

Re: Chuck Discusses Chinese and Russian Weapons : "I would not doubt China's growing momentum in undersea warfare...."

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 - *Date:* 12 Dec 2006 20:26:29 -0800
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10

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I would not doubt China's growing momentum in undersea warfare. There is a strong tendency in Washington to rate the Chinese as poor mariners. The purchase from Russia of eight "Kilo"-class diesel submarines, all confirm PRC progress in undersea warfare, though do not match the US in its fleet of stealth nuclear attack subs.

China tests ballistic missile submarine

By Bill Gertz

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

China's military has launched the first of a new class of ballistic missile submarines in what defense officials view as a major step forward in Beijing's strategic weapons program.

The new 094-class submarine was launched in late July and when fully operational in the next year or two will be the first submarine to carry the underwater-launched version of China's new DF-31 missile, according to defense officials.

"When fully operational, it will represent a more modern, more capable missile platform," said one official familiar with reports of

the new submarine.

A second intelligence official said building submarines is a top priority of the Chinese, and the Type 094 will be "China's first truly intercontinental strategic nuclear delivery system."

The new Type 094 was spotted by U.S. intelligence agencies at the Huludao shipyard, located on the coast of Bohai Bay, some 250 miles northwest of Beijing.

The submarine is in the early stages of being outfitted and is not yet equipped with new JL-2 submarine-launched nuclear missiles.

The submarine is believed to be based largely on Russian nuclear submarine technology, the officials said.

A CIA report made public last week stated that Russia was a major supplier of technology to China's naval nuclear propulsion programs.

The launching of the new missile submarine appears ahead of schedule. A Pentagon report on Chinese military power made public in May stated that the new Chinese missile submarine would not be deployed until around 2010.

A Defense Intelligence Agency report produced in 1999 and labeled "secret" stated that the new submarine is part of a program by China of "modernizing and expanding its missile force."

"Mobile, solid-fuel missiles and a new ballistic missile submarine will improve the force's ability to survive a first strike," the report said, "while more launchers, on-board penetration aids, and possibly multiple warheads will improve its ability to penetrate missile defenses."

The DIA report stated that China is expected to field one new ballistic missile submarine by 2020.

A Chinese Embassy spokesman had no immediate comment.

In a related development, U.S. intelligence officials said the Chinese suffered a setback in their JL-2 missile program when a test flight of the JL-2 missile failed over the summer.

The JL-2 missile program was delayed by the test failure but is continuing to be developed, the officials said. China conducted tests of the JL-2 in 2002 and last year.

Richard Fisher, vice president of the Washington-based International Assessment and Strategy Center, said the launch of the new missile submarine is "an astounding development."

"The 094 has followed 093 development far more rapidly than the assessments in the annual Pentagon reports on the PLA," Mr. Fisher said, referring to the China's People's Liberation Army.

China also recently launched a new attack submarine known as the Type 093. Additionally, U.S. intelligence agencies were surprised by China's disclosure in July of a third new type of submarine known as the Yuan-class, a diesel-electric attack submarine.

"In the very near future, China will have a secure, second-strike nuclear attack capability that it will use to bolster its nuclear strategy of seeking to deter the United States from aiding Taiwan after a PLA attack," Mr. Fisher said.

Mr. Fisher said the JL-2 likely will have multiple warheads.

The new submarine will make it more difficult for the U.S. military to take part in a defense of Taiwan because of the threat of nuclear

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retaliation, he said.

The Pentagon has deployed a new missile defense system, but a spokesman for the Missile Defense Agency has said the current interceptor system is designed to stop a long-range North Korean missile, but not an attack from Chinese or Russian missiles.

A 1999 report by the House Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China stated that the new missile submarine will likely benefit from stolen U.S. nuclear warhead designs.

The report stated that the JL-2 is expected to have a longer range than the DF-31 and that 16 JL-2s will be deployed on the new submarine.

The range of the JL-2 is estimated to be about 7,500 miles, enough "to strike targets throughout the United States," the report said.

"Instead of venturing into the open ocean to attack the United States, the Type 094-class submarines could remain near [Chinese] waters, protected by the [People's Liberation Army,] Navy and Air Force," the report said.

The new submarine will be a major improvement over China's current ballistic missile submarine known as the Xia, which is equipped with medium-range missiles.

The current Xia submarine is considered so noisy to underwater detection gear that its chances of surviving attack submarine strikes in ocean waters are limited.

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