke\\_Powered\\_Submarine#.XzW97KeSntT](https://www.defenseworld.net/news/27628/S_Korea_to_Develop_Nuke_Powered_Submarine#.XzW97KeSntT)

From: Our Bureau at Defense World // 09:48 AM, August 11, 2020

South Korea plans to build a 4,000-ton nuclear-powered submarine and an "iron dome" (air defence system) in the capital area that can fend off long-range artillery attacks from North Korea.

The Defense Ministry [released](#) its mid-term plans on Monday, which pledge ₩300.7 trillion to the military over the next five years, with the defense budget expected to exceed ₩60 trillion in 2024 (US\$1=₩1,188). The 4,000-ton sub, much larger than the 3,000-ton sub currently under construction, is to be armed with ballistic missiles and powered by a nuclear reactor. That may require a revision to the nuclear pact with the U.S., which bans South Korea from using nuclear energy for military purposes.

He said a revision of missile guidelines from the U.S., which removed all restrictions on using solid fuel rockets, will give Seoul greater independence to defend the country and the government's plan to build a nuclear-powered submarine is part of that. The ministry also hopes develop an "iron dome" to fend off long-range artillery attacks on Seoul and surroundings with a goal of deploying it in the late 2020s. This will be similar to an Israeli mobile air defense system aimed at intercepting incoming artillery rounds with missile launchers set up at strategic locations.

North Korea has deployed about 1,000 long-range artillery pieces near the border. The ministry plans also include building a 30,000-ton light aircraft carrier with the goal of deploying it in the early 2030.



### **IRAN:**

#### **Iran to Boost Nuclear Fuel Production at Plant Hit by Blast**

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/iran-to-boost-nuclear-fuel-production-at-plant-hit-by-blast/ar-BB17UUVp?ocid=uxbndlbing>

By: Jonathan Tirone (Bloomberg) // 12 hrs ago

Iran is moving to boost production of nuclear fuel at a key facility struck by apparent sabotage last month.

The Islamic Republic is transferring new generations of advanced centrifuges used to enrich uranium -- the heavy metal needed for nuclear power and weapons -- from a pilot facility into a new hall at its primary fuel plant in Natanz, according to a one-page restricted International Atomic Energy

Agency document seen by Bloomberg. Iranian engineers have already installed piping needed to accumulate higher volumes of material that will be generated by three new centrifuge cascades, each equipped with 164 machines spinning at supersonic speeds to separate uranium isotopes, according to the document circulated to diplomats late last month.

The stepped-up enrichment program is unfolding as U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo travels to meet IAEA chief Rafael Mariano Grossi in Vienna on Friday. Iran's response to the U.S. abrogation of a landmark nuclear accord two years ago is raising pressure in the Persian Gulf, where tit-for-tat [ship seizures](#) and facility attacks over the last year have threatened to spill into open military conflict.

Grossi dispatched his top monitor for meetings in Tehran ahead of Pompeo's arrival this week, according to two officials briefed on the matter. While Iran has offered to show inspectors the places they want to see, they've also asked the agency to outline the scope of their investigation -- a potential red line for both the IAEA and Washington. The addition of advanced centrifuges to Hall B of the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant -- another technical violation of its 2015 agreement with world powers -- suggests that last month's attack at a nearby machine shop didn't have the intended effect of disrupting production.

The scale of the July 2 [Natanz explosion](#), which followed another at a military site near Tehran, was widely seen as an attempt to disrupt Iran's program to boost enrichment, possibly by the U.S. and Israel. Iran, which denies any ambitions to build atomic bombs, has withheld its conclusions on what caused the blast, citing security considerations.

Since the U.S. quit the landmark agreement in 2018 and reimposed sanctions, Iran's uranium stockpile swelled more than fivefold to over 1,572 kilograms (3,465 pounds).

That's enough of the heavy metal to create two bombs if Iran chose to enrich the material to weapons grade. When the Trump administration entered office, Iran's stockpile was less than the 300 kilograms authorized by the deal. Grossi's public meeting with Pompeo will be their second since the Argentine diplomat made his first official visit as new IAEA director to Washington in February.

Less than a month later, the agency reopened an investigation into past Iranian activities decades ago that may have included some research related to weapons. Pompeo is visiting governments in central Europe this week in part to rally support for U.S. efforts to extend an arms embargo on Tehran. The U.S. has threatened to invoke provisions in the nuclear agreement that Trump jettisoned to get its way, potentially thrusting the United Nations Security Council [into crisis](#).

"Iran poses a real threat to Europe," the Trump administration's top diplomat said Wednesday in an interview with Radio Free Europe. "It makes no sense for any European country to support the Iranians being able to have arms." The showdown over the arms embargo due to expire in October could push Germany and France to side with Russia and China -- all parties to the nuclear pact -- at the Security Council, isolating the U.S.

