

PRC missiles aimed at Taiwan: MND

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Minister of National Defense Feng Shih-kuan yesterday speaks at a question-and-answer session at the Legislative Yuan's Foreign and National Defense Committee in Taipei.

Photo: Wang Yi-sung, Taipei Times

The Ministry of National Defense yesterday confirmed for the first time that China has Dong Feng-16 (DF-16) missiles aimed at Taiwan in a bid to increase military pressure on the nation.

In a report delivered to the legislature's Foreign and National Defense Committee, the ministry said Beijing has stepped up military threats toward Taiwan, pushing for military reforms and advancing its joint forces operations.

"In recent years, China's navy and air force have introduced new warships, domestically produced fighter jets — including the Chengdu J-10, Shenyang J-11 and Shenyang J-15 — and Russian-made Sukhoi Su-35 multipurpose fighter jets, and put its latest stealth fighter, the J-20, into service," the ministry said.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army Rocket Force has deployed DF-16 ballistic missiles,

capable of conducting precise strikes on Taiwan proper, it added.

According to military sources, the DF-16 medium-range ballistic missile is guided and can carry multiple warheads, making it much more difficult to intercept.

Minister of National Defense Feng Shih-kuan (馮世寬) said recent events indicate that Beijing is seeking to stir up domestic discontent in Taiwan by increasing its military activities to force Taipei to fall in line with its cross-strait policy.

Feng cited as examples China's first and only aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, passing through the first island chain in international waters off eastern Taiwan in December last year, as well as retired Chinese military officers' repeated warnings about the risks of military conflict across the Taiwan Strait.

Responding to a question from Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Liu Shih-fang (劉世芳) about Taiwan's ability to intercept and counter DF-16 missiles, Feng said the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile systems can meet the task.

"As the DF-16 is released at a high altitude and targets a single area, we are able to counter the missile as it passes through the atmosphere," Feng said.

Lieutenant General Chiang Chen-chung (蔣陳仲), director of the ministry's Office for Operations and Planning, said the PAC-3 missile system can effectively take down the DF-16 when it is flying between 40km and 70km away, preventing it from hitting Taiwanese soil.

To improve the nation's integrated air defense capabilities and in response to an increased Chinese military presence in the area, the ministry earlier this month said that it has deployed PAC-3 missile batteries to Hualien and Taitung counties.

Dismissing US President Donald Trump's reported plans to announce new arms sales to

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Taiwan after a proposed meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) next month, Feng said the government has yet to talk to Washington about weapons needs.

“Our policy is to consider any kinds of weapons that can truly increase the nation’s defensive capabilities,” Feng said, expressing hope that the US would authorize a large arms sale package soon.

Additional reporting by Lo Tien-bin

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