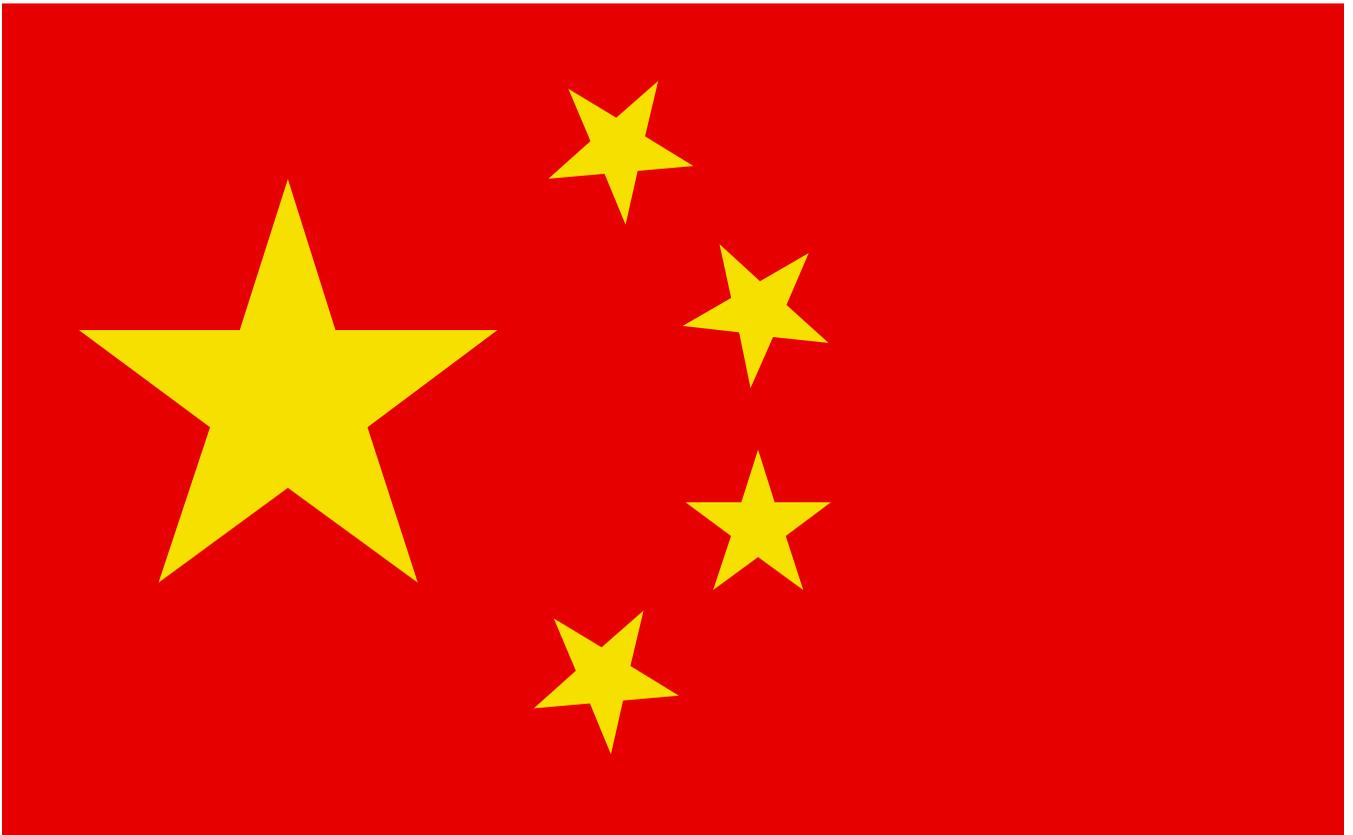


**Taiwan is the last major post-revolution territorial issue for China, and tensions are rising.**



# Flash Point Taiwan

**By Bill Gertz**

**I**F the President's words are any guide, China can expect a hard new line from Washington during the Bush years. The Clinton Administration ceaselessly boosted Beijing as a "partner," but George W. Bush, in a sharp reversal, has branded China as a "strategic competitor."