"This status quo is neither desirable nor sustainable," Iran's Foreign Minister Mohamad Javad Zarif wrote in an open letter to the council [this week](#). "We are thus at a crossroads." For more articles like this, please visit us at [bloomberg.com](http://bloomberg.com)



## INDIA:

NSTR



## PAKISTAN:

NSTR



## UNITED KINGDOM:

NSTR



## FRANCE:

NSTR



## ISRAEL:

**Israel, US test upgraded Arrow 2 missile, capable of intercepting incoming nukes**

Weapon to defend against long-range projectiles shoots down target off Israeli coast in 'perfect' simulation, Defense Ministry says  
Times of Israel Online (Israel), Aug. 13 | Judah Ari Gross

Israel and the United States completed a successful test of the advanced Arrow 2 air defense system late Wednesday night, shooting down a simulated long-range missile high over the Mediterranean Sea, defense officials said.

The system successfully intercepted the target, which behaved in a way similar to the types of weapons that Israel anticipates could be fired at it someday — like those made by Iran — and was affixed with an explosive warhead, according to Boaz Levy, vice president and head of the Systems, Missiles and Space Group at Israel Aerospace Industries, which manufactures the Arrow 2.

The platform was tested by the Defense Ministry’s Missile Defense Organization, the Israeli Air Force, IAI, and the US Missile Defense Agency. The test was carried out late Wednesday night from the Palmachim Air Base in central Israel.

“The test last night can be described in one word: perfect,” Moshe Patel, head of the MDO, told reporters Thursday morning.

According to Patel, the incoming target was first detected by the Arrow’s radar system and that the Arrow 2 interceptor missile was fired “at the precise moment” it was meant to and detonated its explosive payload, completely destroying the target.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz said of the test, “Our elite technological unit ensures that we will always be one step ahead of our enemies.”

“We will defend Israeli skies from any threat,” Gantz said.

With hundreds of thousands of rockets and missiles pointed at Israel from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran, Israel maintains one of the world’s most advanced multi-tiered air defense systems, designed to intercept incoming short-, medium- and long-range missiles.

“Our enemies and those wishing us evil will know that the State of Israel is prepared for any threat,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, following Wednesday night’s test.

The Arrow system — made up of the Arrow, Arrow 2 and Arrow 3 interceptor missiles — represents the longest range of Israel’s air defense network, designed predominantly to shoot down ballistic and cruise missiles, including those that could be used to carry a nuclear warhead or other non-conventional munitions.

Though in recent years, the Defense Ministry has focused on testing and improving the Arrow 3, which was declared operational in January 2017, its Missile Defense Organization has continued to upgrade the Arrow 2, which is designed to intercept incoming missiles at slightly lower altitudes than the Arrow 3.

Patel said the Arrow 2 system has been upgraded five times over the course of its 20 years in use.

According to Levy, the test late Wednesday night simulated an incoming missile that represented a threat that was between the capabilities of the two systems, coming in at the upper reaches of the Earth's atmosphere and just beyond it. Though the Defense Ministry did not specify precisely at what altitude the system intercepted the target missile.

“During the test, the updated capabilities of the Arrow system to contend with current and future threats were validated,” the Defense Ministry said.

Last summer, Israel and the US successfully tested the Arrow 3 system.

According to Levy, the target intercepted by the Arrow 2 on Wednesday night was the same type as was shot down by the Arrow 3 over Alaska last summer.

The Arrow 3 system, which was developed in a joint Israeli-American program, is designed to shoot down intercontinental ballistic missiles outside the atmosphere, taking out projectiles and their nuclear, biological, chemical or conventional warheads closer to their launch sites — and farther from Israel.

The Arrow 2 was first rolled out in March 2000. Its first reported operational use was in March 2017 against a Syrian surface-to-air missile that was fired at Israeli aircraft. Reports at the time said the missile cost nearly NIS 3 million (some \$827,000).

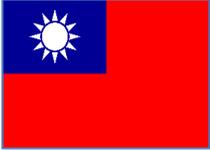
The lowest layer of Israel's multi-tiered missile defense system is the Iron Dome, capable of shooting down short-range rockets, small unmanned aerial vehicles and some mortar shells like those that are fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip or from southern Lebanon.

The middle tier of the missile defense array is the David's Sling system, which is designed to shoot down medium-range projectiles.

But even with the full complement of missile defense systems, defense officials warn that it is not a hermetic seal and some rockets will inevitably slip past the defenses.



