

1971 CINCPAC China Assessment

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China conducted one nuclear test explosion in 1971, and CINCPAC's assessment of the Chinese nuclear threat "remained unchanged" during 1971. China was still recovering from the effects of the Cultural Revolution, but CINCPAC concluded that the country was expected to continue to develop a "credible nuclear capability" during the 1972-1975 time period.

CINCPAC intelligence concluded that China "had available both fission and thermonuclear weapons for medium and light bomb delivery." It also possessed "fission warheads for MRBM delivery," but although three surface-to-surface missile sites were known, there was no evidence that an operational system had been deployed to any of the three sites.

CINCPAC also concluded that at the end of 1971, "the assessment remained that within a year, or by early 1973, the Chinese would have an ICBM capable of delivering a one-to-three megaton warhead."

The development of a sea-based leg of China's nuclear posture did not appear to have progressed much, and CINCPAC concluded that China "did not have an operational missile for their single ballistic missile submarine."

Of more immediate concern, was the deteriorating China-USSR situation. CINCPAC feared that a war between China and the Soviet Union "is a continuing possibility."

Finally, during the year, the official U.S. terminology for China changed from Communist China to People's Republic of China.

These plans and operations are described in more detail in the selected pages from the 1971 CINCPAC history provided below:

Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, "CINCPAC Command History 1971," May 31, 1972, Volume 1. Only selected pages. Partially declassified and released under FOIA. (0.34 MB)

and [Ploughshares Fund](#). For information about the Nuclear Strategy Project contact [Hans M. Kristensen](#).

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