
CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Emerging Global Threats: Putting America's National Security First

**Testimony Before
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Course Correction Required to Wage the New Cold War

Today we are nearly four years from the warning the Indo-Pacific Commander, Admiral Philip Davidson, gave that the Chinese Communist Party was preparing for a war with the U.S. by 2027.¹ Since then, little meaningful progress has been achieved to alter the military balance to deter China's leaders from acting on that goal – defeat the U.S. and subjugate Taiwan.² The urgency for real action cannot be understated, as time goes by there are fewer options available while the cost for real deterrence grows. Failing to act, however, would result in the most destructive and consequential war this nation has had fight.

An Increasingly Dangerous World for America

As Americans go about their daily lives unmolested, for now, the world is accelerating in its change – much of it perilous to our national survival. The past four years has seen Iran and its proxies engage our Navy in the Red Sea, attack our armed forces across the Middle East without real consequence, and of course the coordinated barbaric assault on Israel on October 7th 2023. The war between Russia and Ukraine broke out and settled into an unsustainable attritional contest due to a series of miscalculations and dithering by D.C.³ Finally, and most dangerously, on the back of a decades long sustained military buildup, China's military is increasingly confident and willing to directly challenge the U.S. Just last summer a scuffle between Chinese maritime forces and the Philippines at Second Thomas shoal resulted in serious injury – significantly such violence could trigger a U.S. response

¹ "I am worried about them moving that target closer. Taiwan is clearly one of their ambitions before then, and I think the threat is manifest during this decade, in fact, in the next six years." Hearing to receive testimony of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Senate Armed Services Committee, March 9, 2021, pg. 45, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/21-10_03-09-2021.pdf (accessed February 23, 2025).

² Dakota Wood, "Index of Military Strength," The Heritage Foundation, January 24, 2024, <https://www.heritage.org/military/an-assessment-of-us-military-power> (accessed February 23, 2025).

³ Erin Banco, Anastasiia Malenko, Mike Stone and Mari Saito, "Biden administration slowed Ukraine arms shipments until his term was nearly done," Reuters, February 3, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/investigations/biden-administration-beset-by-doubts-slowed-ukraine-weapons-shipments-until-2025-02-03/> (accessed February 23, 2025).

as the Philippines is a treaty ally.⁴ While the Biden administration did send its diplomats and senior military leaders to the region often, words alone have not deterred China from its current path to confrontation. As such, the trajectory we are on in the world is both unsustainable and increasingly dangerous.⁵ This did not have to be the case.

For the last four years, instead of bolstering our military and backing up proactive diplomacy with meaningful consequences to our enemies, the nation is confronted by two wars and a simmering conflict in Asia. The trigger for this dates to the ill executed 2021 evacuation from Afghanistan. This event along with confused diplomacy and no meaningful military posture adjustments effectively gave Russia a green light for invasion in February 2022 against Ukraine. While the U.S. and its allies rallied support once Ukraine had stymied the initial Russian onslaught, the over cautious and tardy delivery of weapons meant that the war predictably settled into a contest of attrition that favored Russia. The military support for this preventable war drew munitions intended for Taiwan and Israel – notable was the moving of guided munitions and artillery rounds from Israel in the months before Hamas’ October 7th assault.⁶ The U.S. Navy has conducted naval combat operations on a scale and veracity not seen since World War Two as Iran’s proxy the Houthis attempted to sever shipping and attack Israel’s supporters.⁷ This has seen significant depletion of expensive and hard to replace air and missile defense weapons – like the standard missile three (SM-3 \$9m - \$28m). China is watching and calculating, but so far has not acted, there are several reasons for this.

⁴ Aaron-Matthew Lariosa, "Philippine Sailor Severely Injured, Vessels Damaged As Chinese Block South China Sea Mission," Usni News, June 17, 2024, <https://news.usni.org/2024/06/17/philippine-sailor-severely-injured-vessels-damaged-as-chinese-block-south-china-sea-mission> (Accessed February 23, 2025).