**JAPAN:**  
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## **TAWIAN:**

### **NSTR Taiwanese President Touts U.S. Partnership, Slams China on Human Rights**

*[https://freebeacon.com/national-security/taiwanese-president-touts-u-s-partnership-slams-china-on-human-rights/?utm\\_source=actengage&utm\\_campaign=FreedomMail&utm\\_medium=email](https://freebeacon.com/national-security/taiwanese-president-touts-u-s-partnership-slams-china-on-human-rights/?utm_source=actengage&utm_campaign=FreedomMail&utm_medium=email)*

By: Jack Beyrer for the WFB // AUGUST 12, 2020 1:30 PM

Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen extolled the progress of the Taiwanese-American relationship and sharply criticized China's treatment of Hong Kong in a speech Wednesday, at a video event cohosted by the Center for American Progress and the Hudson Institute.

"The relationship between Taiwan and the U.S. has never been closer," she said. "Taiwan is on the frontlines of freedom and democracy." Tsai announced her focus on increasing military cooperation, multilateral engagement with "a community of like-minded democracies," and working through a new free trade agreement with the United States.

This week, Health and Human Services secretary Alex Azar visited Taiwan in what one panelist called a "gesture of goodwill" between the two countries. Azar engaged in constructive dialogue, particularly around Taiwan's successful management of the coronavirus pandemic. Beyond diplomatic overtures, the United States and Taiwan have worked together on securing the sale of high-tech drones to increase Taiwan's asymmetric defense capabilities, as well as missile defense systems to deter an invasion from Taiwan's increasingly aggressive cross-strait rival.

"Beijing must recognize that Taiwan is a democracy whose future is decided by our own people," Tsai warned in her speech. With Washington's help, Taiwan's defense systems are "cost effective but lethal enough to become deterrents, to make the consideration of invasion very painful," Bi-khim Hsiao, Taiwan's representative to the United States, said in a panel following the speech.

Aside from discussing Taiwan's partnership with the United States, Tsai also gave renewed attention to China's hostile takeover of Hong Kong. "When the rest of the world has been distracted in responding to one of the most significant crises in recent history, we're seeing a growing effort to pose ever more challenging threats to free and democratic societies," she said. "Nowhere is this more apparent than in Hong Kong."

Tsai called upon the United States, Taiwan, and other allies to "take a forceful stand in the defense of global democracy." To this end, Bi-khim made note of fresh efforts to draw Taiwan closer to Japan and India as regional partners. The event—and its bipartisan nature—was regarded by Taiwan's diplomatic office as a milestone in the Taiwanese-American relationship. "This marks the very first time for these two influential U.S. think tanks to cohost a high-level event on Taiwan, which demonstrates the solid support from the U.S. think tank community on advancing robust Taiwan-U.S. relations," a statement from the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representative Office reads.

### **Taiwan says discussing purchase of U.S. mines, cruise missiles**

<https://news.yahoo.com/taiwan-says-discussing-purchase-u-170002769.html>

From Reuters for Yahoo // August 12, 2020

**WASHINGTON (Reuters)** - Taiwan is in discussions with the United States on acquiring underwater sea mines to deter amphibious landings as well as cruise missiles for coastal defense, Taiwan's de facto ambassador to United States said on Wednesday.

Speaking to the Washington's Hudson Institute think tank, Hsiao Bi-khim said Taiwan was facing "an existential survival issue," given China's territorial and sovereignty claims over the island and needed to expand its asymmetric capabilities. "What we mean by asymmetric capabilities is cost effective, but lethal enough to become deterrence - to make any consideration of an invasion very painful," she said.

Hsiao said Taipei was currently working with the United States on acquiring a number of hardware capabilities, including cruise missiles that would work in conjunction with Taiwan's indigenous Hsiung Feng missile system to provide better coastal defense. Other systems under discussion included "underwater sea mines and other capabilities to deter amphibious landing, or immediate attack," she said.

Earlier, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen told the online event she had made expanding accelerating development of Taiwan's asymmetric defense capabilities its number-one priority. Hsiao said Taiwan also wanted to strengthen defenses on islands its controls in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety.

"For Taiwan, our priority in our survival involves building up the defense of Taiwan itself, but also of the islands that Taiwan currently controls in the South China Sea," she said.

Taiwan has been bolstering its defenses in the face of what it sees as increasingly threatening moves by Beijing. It said in May it plans to buy land-based Boeing-made Harpoon anti-ship missiles and U.S. sources said last week Washington was negotiating the sale of at least four sophisticated aerial drones to Taiwan for the first time. Washington broke off official ties with Taipei in 1979 in favor of Beijing but is still Taiwan's biggest arms supplier and is bound by law to provide it with the means to defend itself.

The Trump administration has emphasized its support for Taiwan as U.S. relations with Beijing sour over issues including human rights and trade. This week, U.S. Health Secretary Alex Azar became the highest-level U.S. official to visit Taiwan in four decades, a trip condemned by China, which routinely denounces U.S. arms sales to Taipei.

(Reporting by Ben Blanchard and David Brunnstrom; Editing by Alistair Bell)



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