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Related Categories: China; Russia; Turkey

ESCAPED BLIMP MAY END JLENS PROGRAM
Late in October, a giant military blimp broke free of its tether and, after passing over several states, came to a stop in Pennsylvania. The blimp was part of the Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense system (JLENS), a program that - in the wake of the incident - is now receiving fresh scrutiny from lawmakers. The original design of the program calls for two blimps to be flown simultaneously using advanced radar to detect incoming threats (including aircraft and missiles) within a range of 340 miles in any direction. However, JLENS has been plagued with poor performance and cost overruns from the outset, most notably this past March, when an individual flew an aircraft near the U.S. Capitol - a threat the JLENS program should have, but did not, detect. With the program now under investigation by lawmakers following the October mishap, chances are increasing that the blimp-based missile defense system may soon be scrapped. (*Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 2015)

MOSCOW FLEXES ITS MISSILE MUSCLES...
Russia has taken a step forward for its strategic triad with the recent testing of the RS-24 multiple-warhead intercontinental ballistic missile. The ICBM (known by NATO as the SS-27 Mod. 2) was launched on October 28th from Russia's Plesetsk Cosmodrome. The test was reportedly successful; "the re-entry vehicles have arrived at the designated area in the Kura Missile Range in the Kamchatka Peninsula. The launch mission has been accomplished in full," Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Yegorov has told reporters. (Moscow Itar-TASS, October 28, 2015)

...WHILE WASHINGTON FOCUSES ON DEFENSE
The U.S. military has successfully completed a challenging missile intercept test involving the integration of numerous missile defense assets in the Western Pacific. "This was a highly complex operational test of the BMDS which required all elements to work together in an integrated layered defense design," the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency said of the successful trial. The test involved simultaneous utilization of both the high-altitude THAAD missile defense system as well the ship-borne Aegis system, which were jointly tested against medium and short-range incoming ballistic missiles. The test also had a distinct political dimension. Pentagon officials hoped that its success might help convince the South Korean government to approve the placement of a THAAD system there by U.S. forces - a plan that has been stalled due to opposition from China and from certain elements within the South Korean government. (Reuters, November 1, 2015)

CHINA AUGMENTS SPACE WARFARE ARSENAL
On October 30th, China launched a Dong Neng-3 anti-satellite weapon under the guise of missile defense test, Washington believes. While Chinese media claims the test was solely a missile defense effort, the U.S. government is convinced otherwise. According to one State Department official, despite official denials from Beijing, "the United States has high confidence in its assessment, that the event was indeed an ASAT test." Hong Kong's Ming Pao newspaper reported on November 4th that the test appeared to be a "final-phase missile interception test that had been conducted in the upper atmosphere," and intended to test the missile's functionality in destroying hypersonic glide weapons. Whatever the true nature of the test, it is clear that the Chinese military is making significant advances in its missile technology - ones that will make the deployment of both space and missile assets by other nations increasingly difficult. (Washington Free Beacon, November 9, 2015)

TURKEY MAKES A CHOICE
After years of debate, Turkey's government has finally concluded deliberations over its $3.4 billion anti-missile air defense program. The prospective missile defense system has been the subject of considerable controversy because it was initially awarded to a Chinese manufacturer, a problematic choice since the system would need to be integrated into NATO's emerging missile shield. After much consideration, however, Ankara appears to have opted to develop the system indigenously with the help of Turkish defense contractor Aselan. However, the country may still purchase some missile defense capabilities from external contractors as a stopgap defense against ballistic missile attack until its domestically-produced system comes online several years hence. (Defense News, November 15, 2015)