⁵ Brent D. Sadler and Elizabeth Laporre, "China’s Evolving Risk Tolerance and Gray-Zone Operations: From the East China Sea to the South Pacific," The Heritage Foundation, September 9, 2024, pg. 3-5, https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/BG3850_0.pdf (accessed February 23, 2025).

⁶ Eric Schmitt, Adam Entous, John Ismay and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "Pentagon Sends U.S. Arms," The New York Times, January 17, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/17/us/politics/ukraine-israel-weapons.html> (accessed February 23, 2025).
Eric Gomez and Benjamin Giltner, "Taiwan Arms Backlog, October 2024 Update: New Air Defense Sales and Javelin Delivery," CATO Institute, November 22, 2024, <https://www.cato.org/blog/taiwan-arms-backlog-october-2024-update-new-air-defense-sales-javelin-delivery> (accessed February 23, 2025).

⁷ "...Navy ships fired 220 missiles (120 SM-2 missiles, 80 SM-6 missiles, and 20 Evolved Sea Sparrow Missiles and SM-3 missiles) and 160 5-inch shells over the course of 380 separate engagements."
Konstantin Toropin, "Navy's Fight in Red Sea Used 220 Missiles, But Officials Say That's Changing," Military.com, January 15, 2025.

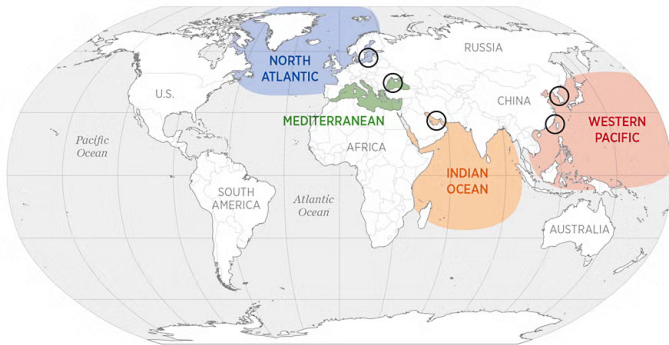
First, the unity of NATO and increasing defense expenditures for weapons and militaries that are interoperable amongst allies familiar with each others' operations. This was not in China's Xi Jinping's nor Russia's Vladimir Putin's calculations for how a divided NATO on the eve of the February invasion of Ukraine would play out.⁸ That unity paired with sustained increased defense spending presents a potential united front that China has to contend. This, however, remains tenuous and could easily recede.

Second, despite all the chaos of the last several years, the U.S. Navy has managed to sustain significant presence in the western Pacific.⁹ This comes at a cost in added wear

MAP 15

U.S. Navy Global Presence

○ Potential sites for major war



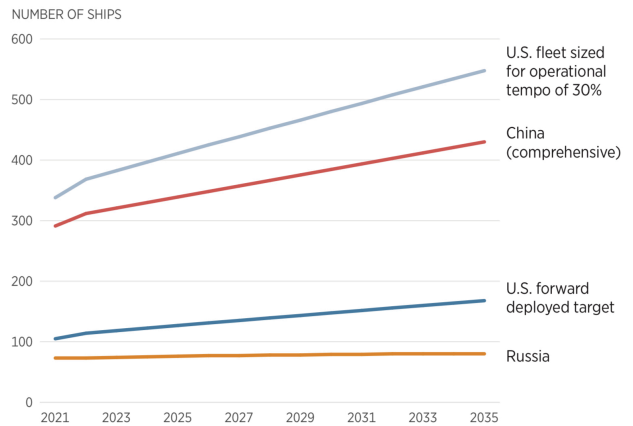
WEEKS CSG, ARG/ESG PRESENT IN REGION	NORTH ATLANTIC			MEDITERRANEAN			INDIAN OCEAN			WESTERN PACIFIC		
	CSG	ARG/ESG	TOTAL	CSG	ARG/ESG	TOTAL	CSG	ARG/ESG	TOTAL	CSG	ARG/ESG	TOTAL
June 2021–June 2022	1	10	11	22	0	22	22	35	57	77	42	119
June 2022–June 2023	10	18	28	47	0	47	0	0	0	86	54	140
CHANGE	+9	+8	+17	+25	0	+25	-22	-35	-57	+9	+12	+21

