

US deploys three subs in Asia

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Three Ohio-class nuclear submarines — heavily armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles — are now making a show of US military power closer than usual to China.

US defense analysts, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the vessels were in place to demonstrate US commitment to nervous allies in the region.

“And the US military remains concerned over China’s growing missile force — now more than 1,000 — near the Taiwan Strait,” *Time* magazine said this week in a report on the submarines.

One analyst told the Taipei Times that moving the submarines into the Pacific Ocean in part reflected US “concern” at China’s failure to reduce the missiles aimed at Taiwan despite a major reduction in tensions across the Taiwan Strait.

A senior US military official would not comment on suggestions that the US was “sending a message” to China, but did not deny that the submarines would stay in the region for some months.

In a paper presented to a conference earlier this week in Washington, Daniel Blumenthal, resident fellow in Asian Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, emphasized the need for the US to stand up to China in the Strait.

He said that in the short term President Ma Ying Jeou’s (馬英九) cross-strait policies had made the Strait more stable, but over the long term “China-Taiwan relations remain structurally unstable and fraught with risk.”

While making no direct mention of the submarines or any other military movements, he added: “The Mainland has not abandoned its policy of reunification, and, continues to build-up its military across the Strait in a destabilizing fashion.

“Washington thus must show its un-abiding commitment to Taiwan’s security and welfare while engaging in energetic diplomacy with China to stabilize the Strait for the long-term,” Blumenthal said.

“The Second Artillery force deployed across the Strait, growing in number, precision, and lethality is tantamount to a gun pointed at Taiwan’s head,” he said.

The presence of the submarines was first reported in Hong Kong’s *South China Morning Post* and confirmed on Thursday by *Time*.

Time said the USS *Ohio* was in the Philippines’ Subic Bay, the USS *Michigan* was at Pusan,

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South Korea and the USS

Florida

was at the joint US-British naval base on Diego Garcia.

The three subs have been retrofitted and no longer carry nuclear weapons. Instead, they have as many as 462 new Tomahawk cruise missiles between them.

The Tomahawks are said to be “capable of hitting anything within 1,000 miles [1,609km].”

Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington is quoted by Time as saying: “There’s been a decision to bolster our forces in the Pacific. There is no doubt that China will stand up and take notice.”

She said the arrival of the Tomahawks was “part of a larger effort to bolster our capabilities in the region. It sends a signal that nobody should rule out our determination to be the balancer in the region that many countries there want us to be.”

Time said that Australia, Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and Vietnam had all been urging the US to “push back against what they see as China’s increasingly aggressive actions in the South China Sea.”

Source: [Taipei Times - 2010/07/10](#)