

Japan deploys long-range missiles for the first time

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Amid the US-Israeli war against Iran, the US and Japan are at the same time rapidly implementing plans to expand the war into an even larger conflict, above all aimed at China. This includes the continued joint militarization of Japanese southern islands in the East China Sea and the Pacific.

On March 31, the Japanese military deployed long-range missiles capable of striking China and North Korea within the country for the first time. Type-25 surface-to-ship missiles were deployed to the army's (known as the Ground Self-Defense Force) Camp Kengun in Kumamoto Prefecture on Kyushu. The Type-25 missile is an enhanced version of the Type-12 and is domestically produced, having a range of 1,000 km.

Additionally, Type-25 hyper-velocity gliding projectile (HGP) missiles have been sent to Camp Fuji Shizuoka Prefecture, to the southwest of Tokyo. Japan also intends to deploy missiles at other locations throughout the country, including Camp Ebino in Miyazaki Prefecture, also on Kyushu, later this year.

Tokyo also plans to further upgrade its Type-25 HGP missiles to give them a range of 2,000 km for deployment in the near future to islands in the southern Ryukyu chain, which includes Okinawa, giving Japan the capability of striking deep into Chinese territory. The military will also arm its Aegis destroyers with US-made Tomahawk cruise missiles later this year, as well as its fighter jets with JASSM-ER missiles. Those have ranges of 1,600 km and 900 km respectively.

The militarization of these islands has been ongoing by successive Japanese governments since Shinzo Abe was prime minister from 2012 to 2020. Missiles, radar installations and garrisons have been established on Ryukyu islands including Miyako, Ishigaki, Amami and Yonaguni, the last of which is just 110 km east of

Taiwan.

The stated goal of the present Takaichi government is to be able to strike the launch sites of missiles in China or North Korea before a so-called “imminent” attack, claiming that this constitutes self-defense. In reality, Tokyo is planning pre-emptive attacks in alliance with Washington against China, which both see as the greatest obstacle to their imperialist and economic interests in the region. Any Japanese missile attack on China would be coordinated with Washington's operations.

The coordination of US and Japanese militaries also includes those of South Korea and the Philippines, which encircle China and are preparing for a US-led war on Beijing. Japan has also drawn closer militarily to both Seoul and Manila. Washington, Tokyo and Seoul launched a de facto trilateral military alliance in 2023, moving towards integrating the three countries' missile, radar and intelligence systems.

None of this has anything to do with defense. Under the current far-right government of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, Tokyo has backed the Trump regime's criminal actions in Iran as well as against Venezuela while ramping up military spending to 2 percent of GDP, a year earlier than previously planned. At the same time, the Japanese government has turned Article 9 of the constitution—the so-called pacifist clause that bans Japan from maintaining a military—into a dead letter.

The criminal US-led war against Iran has not drawn a single word of opposition from Tokyo, which has echoed Washington's false pretext of stopping Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. This is providing the framework for a similar war of annihilation against China.

Tokyo's militarization of its islands takes place in

close collaboration with the US military. However, behind this agenda, Tokyo is not simply acting as the junior partner to Washington, but has its own imperialist interests which it is preparing to achieve through war. Through the expansion of its armed forces nationwide, Tokyo is seeking to make its military more independent from Washington.

For now, Japanese remilitarization takes place under cover of “collective self-defense” with Washington. Washington spells out its own agenda in its latest National Defense Strategy (NDS) document, released in January, as being: “To prevent anyone, including China, from being able to dominate us or our allies—in essence, to set the military conditions required to achieve the [National Security Strategy] goal of a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific that allows all of us to enjoy a decent peace.”

Behind the phony language of peace, the Trump administration is accelerating its plans for war against China. The NDS states, “We will build, posture, and sustain a strong denial defense along the [First Island Chain]. We will also work closely with our allies and partners in the region to incentivize and enable them to do more for our collective defense, especially in ways that are relevant to an effective denial defense.”

Controlling of the First Island Chain, which runs through Japan (including its southern Ryukyu Islands), Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, is essential to the US strategy of dominating waters and airspace immediately adjacent to the Chinese mainland. Commanding the straits through the Ryukyu Islands is regarded as essential to preventing Chinese naval vessels, particularly its nuclear submarines, from gaining access to the wider Pacific Ocean beyond the First Island Chain.

In January, US War Secretary Pete Hegseth and Japan’s Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi agreed to expanded military exercises throughout the Ryukyu Island chain. This includes turning Yonaguni into a forward operating base for a war over Taiwan. Cooperation also includes stepping up joint missile production, as well as providing maintenance for US aircraft and naval vessels.

In addition to these islands, both Japan and the US are stepping up their military presence on islands in the Pacific. Tokyo is planning to reinforce its airbase on Iwoto island, formerly known as Iwo Jima. The US is

also refurbishing its airfields on islands like Tinian and Peleliu near Guam.

Last year, the two militaries also launched the Japan Self-Defense Forces Joint Operations Command Cooperation Team (JCT). The JCT is a US-led permanent joint body that coordinates planning and action between Japan’s own joint military command and US Forces Japan (USFJ). Lieutenant General Stephen Jost, the head of USFJ, stated last June that the JCT would “integrate and synchronize operations that span the spectrum of operations from humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and armed conflict.”

All pretensions that the US is concerned with “humanitarian assistance” or defending “freedom” have been torn away through the illegal war in Iran. The Trump administration, like those of Biden and Obama before it, are putting the pieces in place to launch a devastating war against China.

Much in the same way that Washington and NATO goaded Russia into the conflict in Ukraine, Washington and Tokyo have been at the forefront of provoking Beijing over Taiwan, which China regards as a renegade province to be reunited with the mainland by force if it were to declare independence. Beijing is conscious that an independent Taiwan would become a staging ground for US military actions against China, while setting a dangerous precedent for the further carve-up of Chinese territory.



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