NOTES: CSG – Carrier Strike Group, ARG – Amphibious Ready Group, ESG – Expeditionary Strike Group.
SOURCE: Heritage Foundation research based on data from U.S. Naval Institute News, "Category Archives: Fleet Tracker," <https://news.usni.org/category/fleet-tracker> (accessed September 9, 2023).

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Keeping Pace with Chinese, Russian Naval Growth

Shown below are the number of ships the U.S. must have in its fleet in order to keep pace with both the Russian and Chinese navies while maintaining a 30 percent operational tempo.*



* A 30 percent operational tempo ensures adequate time for ship maintenance and crew training without sacrificing day-to-day operations.

on the ships and sailors reliant on a logistics infrastructure of ports, support ships, and dry docks too few to assure contested forward naval operations.¹⁰ Case in point, the grounding of Navy tanker USNS *Big Horn* in September 2024 jeopardized ongoing Red Sea combat

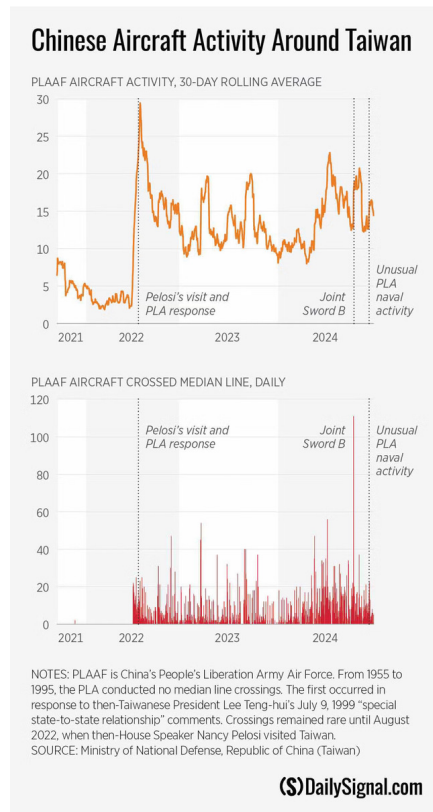
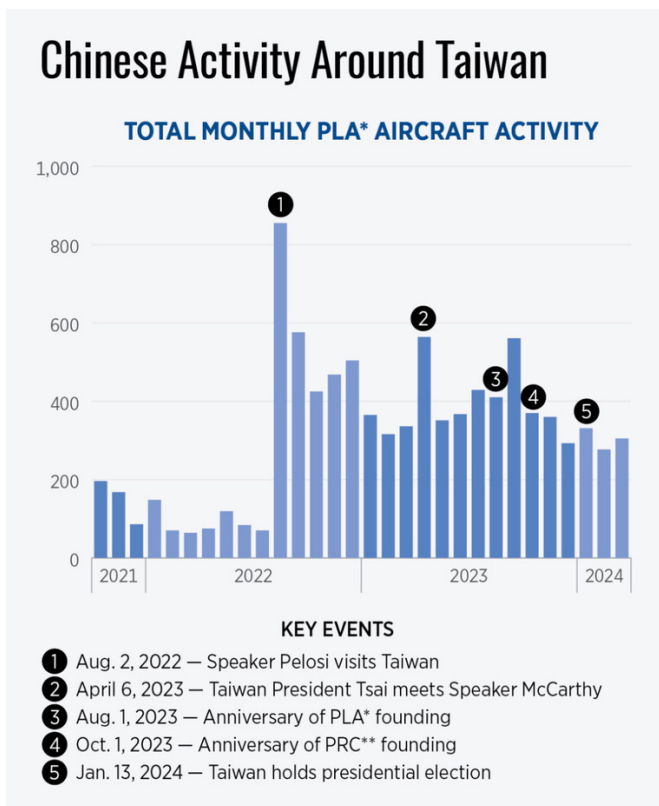
⁸ John Vandiver, "Most in NATO countries say US would aid them against Russia, but they wouldn't step up," Stars & Stripes, February 10, 2020, <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/most-in-nato-countries-say-us-would-aid-them-against-russia-but-they-wouldn-t-step-up-1.618199> (accessed February 23, 2025).

