



Missile Defense Briefing Report: No. 337

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Related Categories: Cybersecurity and Cyberwarfare; Military Innovation; Missile Defense; China; Middle East; Russia; Ukraine

MISSILE DEFENSE FOR THE GULF

The leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council states met recently at Camp David, Maryland to discuss U.S. security assurances ahead of the impending nuclear deal with Iran. The six GCC members are concerned that the removal of sanctions - something being contemplated as part of the negotiations - could lead to a revitalization of Iran's ballistic missile program, among other things. And on this score, at least, there appeared to be a meeting of the minds with U.S. officials. As part of the summit, the parties released a joint statement authorizing the U.S. to establish a regional missile defense shield with early warning radar capability in the Middle East. And while such a comprehensive system is still a long way off, U.S. firms Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman are already being eyed as the potential prime contractors to help the Gulf countries set up a cohesive anti-missile capability. (Reuters, May 15, 2015)

UKRAINE SEEKS BMD AS A HEDGE AGAINST RUSSIA

Locked in an ongoing asymmetric conflict with Russia, Ukraine is lobbying for a new defense role. The government of Petro Poroshenko in Kyiv recently announced its potential willingness to station ballistic missile defenses on its territory as a way to provide protection from Russian missile attacks. The head of Ukraine's National Security Council, Oleksandr Turchynov, justified the decision by explaining "that the annexation of Crimea has significantly increased Russia's military capabilities and changed its balance of military power in the Black Sea and Mediterranean is understood by all our partners." Ukrainian officials are also concerned that Russia has plans to move nuclear weapons into Crimea.

The U.S. State Department has confirmed, however, that neither the United States nor NATO currently have plans to emplace a missile defense systems in Ukraine. Russia, meanwhile, is doing its best to demolish the idea. The Kremlin has long been opposed to the deployment of any missile defense shield in Europe, so news of Ukraine's proposal has enraged officials in Moscow. Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated, "If this means that Ukraine plans to deploy elements of US missile defense systems on its territory, then, obviously, this could be understood as being completely negative because it would pose a threat to the Russian Federation." (Sputnik News, May 20, 2015; Military.com, May 21, 2015)

IN THE ARMY, A FOCUS ON INTEGRATION

Missile defense advocates have long pushed for a robust layered missile shield. However, as a practical matter, the missile interceptors designed to combat various ranges of threats are developed with separate radar and communications packages, making them difficult to integrate. Now, however, the U.S. military is attempting to change that. The U.S. Army is developing the Integrated Air & Missile Defense Battle Command System (IBCS) to allow diverse anti-missile components to function together irrespective of which system any given component was originally designed to operate with. According to Northrup Grumman Vice President Dan Verwiel, "The ultimate long range goal is to be able to engage any target with any weapon with data that comes from any sensor." If perfected, the system - which is still in its infancy - would be considered "plug and play," easily incorporating any missile defense technology. (Breaking Defense, June 1, 2015)

BEIJING, MOSCOW MAKE MISSILE MOVES

China's defense ministry has confirmed the fourth test of the country's nuclear capable Wu-14 hypersonic glide vehicle. Yet Chinese officials claim the tests are strictly for research and are not aimed at any other country. Several sources, however, argue otherwise; experts familiar with the successful trial say that it was timed to coincide with an official, high-level Chinese visit to Washington, and was a sign of displeasure with U.S. opposition to Chinese land reclamation programs in the South China Sea.

Moscow, meanwhile, is continuing its own missile modernization efforts. At a recent forum in the country's capital, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced his government's plans to procure 40 ICBMs this year, as well as to build new radar hubs to augment the targeting ability of these missiles. According to the Russian president, the new missiles will be fully deployed by 2020. (Washington Free Beacon, June 13, 2015; Pravda.ru, June 16, 2015)