



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 27, 2019

Could U.S. Warships in Taiwan Strait Trigger an EMP Attack?

When two U.S. Navy warships sailed through the Taiwan Strait on Thursday, [a Navy spokesman](#) said it was only “routine.” Besides, added U.S. Pacific Fleet spokesman Lt. Commander Tim Gorman, the operation was “in accordance with international law.” It “demonstrates the US commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific,” he added, explaining that “the US Navy will continue to fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows.”



China has challenged that assessment for years, claiming that it has sovereignty over the island and that Taiwan’s status as a separate Republic of China isn’t legitimate. Accordingly, China sent several military jets near the southern tip of the island late Thursday to make the point.

When the Navy sent two “surface combatants” through the Strait in October and then again in November, China responded by sending multiple warships of its own into the area.

The only thing more dangerous than arrogance on the part of the U.S. Navy is the ignorance of just how China could turn off the lights in America if it wanted to retaliate with prejudice.

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As far back as 1996, the communist Chinese government knew that the United States was vulnerable to a nuclear Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) set off in the atmosphere above the country. An article published by the Peoples’ Liberation Army (PLA) — China’s military arm — exposed that vulnerability:

Some people might think that things similar to the “Pearl Harbor Incident” are unlikely to take place during the information age. Yet it could be regarded as the “Pearl Harbor Incident” of the 21st century if a surprise attack is conducted against the enemy’s [the United States] crucial information systems of command, control, and communications by such means as electronic warfare, electromagnetic pulse weapons, telecommunications interference and suppression, computer viruses, and if the enemy is deprived of the information it needs as a result.

Even a super military power like the United States, which possesses nuclear missiles and powerful armed forces, cannot guarantee its immunity....

In their own words, a highly computerized open society like the United States is extremely vulnerable to electronic attacks from all sides. This is because the U.S. economy, from banks to telephone systems and from power plants to iron and steel works, relies entirely on computer networks....

When a country grows increasingly powerful economically and technologically ... it will become increasingly dependent on modern information systems....

The United States is more vulnerable to attacks than any other country in the world.”



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Dr. Peter Vincent Pry, a former staff member of the House Armed Services Committee, reminded his readers in July 2017 that Russia was also aware of that vulnerability:

Russia made a thinly veiled EMP threat against the United States on May 2, 1999, in an apparent effort to blackmail the U.S. to stop the Balkans War.

During the spring of 1999, tensions between the United States and Russia rose sharply over Operation ALLIED FORCE, the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. A bipartisan delegation from the House Armed Services Committee of the U.S. Congress met in Vienna with their Russian counterparts on the Duma International Affairs Committee, headed by Chairman Vladimir Lukin. The object of the meeting was to reduce U.S.-Russia tensions and seek Russian help in resolving the Balkans War.

On May 2, during the Vienna meeting, Chairman Lukin and Deputy Chairman Alexander Shabanov chastised the United States for military aggression in the Balkans, and warned that Russia was not helpless to oppose Operation ALLIED FORCE. [Said Lukin]: “Hypothetically, if Russia really wanted to hurt the United States in retaliation for NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia, Russia could fire a submarine launched ballistic missile and detonate a single nuclear warhead at high altitude over the United States. The resulting electromagnetic pulse would massively disrupt U.S. communications and computer systems, shutting down everything. No internet. Nothing.”

[Added Shabanov]: “And if that didn’t work, we’d just launch another missile.”

Apparently frightened by the potential threat, Congress did what it usually does in the face of a crisis: It created a committee to study the matter and come up with recommendations. Called “The Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) Attack,” it was created in 2001 to assess the following:

1. the nature and magnitude of potential high-altitude threats to the United States....
2. the vulnerability of the United States military and ... civilian systems to an EMP attack;
3. the capability ... to repair and recover from ... an EMP attack; and
4. the feasibility and cost of hardening [those] systems against an EMP attack.

The committee studied the threat and made more than a hundred recommendations to Congress, which Congress ignored. Soon thereafter, the committee was shut down.

The committee was resurrected in 2015 and its results freshened. It issued a series of reports, the last one in July 2017. That last one didn’t see the light of day until Thursday, January 24. Bill Gertz, national security reporter, editor, and columnist for the *Washington Times* for 27 years before moving to the *Washington Free Beacon*, reviewed it and learned that those threats are real: China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran are already building such weapons. It’s been part of their military strategies for years:

“Nuclear EMP attack is part of the military doctrines, plans, and exercises of Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran for a revolutionary new way of warfare against military forces and civilian critical infrastructures by cyber, sabotage, and EMP,” the report states.

This new way of warfare is called many things by many nations: In Russia, China, and Iran it is called Sixth Generation Warfare, Non-Contact Warfare, Electronic Warfare, Total Information Warfare, and Cyber Warfare.

Nuclear-electronic warfare also is called “Blackout War” because of its effects on all electronic



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devices.

The report warned that millions of U.S. citizens could die if any of these countries did launch a nuclear weapon to create an EMP:

Potential adversaries [i.e., the United States] should understand that millions could die from the long-term collateral effects of EMP and cyber-attacks that cause protracted black-out of national electric grids and other life-sustaining critical infrastructures....

A single nuclear weapon can potentially make an EMP attack against a target the size of North America. Any nuclear weapon detonated at an altitude of 30 kilometers [18.6 miles] or higher will generate a potentially catastrophic EMP....

A super-EMP warhead, in the possession of Russia or North Korea, could put at risk the best protected U.S. assets, even threatening the survival of the U.S. nuclear deterrent.

If China, along with Russia, Iran, and other state and non-state actors (i.e., Islamic terrorists) has the capability to send the United States back into the 19th century with a nuclear EMP, a question for the Navy is: Why provoke it by sending warships into the Taiwan Strait?

Image: NicoElNino via iStock / Getty Images Plus

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