⁹ Map 15, "U.S. Navy Global Presence," The Heritage Foundation, January 24, 2024, <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/graphics> (accessed February 23, 2025).

¹⁰ Brent Droste Sadler, *U.S. Naval Power in the 21st Century: A New Strategy for Facing the Chinese and Russian Threat* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2023), pg. 194-200.

operations by the *Abraham Lincoln* carrier strike group.¹¹ That said, actions by allies Japan and Philippines in welcoming greater U.S. military presence somewhat offsets risks – such as the U.S.-Philippines Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites where USMC and Army forces have been increasingly calling with the 2022 election of Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos.¹²

Third, though inconsistent, the strong messages of support to Taiwan in the past few years clearly has caused China unease but uncertainty too as to how rapid and significant U.S. support would be to the island.¹³ Troublingly, at the same time, China has used U.S.



political support for Taiwan to rationalize a significant and sustained military presence that could easily mask an attack against the island as the current Commander of Indo-Pacific

¹¹ Sam Lagrone, “Oiler USNS Big Horn Damaged off the Coast Of Oman, No Fuel Leak Detected,” USNI News, September 24, 2024, <https://news.usni.org/2024/09/24/oiler-usns-big-horn-damaged-off-the-coast-of-oman-no-fuel-leak-detected> (accessed February 23, 2025).

¹² William Piekos and Ben Dolven, “The Philippines,” Congressional Research Service, February 14, 2025, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10250> (accessed February 23, 2025).

¹³ David Brunnstrom and Trevor Hunnicutt, “Biden says U.S. forces would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion,” Reuters, September 19, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-says-us-forces-would-defend-taiwan-event-chinese-invasion-2022-09-18/> (accessed February 23, 2025).

Command has recently asserted.¹⁴ The decision by the U.S. to intervene in a war over Taiwan is a function of the context of how that war starts, but It is after all where over 80,000 Americans (or more) live, work or travel on any given day.¹⁵ As such, in that war of choice by China, it knows those Americans would likely be casualties that would incite a vigorous American response – to say nothing of the economic damage caused to everyday Americans here at home - making an American military response to a Chinese assault on Taiwan highly likely.¹⁶

Finally, and perhaps most shocking, is China’s nuclear arsenal breakout. In 2021, satellite imagery uncovered three new fields of intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) silos being constructed in the Gobi desert - by mid-2024 quadrupling their ICBM arsenal to 400 missiles.¹⁷ Then in October 2021, it was reported China had tested a fractional orbital bombardment system that greatly complicates our missile defenses with its unlimited range and vectors of attack.¹⁸ The U.S. response has been lackluster in recapitalizing its nuclear deterrent forces: *Columbia* class ballistic missile submarines are behind schedule and have too few missile tubes to meet the threat.¹⁹ And, gaps in the U.S. nuclear escalation ladder have been dangerously evident at times in the Ukraine war with Russia’s threat to use tactical nuclear weapons and no comparable U.S. response option.²⁰

¹⁴ John Grady, “China Drills Near Taiwan are ‘Rehearsals’ for Forced Reunification, Paparo Says,” USNI News, February 17, 2025, <https://news.usni.org/2025/02/17/china-drills-near-taiwan-are-rehearsals-for-forced-reunification-paparo-says> (accessed February 23, 2025).

