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China may be preparing for a crippling preemptive missile strike on US military bases

Alex Lockie
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A new report by Thomas Shugart on War On The Rocks details the disturbing level to which China appears to have planned out a crippling missile attack on US military bases in the Pacific should its interests in the region be threatened.

For some time analysts have noted that China seems to be tailoring its military to counter the US's. For example, Beijing tested its "carrier killer" ballistic missile on a model of a US Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, while its own aircraft carrier is designed for coastal defense and will likely be destined for the South China Sea.

But Shugart's investigation of satellite imagery comparing China's missile testing grounds with US bases in the region shows an eerie pattern. It appears that China's latest missile tests have all been geared towards knocking out US carriers, destroyers, and airfields in East Asia. This falls right in line with one of China's core military doctrines — "active defense."

Essentially, if China thinks it is facing a foe that actively seeks to challenge its territorial cohesiveness or sovereignty, the PLA will engage the enemy through all available means: Legal challenges, psychological and cyber warfare, counter-space systems, and preemptive strikes. Under President Donald Trump, the US has made the most serious challenges to China's territory and sovereignty in recent history.

Trump and key members of his administration have chastised China for its "massive military fortress" in the South China Sea, and even threatened to cut off China's access to the islands it has built and militarized in the region. Trump's phone call with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-Wen struck at the core of China's very existence, as it could undermine China's policy of considering Taiwan as a rogue province that must be back into Beijing's fold.



China has already engaged its state-sponsored propaganda against the US, developed counter-space systems that could denude the US of its huge satellite-driven information advantage, and developed systems uniquely able to counter US stealth aircraft.

If the US continues to actively challenge China and seek to undermine its territorial cohesion, the next logical step in the PLA's escalation may be to attempt to eviscerate US bases and assets throughout Asia with a blistering missile attack.