

U.S. moves previously banned missiles closer to China and Russia

written by Drago Bosnic

April 17, 2024



The Typhon.

Back in November last year, the U.S. military was in the process of [deploying new medium-range missile systems to the increasingly contested Asia-Pacific region](#). At

the time, General Charles A. Flynn, a four-star commanding officer of the U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), stated that the deployment was officially slated for 2024 and that their purpose was to “deter China from invading Taiwan.” More importantly, Flynn revealed that the U.S. Army would deploy a missile launcher that would be able to fire the land-based version of the medium-range “Tomahawk” missile. Still, he refused to disclose where exactly the systems would be deployed, leaving many analysts to speculate about the possible location. There was even speculation that such missiles would be stationed directly in Taiwan. However, it seems that the United States chose not to go that far (at least not yet), although the latest deployment isn’t much better in terms of strategic impact on China’s security.

Namely, the system in question, [officially named “Typhon,” has been sent to the Philippines](#). The U.S. Army deployed the elements of its latest land-based medium-range missile system overseas for the first time to take part in a military exercise in the island country. Apart from the aforementioned subsonic “Tomahawk” cruise missiles, “Typhon” also carries the supersonic SM-6 multi-purpose missiles. The latter is used by the U.S. Navy as part of its shipborne “Aegis,” a combined SAM (surface-to-air missile) and ABM (anti-ballistic missile) system that can also be used in a secondary anti-ship role. Precisely, the SM-6 gives it such a capability, meaning that it can hit both airborne and surface targets. Because of such multirole capabilities, “Typhon” can use the missile for land attack missions. Various American military sources suggest that such systems will be “permanently based in China’s backyard,” a clear indicator that the U.S. plans to escalate its aggression.

On April 15, the U.S. Army Pacific (U.SARPAC) announced the arrival of one battery (or at least a part of it) to the Philippines, where it participated in the Salaknib 24 military exercise. This specific “Typhon” system was sent on April 7, and it belongs to Battery C, 5th Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, which is part of the Long Range Fires Battalion assigned to the 1st Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State. Footage shows a single trailer-based

containerized launcher towed by a HEMTT (Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck) being loaded on a USAF C-17A Globemaster III transport aircraft from the 62nd Airlift Wing at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and then being unloaded in the Philippines. A “Typhon” battery consists of up to four launchers, a mobile command post, and other auxiliary vehicles and equipment. The system also uses the Mk 70 Mod 1 launchers derived from the highly controversial Mk 41 VLS.

Namely, the Mk 41 vertical launch system (VLS) was one of the reasons why the INF Treaty fell apart, which recently led Russia to respond to the U.S. escalation by [testing its own previously banned intermediate-range missile](#). The Mk 41 can fire a plethora of weapons, be it for SAM, ABM, or any other system. It's also part of the “Aegis” air and missile defenses, including its land-based “Aegis Ashore” variant. It can be argued that its most disturbing feature is that it can also fire purely offensive missiles such as the infamous “Tomahawk.” The problem is that there's no viable way to know what sort of missile is in the VLS, and the U.S. has repeatedly refused to allow on-site inspections of its alleged “missile shield” in Eastern Europe. This effectively forced Russia to create countermeasures, [particularly in the form of its unrivaled hypersonic missiles](#). China has a similar problem with such VLS, particularly now that the missiles have been deployed on land.

The U.S. military openly describes the “Typhon” as a “strategic weapon system that would be used against higher-value targets like air defense assets and command and control nodes.” If based on Luzon, the largest and most important island in the Philippines, [the system would have more than enough range to reach southern and southeastern China](#), including the island of Hainan, which is crucial for extending control over the strategically important South China Sea. However, U.S. military sources are complaining that too many countries have outright refused to allow the deployment of the “Typhon” on their territory. Still, this doesn't seem to serve as a clear deterrent to the aggressive Pentagon planners, as they're also deploying similar weapons with other service branches, including the U.S. Marine Corps

(USMC), which also has land-based “Tomahawk” launchers, albeit on a completely different platform, the 4×4 Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV).

Worse yet, back in 2021, meaning before the SMO (special military operation), the U.S. Army reactivated its 56th Artillery Command in Germany to oversee forward-deployed units equipped with “Typhon” and similar strike platforms such as the “Dark Eagle” hypersonic missile, which is yet to be delivered, as it’s still going through a rather rocky development. Interestingly, the 56th Artillery Command had battalions equipped with “Pershing” and “Pershing II” nuclear-armed ballistic missiles during the (First) Cold War. In other words, the U.S.-led political West is antagonizing both multipolar superpowers, openly taking pride in the fact that it can get into their “geopolitical backyards.” However, both Russia and China have superior missile technologies, particularly in terms of the development and deployment of hypersonic weapons. Worse yet for the Pentagon, [even North Korea managed to overtake the U.S. in this regard](#) and continues to strengthen its forces.

Source: [InfoBrics](#)