The new attitude seems certain to raise tensions—most notably in the Taiwan Strait. In fact, the first test of this new Bush policy comes in April, when Washington announces its next decision on arms sales to Taiwan. Taiwan seeks to buy submarines, Aegis ships, air-launched missiles, and more. China opposes these sales and, under Clinton, they

declined. Taiwan expects a far more favorable response from Bush.

The new President, thus, will have an opportunity to show whether he is truly prepared to buck China and offer Taiwan high-tech US military equipment. If he does, the Chinese regime can be expected to counter with a nerve-racking response, as it did during other difficult periods and what became known as the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996.

Few believe it will be the last test for Bush. Working out the proper US role in the defense of Taiwan shapes up as one of the toughest and most perilous tasks he faces. All signs are that the issue will flare time and time again, making Taiwan a major flash point in the Far East.

Taiwan looms larger than usual in Beijing's political calculations because China has finally reclaimed Hong Kong and Macao, two other long-sought pieces of Chinese territory. Experts say China's rulers in 1999 began to step up a campaign to reunite the island with the mainland, which have been estranged since the end of China's civil war in 1949. Simply put, Taiwan is the last major post-revolution territorial issue for China.

The Chinese campaign is essentially political, but China plainly has signaled that it is willing to use force to achieve reunification if that's what it takes. China knows such action could bring it into conflict with the United States, but Chinese leaders act as if they believe reunification will indeed require force.

In early 2000, for example, the official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army bluntly stated that China's rulers would fire its long-range nuclear missiles at America if US forces ever attempted to intervene on behalf of Taiwan.

### Not Iraq, Not Yugoslavia

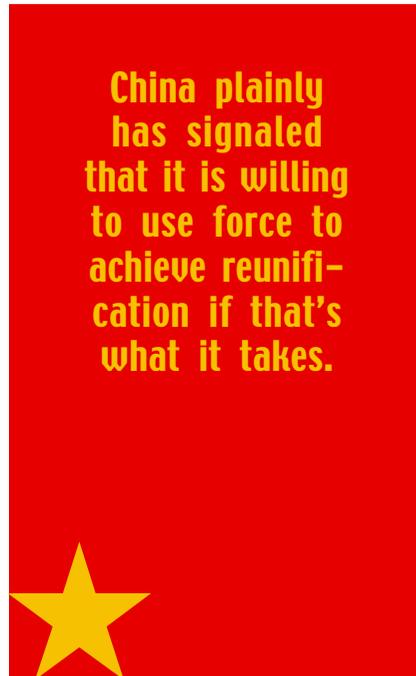
"China is neither Iraq nor Yugoslavia, but a very special country," warned the newspaper, referring to America's two recent adversaries. "It is a country that has certain abilities of launching strategic counter-attack and the capacity of launching a long-distance strike."

Over time, the newspaper predicted, US military units will be "forced to [make] a complete withdrawal from the East Asian region"—

including Taiwan—"as they were forced to withdraw from southern Vietnam" in the 1970s.

A major Chinese defense white paper, published Oct. 16, again turned up the heat. It roundly criticized Washington for "hegemonism" and "gunboat diplomacy" and concluded that the situation in the Taiwan Strait was "grim."

Then it issued a warning: "The Chinese government will do its utmost to achieve peaceful reunification. ... However, if a grave turn of events occurs, leading to the separation of Taiwan from China, ... or if Taiwan is invaded and occupied by



foreign countries, or if the Taiwan authorities refuse ... the peaceful settlement of cross-straits reunification through negotiations, then the Chinese government will have no choice but to adopt all drastic measures possible, including the use of force."

At times, China has matched its words with deeds. Pentagon officials report that Chinese fighters have challenged USAF's RC-135 Rivet Joint reconnaissance aircraft—once flying within two miles of the American aircraft even though it was flying more than 50 miles outside of Chinese airspace.

At the Pentagon, China's recent statements and actions have had a noticeable effect.

Senior uniformed leaders, even before the transition of Administra-

tions, were shifting course on China, as was apparent in a Nov. 3 speech by Army Gen. Henry H. Shelton, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the People's Liberation Army National Defense University in Beijing.

