

# China's X-Band Radar Can Create a National Missile Defense, Underscoring the Need for Trump's 'Iron Dome'

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A missile is launched from an unspecified location in China on Aug. 4, 2022. The Chinese military fired missiles into waters near Taiwan as part of its planned exercises on Aug. 4. CCTV via AP



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## *Commentary*

In President-elect Donald Trump's now famous list of "20 Core Promises," No. 8 states: "Prevent World War Three, restore peace in Europe and in the Middle East, and build a great iron dome missile defense shield over our entire country—all made in America."

But it's the "great iron dome missile defense shield over our entire country" that could shift the nuclear balance of power, decreasing the

perceive power of Chinese, Russian, and North Korean nuclear missiles and reducing the chances of World War III, as well as reviving the utility of nuclear reduction diplomacy.

However, China, which has refused all U.S. attempts to engage in nuclear arms control, revealed a new large X-band radar during its Zhuhai Airshow on Nov. 12–17.

This radar could be the missing link in building a Chinese midcourse interception capability against intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), which makes the construction of an American national missile defense that can also be extended to U.S. allies imperative.

In the early 1960s, the United States, the former Soviet Union, and China were developing missile defenses, but only the Soviets managed to build a limited system around their capital, Moscow.

In the 1980s, then-President Ronald Reagan sought to revive the dream of a national missile defense with his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

Reagan calculated that building effective defenses against nuclear-armed ballistic missiles would make their continued construction irrational beyond the negotiated balance of offensive and defensive missiles, which over time might then create confidence in lower numbers of nuclear missiles.

Reagan's dream was never realized due to opposition from congressional liberals and a large U.S. arms control lobby that



regarded an American national missile defense as an incitement for Russia and China to build ever more nuclear missiles.

From the 1980s onward, Beijing vociferously opposed SDI and U.S. efforts to build missile defenses with allies, at times calling such a U.S. capability destabilizing and against China's security interests.

For example, in October 2012, the United States deployed a large X-band radar to Japan, which could quickly track and target North Korean missiles aimed at Japan but likely could also see into China and track its missiles.

In October 2014, then-Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a press briefing, "Some countries have pushed forward anti-missile system deployment in the Asia-Pacific region to seek unilateral security, which runs against regional stability and mutual trust as well as peace and stability in Northeast Asia."

Unfortunately, much of the elite leadership that has set U.S. strategic defense policy bought the Chinese line that a significant U.S. missile defense capability would force China to increase its then relatively modest long-range nuclear weapons capability.

While the United States has built a small, limited missile defense capability based in Alaska and Washington state to deter attack from North Korea's long-range nuclear missiles, there has been a constant in U.S. policy not to build a robust national missile defense to defend all Americans from Russian and Chinese nuclear missiles.

In her October 2014 statement, Hua also added a now-of-ten-repeated Chinese phrase concerning missile defenses: "Relevant countries should not take [their own security concerns] as excuses for damaging others' security interests."

This means that Beijing will not permit other countries to defend themselves if their military capabilities prevent China from gaining dominance over them. Of course, Beijing has never made any pledge to limit its nuclear missiles or missile defenses.

China's strategic deception was well-played and bought vital time. Since early 2021, the Chinese regime has been engaged in a massive nuclear breakout, building about 300 new ICBM silos in Western China in addition to mobile ICBMs and new submarine-launched ballistic missiles for its growing fleet of nuclear submarines.

By the mid-2030s, China could be nearing a nuclear force of 4,000–5,000 nuclear warheads, and now it appears that the regime is on the verge of strengthening its nuclear missile forces even more with a national missile defense system.

Even though China publicly opposed SDI and many other U.S. missile defense initiatives, in 1960, Mao Zedong ordered his People's Liberation Army to develop large missile interceptors. His 640 Program also included the development of large radar and anti-satellite weapons.

Though Deng Xiaoping canceled the program, by the 1990s, China again invested in missile defense, purchasing Russian technology to help develop its HQ-9 family, which now boasts a range of 190 miles.

China conducted at least seven midcourse missile interception tests from 2010 to 2023, purchased long-range strategic defense radar technology from Russia, and even carried out strategic missile defense tabletop exercises with Russia.

The X-band radar revealed at the Zhuhai Airshow last month—made by China's premier state-owned military company, the China Electronic Technology Group Corporation—was likely used in previous midcourse missile interception tests, which proved that China could shoot down U.S. ICBMs and intercept satellites.

A potential Chinese “offensive” nuclear force of thousands of nuclear warheads—perhaps coordinated with thousands of Russian and North Korean warheads and defended by new Chinese missile defenses against U.S. ICBMs—would make the United States and its allies vulnerable to Chinese nuclear strikes and political nuclear blackmail.

But a U.S. national missile defense, accompanied by an appropriate buildup of U.S. strategic and regional nuclear forces—all to balance Chinese and Russian nuclear offensive capabilities and their potential national missile defenses—could achieve the overall balance sought four decades ago by Reagan, which would begin to nullify the new nuclear arms race.

With China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea rejecting all attempts to engage in nuclear weapons controls as they build and build up their nuclear arsenals, Trump’s promise to create an “iron dome missile defense” is today imperative for national preservation.

If done with appropriate speed, ignoring the political howls of hostile dictatorships and domestic critics alike, Trump’s “iron dome missile defense” can also encourage another revival: making nuclear arms races futile again, perhaps preparing the way for an era of real, verifiable, nuclear reduction agreements.

*Views expressed in this article are opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

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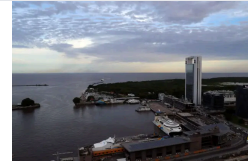
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