

Washington's Policy of Strangling China. US Nuclear Threats, Militarization of the Taiwan Straits

By [Shane Quinn](#)

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Less than 150 miles from China's south-eastern coast lies Taiwan, a mountainous and volcanic island which is about a third the size of Cuba. Yet with 23 million people, Taiwan has twice the population of its Caribbean counterpart. From the 1950s until the present moment, Taiwan has been a crucial piece in the Pentagon's chess game of hemming China in along its coast, and limiting Beijing's oxygen supply.

China constitutes America's principal rival in the international arena today. Washington has increasingly surrounded its Chinese adversary with bases, troops and territories controlled by the United States in east Asia and the Pacific – such as the US client allies of Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, along with other islands dominated by US military power like Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and indeed Taiwan.

Despite strained relations with the Philippines under their unpredictable and brutal leader **Rodrigo Duterte** (1), Washington retains a considerable foothold on Filipino soil, with annual military exercises involving well over a thousand US marines having taken place as recently as October 2019.

To Beijing, Taiwan is of high importance. Its close proximity to the Chinese mainland is similar again to that of Cuba in relation to America. It is normal that a major power like China is concerned regarding what unfolds inside or near its boundaries. Taiwan is a relatively prosperous and diverse area, one which the Chinese government would wish dearly to have under its auspices, therefore dislodging it from US control. In January 2019, president **Xi Jinping** said that Taiwan “must and will be reunited” with China, but such an outcome seems a slim possibility in the foreseeable future.

Taiwan is positioned within 500 miles of two of China's most affluent and influential places, Shanghai and Hong Kong, both of which are situated in south-eastern China.

The Financial Times erroneously describes Taiwan as a “de facto independent island” (2). For over 60 years, Washington has utilised Taiwan as a proxy region dating to the two-term presidency of **General Dwight D. Eisenhower** (1953-1961). Between 1957 and 1958, the Eisenhower administration began shipping MGM-1 Matador cruise missiles to Taiwan in great secrecy, soon furnished with nuclear warheads, all virtually unknown to the Taiwanese and Chinese populaces.

From January 1958, these Matador missiles on Taiwan were being armed with Mark 5 nuclear bombs with a destructive force ranging from 6 to 120 kilotons, up to eight times more powerful than the Hiroshima atomic weapon.

By the end of Eisenhower's tenure in 1961, there were around a dozen Matador nuclear-

armed missiles on Taiwan, within reach not only of Shanghai and Hong Kong but also Guangzhou, a city then with over a million inhabitants, and which is today China's fifth most populated urban centre. Hong Kong would surely not have been on the target list, as at the time it was a British dependency; but Guangzhou, like Shanghai, is positioned less than 500 miles from Taiwan.

The range of a Matador cruise missile consisted of a maximum 600 miles, and it was a weapon which flew at almost the speed of sound, meaning – in the event of a planned US nuclear assault – Shanghai and Guangzhou would presumably have been among the first Chinese cities to face destruction, due to the ongoing presence of nuclear missiles in Taiwan.

The Matador was the first American surface-to-surface cruise missile ever built. US nuclear weapons pointed towards China remained on Taiwanese soil for over 15 years, through the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations, before they were at last removed in 1975. (3)

President Eisenhower, as early as December 1954, had dispatched the planet's largest ship to the Taiwan Strait, the U.S.S. Midway, America's 300-plus metre long, nuclear-armed aircraft carrier – as a response to a conflict which broke out between US-backed groups and Beijing's forces, called "the First Taiwan Strait crisis" (September 1954 to May 1955), also known as the First Quemoy crisis, among other names. This was all occurring astride China's south-eastern frontiers, and nowhere near US shorelines.

During the skirmishes, in which nearly a thousand Chinese were killed, the Eisenhower government threatened to attack China with nuclear bombs as "a last resort". This was communicated to **Mao Zedong** in separate statements and moves.

