



Missile Defense Briefing Report: No. 322

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Related Categories: Military Innovation; Missile Defense; Science and Technology

NORTH KOREAN MISSILE THREAT PROMPTS LONG-TERM GUAM DEFENSE

The growing missile threat posed by North Korea continues to command the attention of U.S. policymakers. Most recently, plans for long-term missile defense coverage of Guam received a boost when House Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee chairman Robert Wittman (R-VA) publicly endorsed an indefinite extension of the planned initial 90-day deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery on the island. The THAAD deployment in Guam, which began in April 2013, was carried out in response to North Korean threats, which included Guam as a potential target. For their part, Guam's governor and legislators have been requesting permanent emplacement of the missile defense system. (*Military Times*, January 22, 2014)

AMID DIPLOMACY, GROWING CONCERN OVER IRANIAN CAPABILITIES

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper has told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that Iran advanced its nuclear program significantly in the year prior to the interim nuclear agreement reached this past November. Clapper's written testimony states that "Tehran has made technical progress in a number of areas — including uranium enrichment, nuclear reactors, and ballistic missiles — from which it could draw if it decided to build missile-deliverable nuclear weapons... These technical advancements strengthen our assessment that Iran has the scientific, technical, and industrial capacity to eventually produce nuclear weapons. This makes the central issue its political will to do so." (*Politico*, January 29, 2014)

CHINA STRENGTHENS SPACE WEAPONS WITH AN EYE TOWARD THE U.S...

China's ongoing desire to blunt U.S. military superiority through asymmetric tactics has long been a major concern for U.S. forces. Now, the issue is receiving fresh attention on Capitol Hill. During a recent hearing before the House Armed Services Committee, former State Department and National Security Council strategic specialist Ashley J. Tellis testified that "the current and evolving counterspace threat posed by China to U.S. military operations in the Asia Pacific theater and outside is extremely serious." Other experts concur with Tellis' assessment; According to Robert Butterworth, the former chief of strategic planning at Air Force Space Command, Beijing's demonstrated anti-satellite (ASAT) capability has been augmented by cyber weapons, electronic jammers, laser applications, both high- and low-earth orbit ASAT missiles, and "recently the launch of small maneuvering satellites capable of attacking U.S. satellites." Chinese assessments of the U.S. military's dependence on satellites for operations, the experts said, is a driving force behind China's rejection of diplomatic attempts to de-militarize the space domain. (*Free Beacon*, January 29, 2014)

...WHILE SENDING MESSAGE WITH NUCLEAR MISSILE DRILL

Meanwhile, China is flexing its muscles on Earth as well, debuting its Dongfeng (DF)-31 ICBM publicly for the first time since it was added to the 2nd Artillery's inventory around 2006. The disclosure of 17 photos of the DF-31 launch is a notable moment of transparency, but is also likely a response to the U.S. deployment of F-22 advanced fighter planes to Okinawa and the arrival of the *USS Ronald Reagan* to the region to relieve the older aircraft carrier *USS George Washington*. The DF-31 has an estimated range of up to 6,200 miles, giving it the ability to potentially reach U.S. West Coast. The timing of the test (and release of the photos) suggests Beijing is attempting to deter further U.S. involvement in the current territorial dispute between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Daiyou Islands. (*South China Morning Post*, January 23, 2014)

AMERICAN ASSISTANCE FOR POLAND'S DEFENSE

As Poland proceeds with plans to increase its defense spending to the highest levels in its history, the U.S. is pledging assistance in the development of a missile defense system to supplement the planned NATO "Aegis Ashore" system slated for completion in 2018. During a meeting with his counterpart in Poland, U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel noted "an unmistakable opportunity for us to forge even closer cooperation in this area [missile defense], leveraging cutting-edge technology and enhanced NATO capability." (*Defense News*, February 1, 2014)

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD FOR U.S. INTERCEPTORS?

Even as House Republicans push for a third long-range missile interceptor site on the East coast, the Pentagon's testing shop is calling into question the effectiveness of existing long-range missile interceptors deployed by the United States. The Exo-atmospheric Kill Vehicle (EKV) component of the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense System may require extensive re-designing after not having achieved a successful intercept test since 2008, according to a new assessment just issued by the Defense Department's Operational Test and Evaluation Office. It is not clear, however, whether this negative assessment is the consensus opinion of the U.S. military; neither the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency nor Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel have weighed in on the EKV's test record as of yet, and plans for adding 14 interceptors in Alaska remain unchanged for the moment. (*Global Security Newswire*, January 29, 2014)