¹⁵ Nolan Masterson, “A Solid Foundation: Celebrating 40 Years of U.S.-Taiwan Partnership,” State Magazine, May 2019, <https://statemag.state.gov/2019/05/a-solid-foundation/> (accessed February 23, 2025).

¹⁶ 'The Boiling Moat' argues U.S. should prepare to help Taiwan defend against China, interview with former deputy national security advisor Matt Pottinger, July 29, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/07/29/nx-s1-5013620/the-boiling-moat-argues-u-s-should-prepare-to-help-taiwan-defend-against-china> (accessed February 23, 2025).

¹⁷ Annual Report to Congress, Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2024, pg. IX and 63, <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Dec/18/2003615520/-1/-1/0/MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-2024.PDF> (accessed February 23, 2025).

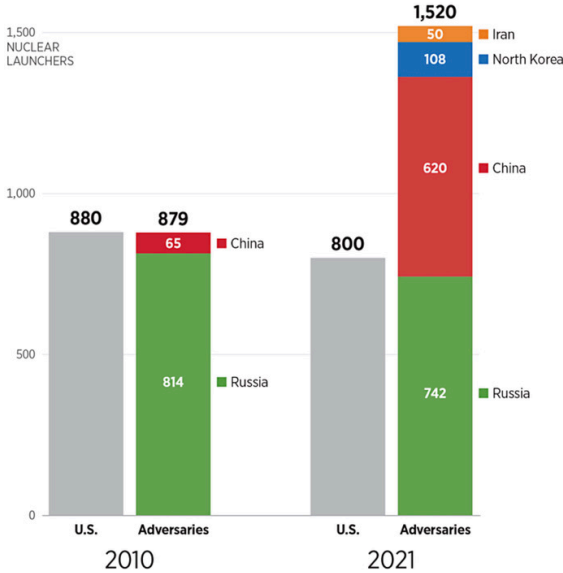
¹⁸ Peter Brookes and Andrew Harding, “China’s New Weapon Just Upped Global Threat Level,” The Daily Signal, October 27, 2021, <https://www.heritage.org/china/commentary/chinas-new-weapon-just-upped-global-threat-level> (accessed February 23, 2025).

¹⁹ Robert Peters and Brent D. Sadler, “Columbia Submarine Fleet Production Should Be Radically Expanded,” The Heritage Foundation, June 3, 2024, <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/BG3834.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2025).

²⁰ Patty-Jane Geller and Brent D. Sadler, “Faulty Assumptions About the Global Nuclear Threat May Require Changes in U.S. Sea-Based Nuclear Force,” The Heritage Foundation, February 22, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/IB5248.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2025).

CHART 1

Aggregate Adversary Nuclear Launchers Significantly Outnumber U.S.

