



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 22, 2011

U.S. Admiral Says China's "Carrier Killer" Missile Won't Alter Navy's Asia Stance

In fact, defense experts have suggested that the capability of China's new Dong Feng 21D missile is so imposing that it could swing the balance of power in Asia from the United States — whose aircraft carrier battle groups have ruled the sea since the end of World War II — to a Chinese military that has spent many years aggressively modernizing its fighting abilities and developing high-tech weaponry.



According to the [Associated Press](#), military experts consider the DF-21D missile "a key component of China's strategy of denying U.S. planes and ships access to waters off its coast." The strategy includes "overlapping layers of air defense systems, naval assets such as submarines, and advanced ballistic missile systems — all woven together with a network of satellites."

Patrick Cronin, director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, said that China's "emerging Chinese anti-ship missile capability, and in particular the DF-21D, represents the first post-Cold War capability that is both potentially capable of stopping our naval power projection — and deliberately designed for that purpose."

But as reported by the AP, Vice Admiral Scott van Buskirk, commander of the U.S. 7th Fleet, "does not see the much-feared weapon as creating any insurmountable vulnerability for the U.S. carriers — the Navy's crown jewels."

Van Buskirk told the AP that the missile, which China's [Global Times](#) said boasts a firing range of between 1,800 and 2,800 kilometers and has already been deployed by China's army, does not represent "the Achilles heel of our aircraft carriers or our Navy," but is merely "one weapons system, one technology that is out there."

Some defense analysts believe the missile could have the capability of hitting a well-defended target — such as Admiral van Buskirk's own USS George Washington — with pinpoint accuracy. "The missile would penetrate defenses because its speed from launch would not allow enough time for carriers or other large ships to complete countermeasures," reported the AP. "That could seriously weaken Washington's ability to intervene in any potential conflict over Taiwan or North Korea, as well as deny U.S. ships safe access to international waters near China's 11,200 mile-long coastline."

While van Buskirk conceded that the new technology has become a point of concern in America's defense posture, he noted that the missile's capability has yet to be proven, and is but one of many potential "game changers" that military experts have pointed to over the years:



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If there wasn't this to point to as a game changer, there would be something else. That term has been bandied about for many things. I think it really depends on how you define the game, whether it really changes it or not.

China itself appears to think it may be gaining an edge in the region. In April 2010 it sent a flotilla of 10 warships through an area of the East China Sea where Japan claims several islands and where U.S. Navy vessels regularly patrol, passing through Japan's Miyako Strait without informing Tokyo of its intentions. That military muscle flexing, along with Beijing's warning against U.S. carrier operations off the coast of the Korean Peninsula, add up to what military experts say is an example of China's "testing of the waters" as it continues to develop its long-term strategy for exerting control in the region.

Nonetheless, the U.S. has no plans to alter its mission, "and will continue to operate in the seas around Japan, Korea, the Philippines and anywhere else it deems necessary," reported the AP. "We won't change these operations because of this specific technology that might be out there," said van Buskirk. "But we will carefully monitor and adapt to it."

While the technology seems intimidating and a real threat to U.S. naval presence in Asia, Toshi Yoshihara, an associate professor at the U.S. Naval War College, was quoted by [FOX News](#) as explaining that China must still perfect a range of complex technologies to make the missile do what experts say it is designed to achieve: zoom in at 10 times the speed of sound and destroy a large aircraft carrier moving through an unending seascape.

"There would be several layers of sensors, including over-the-horizon radar, which would help track surface units," Yoshihara conceded. "They also have airborne sensors to look out into the Pacific, as well as space-based satellites to track a strike group."

But how long will it be before China has perfected the missile's accuracy and is able to pose a threat to America's carrier fleets prowling the Pacific Ocean? "This is probably one of the biggest mysteries," Yoshihara told FOX. "My quick answer is we don't know."

While a carrier is a huge target, it would be "operating in the vast expanse of the Pacific," explained Yoshihara. "Besides, we're talking about a warhead falling onto the earth at 10 times the speed of sound. How do you guide it in pinpoint fashion?"

Meanwhile, the United States is not merely standing idly by while China ramps up its capabilities, but is "investing in missile-defense systems designed specifically to defend against anti-ship ballistic missiles," Yoshihara said.

Yoshihara noted, however, that any technology empowering China to threaten U.S. Navy ships at sea would make other targets vulnerable as well. "If those missiles can reach carriers in the open ocean, they can target critical naval bases all along the Pacific Rim," Yoshihara told FOX. "That challenges the basic principle of American power projections in the Far East."

To add to the complexity of the situation, China's *Global Times* recently reported that in addition to the "carrier killer" missile, the Chinese army "is researching a new type of conventional missile that is set to be weaponized and entered into active service within five years...."

According to the report, China's largest weapons manufacturer, the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, is set "to complete research, production and delivery of this new generation of missile by 2015. The new missile would be part of a network forming a solid defense system allowing for total coverage in both defense and attack, and capable of dealing with various threats from land, sea,



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air, space as well as cybernetic attacks....”



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