

Military Intelligence Report

China's Intercontinental

BALLISTIC

MISSILE

TEST





Executive Summary

The successful test of an Intercontinental Ballistic missile (ICBM) into the Pacific Ocean by China demonstrates its increasing nuclear capability and strategic intentions in times of growing territorial disputes in the region. The test which involved a dummy warhead during the UN General Assembly meet highlights China's efforts to demonstrate its military strength and deterrence, particularly against regional adversaries and the presence of the United States. This report analyzes key findings, and implications and provides strategic recommendations.



Situation Overview

Time & Date: 08:44 local time (04:44 GMT), September 25, 2024.

Location: Hainan Island

Missile Type: DongFeng 41 (DF-41)

Range: Approximately 12,000 km

Payload Capacity: Dummy warhead

Background Overview:

This ICBM test into international waters comes after 44 years when a DF-5 missile tested in May 1980 flew 9,070km and landed in the Pacific. As stated by China's defence ministry the test as routine and part of annual training raises concerns and suspicion. China's nuclear weapon tests usually take place domestically either in the Xinjiang region or Bohai Sea.



Key Findings

Missile Capabilities: The DF-41, which first came into service in 2017 has an operational range of up to 12,000-15,000km, capable of reaching the US mainland.

Geographical Impact: The missile landed near the Pacific nations, such as the Solomon Islands and Fiji projecting China's long-range nuclear threat.

Strategic timing: The test comes ahead of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China showcasing its missile capabilities and military power.

Regional Context: The launch follows the extension of the United States deployment of its mid-range capability (MRC) Typhon missile system, acquiring India's BrahMos missile by Philippines and increased Beijing-Manila tensions over the South China Sea, pointing to a broader strategic competition in the region.

Proximity: The missile's trajectory near the Philippines within 90km, signals Beijing's disapproval of Manila's strengthening ties with Washington.

Military Modernisation: According to a Pentagon report, China's missile capabilities are rapidly expanding, with the PLA Rocket Force doubling ICBM launchers and growing its nuclear arsenals for over 1000 warheads by 2030. As of 2022, it holds 350 ICBMs and 500 operational nuclear warheads in its arsenal.



Analysis

The test might be intimidating to its neighbours including Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines. Also a strategic signal to the US about China's advancing missile capabilities as a potential nuclear state. The Chinese military activities around Taiwan indicate a broader plan to reinforce China's regional dominance and challenge US influence and presence in the region.

Recommendations

- Deepen military cooperation with the adversaries of China, particularly Taiwan, Japan and the Philippines to build a strategic defence posture.
- Expanding the United States presence and joint exercises in the region to curtail China's aggressive activities in the region.
- Strengthening diplomatic efforts to solidify international support and counter China's narratives in the region.



Conclusion

China's ICBM test adds to the increasing number of missile activities in the Asia Pacific mirroring North Korea. This is a strategic step in China's ongoing efforts to enhance its military strength and solidify its position in the regional power dynamics. Even though China employs a "No First Use" policy, its actions suggest an increasing focus on strategic deterrence.





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