In this setting, Shelton pointedly reminded his Chinese hosts, "The ultimate status of Taiwan is a matter for the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resolve in a peaceful—I repeat, peaceful—manner."

A month later, Shelton returned to the China theme in a widely covered speech raising the specter of a new, Soviet-style Chinese superpower. "I am firmly convinced," said Shelton, "that we need to focus all elements of US power and diplomacy on ensuring that China does not become the 21st century version of the Soviet bear."

Chinese leaders, Shelton said, "are aggressively modernizing their military forces, both conventional and nuclear."

Even earlier, Pentagon officials took special notice of threats to Taiwan. In an annual report delivered to Congress last June, DoD said China's military buildup seemed to be preparation for high-tech conflict with the United States over the island.

### The "Dominant Scenario"

"A cross-strait conflict between China and Taiwan involving the United States has emerged as the dominant scenario guiding [the People's Liberation Army] force planning, military training, and war preparation," the report declared.

The report went on to warn that China's military thinkers were discussing ways to "offset US power," which could include "accelerating military modernization, pursuing strategic cooperation with Russia, and increasing China's proliferation activities abroad."

Referring to possible American military operations taken in defense of Taiwan, the report predicted China would employ "all means necessary" with the goal of "inflicting high casualties and weakening [American] resolve."

The most alarming Chinese military development of recent years—by far—has been its buildup of missiles clearly aimed at destroying Taiwanese targets and detaching it

from allies and friends that might try to come to its aid.

As long ago as October 1998, a Defense Intelligence Agency report outlined a major buildup of short-range ballistic missiles opposite Taiwan. The study said that, up until 1998, the missile deployment had been modest and was limited to a garrison of CSS-6 weapons based at Leping.

Then matters suddenly changed. The DIA uncovered a new Chinese plan to put into place a total of 600 missiles by 2005. The report stated that the process would entail deployment of about 50 new missiles a year, starting from a base of about 150 weapons.

At the Pentagon, this revelation had a sensational effect. It was viewed as a clear sign that China was embarked on a major campaign to acquire the means for the intimidation or actual military defeat of Taiwan.

The deployment includes two versions of the CSS-7 short-range ballistic missiles. The DIA report said the first version—Mod 1—has a range of 217 miles. The second version—Mod 2—could hit targets nearly 329 miles distant, according to DIA.

On Dec. 5, 1999, DIA issued an updated report on the Chinese buildup of short-range missiles opposite Taiwan. It was not good news for US military planners. It concluded that China already had deployed about 400 CSS-7s to Chinese military bases near Taiwan, said one official familiar with the conclusions.

In short, China had acquired a capability to target Taiwan and unleash a devastating strike with little or no warning.

In addition, the DIA report identified a CSS-7 base, at Yongan, that was co-located with tunnel storage areas, a sign that the Chinese were protecting the systems from US aircraft equipped with precision guided bombs and missiles.

Pentagon analysts viewed the missile buildup as ominous because it showed Beijing's intention was not to conduct aircraft or seaborne assaults against the island but rather to launch barrages of missiles.

### **An Unorthodox View**

In a 1999 paper, Air Force Maj. Mark A. Stokes, a former assistant

air attaché at the US Embassy in Beijing, outlined the full extent of possible missile operations. He challenged the orthodox view of those US security analysts of the PLA who dismiss it as a “junkyard” army incapable of matching US power for 15 to 20 years. Stokes said China's strategy of missile power threatens not only Taiwan but also US forces in Japan and Hawaii.

Stokes laid out a 2010 scenario for lightning missile strikes on Taiwan. The plan calls for backing up these no-warning attacks with aircraft sor-



ties and special operations attacks to prevent a buildup of US forces. The goal of the attacks would be to knock out all communications and information systems, defeat Taiwan's air forces, and control the waters around the island.

According to Stokes, the missiles could be launched within 40 minutes of an order to do so. The report quotes PLA writings as stating that Taiwan could be paralyzed by missiles “in as little as 45 minutes.”

CIA Director George J. Tenet echoed these concerns in testimony to Congress. He said tensions between China and Taiwan could lead to a regional military confrontation.