In the opinion of Eisenhower's Secretary of State, **John Foster Dulles**, these nuclear threats upon [China led to](#) "the negotiated resolution of the crisis" (4). As tensions were rising, on 12 September 1954 the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, a senior military body advising the president, recommended the nuclear option against China. (5)

The Chinese nation was previously the subject of US nuclear attack warnings, as Eisenhower [sent secret](#) atomic threats to Beijing in order "to maintain a settlement in Korea in 1953", at the Korean War's conclusion. (6)

In the mid-1950s, China lacked a primary deterrent to US nuclear strikes, as Beijing did not develop atomic weapons until October 1964. US government threats to unleash nuclear warfare on China during the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, may have been the spark that finally ignited Mao Zedong's decision, in January 1955, to begin his country's nuclear weapons program, with China facing possible annihilation.

Even then, the CIA knew six months in advance – by April 1964 – that the Chinese were soon to test their first atomic bomb, thanks to the spy activities carried out by a CIA-trained Tibetan guerrilla, unnamed; who decades later was interviewed by US journalist Thomas Laird, corroborating the story. CIA sources highlight that this Tibetan guerrilla's covert operations [comprised](#) "some of the most valuable intelligence of the entire Cold War". (7)

Sailing around Taiwanese shores, the U.S.S. Midway was carrying Mark 8 nuclear bombs, one of which has a yield of 25 to 30 kilotons, more powerful than either the Hiroshima (15 kilotons) or Nagasaki bombs (21 kilotons).

The U.S.S. Midway had a prior history of holding stashes of nuclear weapons aboard; and in late 1952, she was cruising through Mediterranean waters with Mark 7 nuclear bombs on her deck, ranging in firepower from 8 kilotons to 61 kilotons.

Across the decades, successive US governments have sold tens of billions worth of military hardware to Taiwan. In 1993 for instance, president **Bill Clinton** dispatched 200 Patriot missiles and related equipment to Taiwan (8). This on its own was a serious provocation of Beijing, and one can imagine the reaction were the Chinese government to send sophisticated missile systems to Cuba. It is merely the tip of the iceberg, however.

During two terms in office ending in 2001, Clinton sold an array of war materiel to Taiwan, including torpedoes, other missile types, helicopters, tanks and warships, worth billions of dollars.

In more recent times, selling of arms to Taiwan under president Barack Obama was considerable too, including 60 Black Hawk helicopters at a total price of \$3 billion in 2010. Another 114 Patriot missile systems were shipped there by the Obama administration, costing almost \$3 billion. Obama furthermore sold Taiwan high-tech guided missiles, Assault Amphibious Vehicles (AAVs), Browning Machine Guns, along with the continuation of a pilot training program and logistics support to Taiwanese forces, among other things.

Supplies of US military equipment to Taiwan are increasing under president Donald Trump. His cabinet has sold 66 F-16 fighter aircraft to the island, at a significant \$8 billion. Trump has moreover sent tanks to Taiwan, along with a collection of expensive missiles and torpedoes accompanied with spare parts for other equipment. Taiwan was also compelled in recent months to buy billions of dollars worth of US beef, corn and soybeans. This is the “de facto independent island” that the Financial Times informs its readers about.

Taiwan continues to be governed by a US-friendly outfit, led by **Tsai Ing-wen**, who received much of her third level education in New York and London. President Tsai pursues close relations with the Americans, and late last year she called for a “bilateral trade agreement” between Taiwan and America. She has met numerous US officials, including John McCain, who she can be seen smiling with in images shot during the summer of 2016.

Reacting to McCain’s death 18 months ago, president Tsai described him as “a friend and a fighter” who “forever strived for a more peaceful and prosperous world”. In reality, McCain was “a notorious warmonger and lobbyist” that “always defended the interests of the international arms dealers”, as [noted by the](#) Brazilian historian Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira. (9)

Of the US Matador missile itself, which was in service from 1952 to 1962, its creation was made possible through work done by figures like Wernher von Braun, a Prussian-born rocket engineer and former SS Major. Von Braun was an ingenious but unscrupulous scientist flown covertly to the United States on 20 September 1945, accompanied with eventually another 1,600 other Nazi scientists, engineers and technicians (“Operation Paperclip”), some of whom had been high-ranking members of the Nazi Party.