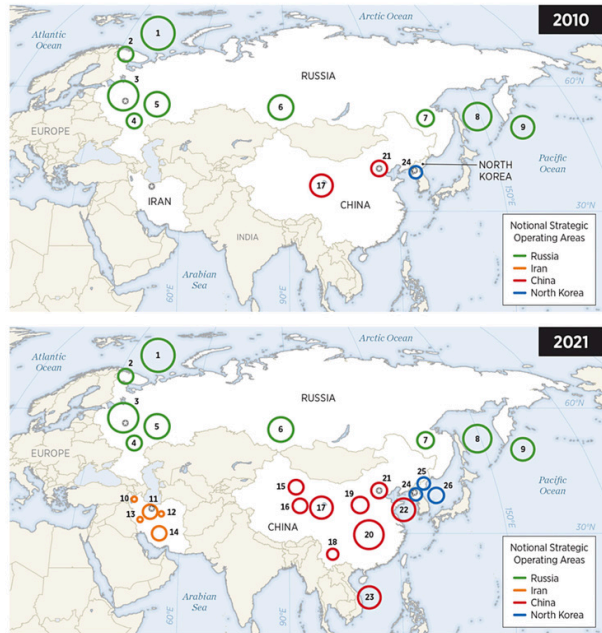


NOTES: Figures include only launchers (ICBMs, SLBMs, and long-range bombers), not warheads delivered by ballistic missiles, ballistic missile submarines, or long-range nuclear-capable cruise missiles. U.S. and Russian data include deployed and non-deployed launchers reported by the State Department, and Chinese data include strategic systems and dual-capable IRBMs and MRBMs. The figure for Iran assumes that, should it become a nuclear-armed threat, the Shahab-3 would be the most likely delivery system. North Korea is assessed as not having a viable nuclear warhead and long-range delivery system until after a 2013 nuclear test suggested effective miniaturization to enable delivery by means of its long-range rockets.
SOURCES: Authors' research. For more information, see Appendix, Sources for Chart 1.

MAP 1

How the Global Nuclear Threat Has Changed (Page 1 of 2)

Nuclear threats have expanded in recent years. In 2010, the primary nuclear threat to the U.S. was Russia with key areas ranging from Europe to the Pacific Ocean. However, threats had grown significantly by 2021 and, assuming Iran emerges as a nuclear-armed threat in the near term and China continues its nuclear expansion, will likely continue to worsen.



NOTE: Locations are approximate.

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Restoring Deterrence with China

The challenge facing the nation today is how to restore an ebbing deterrence and prevent a war in Asia while not ceding our democratic way of life and prosperity for our children. This will require several urgent actions:

One, bring the war in Ukraine to a conclusion while NATO restores its military capacities to enforce a sustained peace in Europe. This will allow U.S. munition production and military presence to be focused in the western Pacific.

Two, support Israel and our middle east allies in rolling back and severing Iran's network of terrorist proxies. The goal being to prevent a repeat of October 7th barbaric attacks, and pressure the regime in Iran to focus internally rather than exporting its terrorism. This mitigates the potential for a crisis that draws U.S. forces needed in the Pacific to deter China.

Three, operate our military differently and in ways that complement diplomatic and economic statecraft. This will engender a rethinking of how American statecraft is executed – a retooling of our institutions to wage a new Cold War.²¹ The nation has done this before, as the Cold War with the Soviet Union was unfolding, Congress passed the National Security Act of 1947; establishing the CIA and beginning a process of making our military services more unified or joint. Given the nature of the Chinese threat globally and specifically against Taiwan militarily, naval statecraft is the best way forward - a maritime strategic framework for using American power.

Four, commit to restoring the nation’s maritime industrial base vital to building and sustaining a Navy able to deter, fight and win in a conflict with China.²² This will require committing significant resources akin to the build up seen in the 1930s as the world edged to conflagration – a modern Naval Act is one way to accomplish this.²³ And already, there is wide support for efforts to restore our maritime industry with the SHIPS for America Act; a promising first step to regaining the ability to sustaining a wartime economy in a prolonged war with China.²⁴

America First National Security Rising

As we enter the second month of the America First era under President Trump, it is increasingly clear that there is a groundswell for action and appreciation of the dangers we as a nation we are in. Looking ahead, the early choices made by this administration give some insight as to what is in store:

Early engagement with Russia and Ukraine to end the war. This has invigorated our European allies to huddle and finally commit real money in their own defense as well as

²¹ James J. Carafano, Michael Pillsbury, Jeff M. Smith and Andrew J. Harding, “Winning the New Cold War: A Plan for Countering China,” The Heritage Foundation, March 28, 2023, pg. 62-72, <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/SR270.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2025).

²² Brent D. Sadler and Peter St Onge, “Regaining U.S. Maritime Power Requires a Revolution in Shipping,” The Heritage Foundation, May 15, 2023, pg. 5-6, <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/SR272.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2025).