Tenet observed that China's military “still lacks the air- and sealift capability to successfully invade Taiwan,” but that it had made great strides in “the size and sophistica-

tion of its forces arrayed along the strait, most notably by deploying short-range ballistic missiles.”

Adm. Dennis Blair, the commander in chief of US Pacific Command, has said in interviews that the Chinese missile buildup is destabilizing the region and underlines a need for the US to provide more defensive arms and weapons systems to Taiwan.

Blair claims the US could justify giving Taiwan missile defenses under the Taiwan Relations Act. “We're talking about a balance here,” Blair said, “and a count of 500 or 600 [missiles] to very few defenses doesn't seem like a very good balance.”

Taiwanese forces would not be the only ones facing the missiles, according to Stokes. He said the PLA, in anticipation of US intervention, has “indicated a willingness” to use accurate short- and medium-range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles against US forces, including bases in Japan and aircraft carriers operating in the Western Pacific.

Stokes warned that the combination of advanced surveillance, large numbers of ballistic and cruise missiles, and surprise is a serious threat to the stability of the region. The force would provide Beijing with a “conclusive edge” over Taiwan in a conflict and could hold US forces at risk.

### **Tempted to Pre-emption**

“Confidence in a quick military victory could lower the perceived cost of conflict and thus increase Beijing's incentives to use force,” the report stated. It added that such a situation “raises the danger of pre-emptive war.”

In a confrontation with Washington, however, China's position would be weakened were it not prepared to escalate from tactical and theater weapons to long-range strategic nuclear arms. In the view of US officials, China recognizes this fact and is taking steps to prepare itself.

At present, China's 24 silo-based CSS-4 missiles form the backbone of Beijing's long-range strategic nuclear force. These missiles are quite old by US standards. Because they are liquid-fueled, the CSS-4s require a long time to prepare for

firing, a fact that makes them vulnerable to pre-emption. Still, US soil is well within their reach. Each can hit a target 8,000 miles away with a huge five-megaton warhead, packing a punch equivalent of 5 million tons of TNT.

On Aug. 2, 1999, China tested its new ICBM, called Dong Feng (“East Wind”) 31. DF-31 was a mobile missile, with a maximum range of about 5,000 miles. Intelligence analysts say DF-31 is the first of two new mobile missiles that will replace China’s CSS-4 weapons and will be focused on India and Russia, though it could also reach limited areas in the United States. The DF-31 was tested twice in 2000, once in November, while Shelton was visiting the country, and again in December. The twin tests showed the Chinese are speeding up development of the road-mobile missile.

To confront the United States, China is developing a longer-range version. That missile, the DF-41, will have a range of some 8,600 miles and will be able to hit any point in the United States. The DF-31, by contrast, can only reach the western United States.

Chinese policy with regard to use of these weapons is contained in an internal military document—“Document 65,” which is dated Aug. 1, 1999, and signed “General Political Department of the People’s Liberation Army.” It stated that all Chinese military units—including the ICBM forces—must be “well-prepared for the war” over Taiwan.

The document also pondered ways to make Washington “exercise some caution” about Taiwan and “be aware that it would have to pay a price” if it intervened against China.

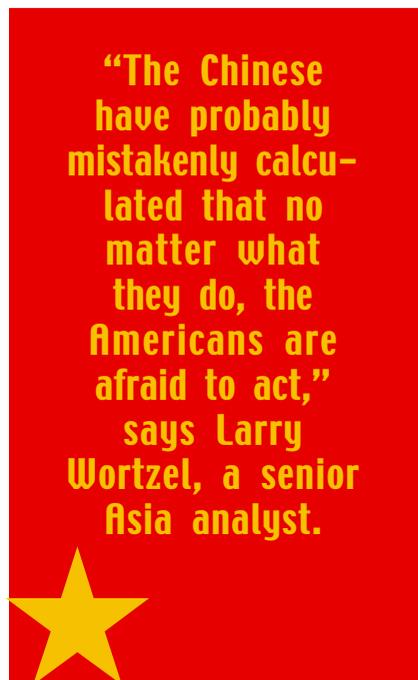
It appears that the United States and Taiwan have little option but to live with the missile problem. If China has a plan to halt or reverse the proliferation of missiles around the Taiwan Strait, it is not apparent to US officials. Appeals to cut back on the missile force, made by Blair and other US officials, have fallen on deaf ears.