Von Braun was in the past summoned by Hitler for discussions on repeated occasions, and (in civilian clothing) he was photographed in Hitler’s presence as early as the spring of 1934, along with [many other](#) German technicians and military personnel (10). Von Braun was later in the company of and photographed multiple times with US presidents Eisenhower, John F.

Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

During talks with Hitler in early 1943 Von Braun informed the dictator that, in the near future, rockets would be able to fly into outer space and also to the moon. It was an opinion which Hitler agreed with, when he said afterwards of his meeting with Von Braun that,

“This young scholar has produced a rocket that upsets all known ballistic laws... We will have Von Braun to thank for the uncovering of many great secrets”. (11)

During the second half of World War II, Von Braun performed a central role in developing the V-1 flying bomb (which killed over 6,000 Londoners), and that was the world’s first cruise missile, of which the US Matador’s design was based on.

Von Braun likewise had a leading part in formulating the V-2 rocket, mankind’s first long-range guided ballistic missile, which up to early 1945 had killed almost 3,000 London residents. By the time Von Braun was relocated to America, one could argue that the blood of thousands of British civilians was partly on his hands, along with that of his colleagues. The first victims in London of the V-2 rocket, for example, were a three-year-old girl and a 63-year-old woman who were killed on 8 September 1944. US government officials had classed [Von Braun as](#) “a potential security threat” in the early days. (12)

It should be noted that much of the landmark technology on display in the human world over the past seven decades, from ballistic and cruise missiles to jet aircraft, can be traced to the work of former Nazi scientists such as Von Braun, Arthur Rudolph and Kurt Debus, with the Wehrmacht providing key assistance through figures like Walter Dornberger.

Rudolph (a Nazi Party member since 1931) and Debus (a Nazi Party and SS member), both rocket scientists, were reported to be “ardent Nazis”, and many of these men were acquainted personally with Hitler. The Nazi leader took an active interest in scientific and technological developments, particularly after the defeat at Stalingrad.

As with Von Braun - Rudolph, Rebus and Dornberger were secreted to the United States after the war, in order to recommence the work they had begun under Hitler.

Dornberger, a German Major-General, was already speaking of “space travel” in early October 1942, long before the Americans were aware that such exploration could be possible. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was not established until July 1958.

In April 1961 the Soviets launched the first human being into space, Yuri Gagarin; and eight years later American astronauts landed on the moon, in the latter case largely because of Von Braun’s expertise. According to the CIA website, altogether 120 former Nazi scientists, engineers and technicians - led by Von Braun - developed the Saturn V launch vehicle, which carried all Apollo Lunar missions, beginning with Apollo 11 in July 1969, culminating in Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walking on the moon. (13)

It is unlikely that much of these uncomfortable realities receive mention in Western state-approved history books and school texts. Big budget Hollywood films glorifying US space travel have, in similar fashion, airbrushed from history Von Braun and other former Nazi scientists whose discoveries were undeniably pivotal.

The first jet-powered airplane in the world was the Messerschmitt Me-262, with test flights beginning in April 1941, before its introduction three years later. Hitler was directly involved in operational plans for the Me-262, and he initially wanted it to be used as a ground attack or bomber aircraft.

After 1945, both the United States and Soviet Russia copied the Nazis' jet aircraft designs from downed Me-262 aircraft they captured (14). At war's end, 300 train-car loads of V-2 rocket parts were shipped to America. It was piracy, on a grand scale.

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Shane Quinn obtained an honors journalism degree. He is interested in writing primarily on foreign affairs, having been inspired by authors like Noam Chomsky. He is a frequent contributor to *Global Research*.

Notes

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