²³ Brent D. Sadler, “A Modern Naval Act to Meet the Surging China Threat,” The Heritage Foundation, October 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/BG3732.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2025).

²⁴ Brent D. Sadler, “Ensuring America’s Maritime Security,” The Heritage Foundation, June 4, 2024, <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/BG3835.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2025).

explore ways of supporting Ukraine's future security.²⁵ In 2014, only the U.S., United Kingdom and Greece met the agreed 2% of GDP spent on defense, by 2023 that number has grown to include 11 NATO members.²⁶ This is positive and long past due. That said, the devil will be in the details as to how long this peace is sustained and what U.S. defense resources can be moved to Asia.

Support for Israel and recommitment to progressing the successful Abraham Accords. Relations soured by President Biden with Saudi Arabia, appear to shifting to a positive trajectory with high level engagements in Riyadh last week.²⁷ This as promises by the White House to restore maximum sanctions on the regime in Tehran that could see the needed rollback of Iran's proxies and its destabilizing efforts.²⁸ Uncertainty remains as to what new will be done to end the Houthi's attacks on shipping in the Red Sea.

Clear focus on regaining our nation's industrial strength with often stated focus on shipbuilding, shipping and the Navy. It was notable that the second defense department nominee announced after the Secretary of Defense was the Secretary of the Navy. However, progress will be slowed until the rest of the maritime team at the Department of the Navy and Maritime Administration is put in place. This will be key in implementing any new SHIPS for America Act as well as an invigorated naval shipbuilding program.

When it comes to Taiwan there is more unknown – top of the list is accelerating already purchased arms delayed for a host of reasons. Harpoon anti-ship missiles delayed due to engineering and production challenges - Taiwan has only begun to receive the first missiles and their associate support systems four years after being ordered this past September

²⁵ Catherine Porter and Steven Erlanger, "European Leaders Meet in Paris as U.S. Pushes Ahead With Ukraine Plan," The New York Times, February 17, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/17/world/europe/europe-paris-ukraine-talks.html> (accessed February 23, 2025).

²⁶ Press Release, "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2023)," July 7, 2023, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230707-def-exp-2023-en.pdf (accessed February 23, 2025).

²⁷ Matthew Lee and Dasha Litvinova, "Russia and US agree to work toward ending Ukraine war in a remarkable diplomatic shift," AP News, February 18, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-riyadh-talks-trump-putin-rubio-0c3beebfef5839e9d509ff58239a6bc5> (accessed February 23, 2025).

²⁸ Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Restores Maximum Pressure on Iran, The White House, February 4, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/02/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-restores-maximum-pressure-on-iran/> (accessed February 23, 2025).

2024, with delivery expected to be completed in 2028.²⁹ Javelin and TOW-2B anti-tank missiles, and stinger man-portable anti-air missiles have faced years of delays with inventories redirected to Ukraine and production bottlenecks.³⁰ How the new administration responds and accelerates the arming of Taiwan will be key in sustaining the military balance and peace in the near-term.

Conclusion: Peace Through Strength

Finally, it is worth noting again that deterrence of China will rest on a credible military, backed by a resilient wartime economy. Already a month into the Trump administration it is clear that a break from the recent past is fast underway.

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²⁹ Matthew Strong, “Harpoon land-based anti-ship missile systems arrive in Taiwan,” Taiwan News, September 28, 2024, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/5943642> (accessed February 23, 2025).

³⁰ Joyu Wang, “Taiwan Is Getting Its U.S. Weaponry—but Years Behind Schedule,” WSJ, December 20, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/asia/taiwan-is-getting-its-u-s-weaponry-but-years-behind-schedule-11c151b1> (accessed February 23, 2025). Report to Congress, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2022, pg. 327, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/2022_Annual_Report_to_Congress.pdf (accessed February 23, 2025).

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