### What China Knows

Most experts concede that the danger of a major armed conflict does exist, but there is wide disagreement about how likely it is. One skeptic is Ralph A. Cossa, executive director

of the Pacific Forum CSIS, a Honolulu-based research institute affiliated with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. Cossa says the Chinese regime does not want war with America, and it is aware that “no US Administration would be able to ignore an unprovoked Chinese attack” on Taiwan.

“Without an unambiguously provocative act on the part of Taipei—and there is no reason to believe that [Taiwan] President Chen Shui-Bian is suicidal—a Chinese military move



against Taiwan is highly unlikely,” he advises.

However, Larry Wortzel, a former military attaché once posted in Beijing, says the problem is that the Chinese could miscalculate. “The Chinese have probably mistakenly calculated that no matter what they do, the Americans are afraid to act,” says Wortzel, now the senior Asia specialist at the Heritage Foundation in Washington. “And they have bought a wide array of Russian military hardware that is specifically designed to attack the United States.” Wortzel notes that the Chinese are continuing to develop a nuclear force

that will hold 20 percent of the US population at risk of nuclear attack as a deterrent.

The United States is beefing up forces in Asia. An example: Last August, the Air Force transferred several dozen conventional air launched cruise missiles to Guam, the first time the precision guided weapons have been based outside the continental United States.

The forward deployment means that US bombers will require only 12 hours at most to put a superaccurate cruise missile warhead on any spot on the Asian rim. The JCS for years opposed the deployment out of concern for physical security of the missiles. Their transfer was approved after appeals from combatant commanders, specifically Blair, who has taken a leading role in developing fresh plans for US forces to defend Taiwan in a conflict with China.

Over the years, Pentagon reports to Congress generally have played down the military capabilities of the People’s Republic of China and contended that China lacks the kind of amphibious assault capability needed for an invasion. However, more recent reports have presented a different picture.

In December, the Pentagon stated: “We cannot expect to predict confidently the outcome of a military conflict” across the Taiwan Strait. The report by the Office of Net Assessment identified at least three major intelligence gaps that made gauging conflict almost impossible. The opaque nature of the Communist government and the inability to discern its leaders’ intentions was a key shortfall. As for whether the United States would mount a successful defense of Taiwan, the report was vague. It would say only that an attack by China would be a grave concern.

When it comes to US commitment, however, the new President does not seem ambiguous at all. “If they decide to use force, the United States must help Taiwan defend itself,” Bush declared in last year’s political campaign. “Now, the Chinese can figure out what that means.” ■

---

Bill Gertz is a defense and national security reporter for The Washington Times and author of the book *The China Threat: How the People’s Republic Targets America* (Regnery). His most recent article for *Air Force Magazine*, “The North Korean Missile Threat,” appeared in the January 2000 issue.

Taiwan Flashpoint: What Australia Can Do. Brendan Taylor Lowy Institute March 3, 2020. Ministry of National Defense via AP. Read Full Article ». Related Topics: Taiwan Australia Asia-Pacific ANZUS. Related Articles. Country Streams. China-Taiwan relation is structurally unstable. Taiwan is the main flashpoint in Sino-American relations. A shooting war can take place between the two giants regarding the status of Taiwan. For China, the loss of Taiwan is reminiscent of its century of humiliation. A major part of Chinese foreign policy is centered on Taiwan. First, Beijing will attempt to reunify Taipei by economic integration and hardcore diplomacy; if they fail then they would resort to military power. A war between China and Taiwan could involve the United States. Operation Flashpoint / Arma: Cold War Assault Modifications Click a mod's banner above directly or scroll down the page. Finnish Defence Forces Mo... Menu: News Search Addons » Weapons » Vehicles » Units » Misc » Boats » Aircrafts » Skins » Islands MODS Missions » SinglePlayer (SP) » MultiPlayer (MP) » Campaigns » MissionPacks » Desert Storm - missions » VideoMissions » EditorExtra Patches Utilities Screenshots Partners Contact.