

1978 CINCPAC China Assessment

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On December 15, 1978, President Carter announced that U.S. and China had agreed to establish formal diplomatic relations by January 1, 1979. As a result, the U.S. pledged to remove all military forces from Taiwan by April 30, 1979. The Mutual Security Treaty with Taiwan would be terminated by January 1, 1980. The joint U.S.-Chinese communiqué from the December 15 decision indicated that U.S. diplomatic ties with Taiwan would be ended, but that cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations would continue.

The U.S. also informed Taiwan that it would discontinue visits by nuclear-powered warships to the island, as well as nuclear submarine participation in Shark Hunt exercises. The last nuclear-powered ship visit had occurred in 1972, but the State Department concluded that such activities would run counter to the U.S. Government policy of lowering its military profile on Taiwan.

The Chinese threat to Taiwan didn't change much during 1978, but concern over continued Chinese military activity in the Taiwan Strait continued prompting Taiwan to increase the readiness of its forces on the off-shore islands. Air-incidents were of particular concern.

Chinese nuclear developments continued at a slightly increase pace during 1978. Three nuclear explosions were conducted, all of them in the low-kiloton range.

Surface-to-surface missile sites increased to 90 with 162-192 launchers, up from 65 sites in 1976 (1977 is unavailable). Of these, ICBMs remained at two sites with two launchers, while IRBM/MRBM sites increased to 62 with 50-67 and 38-51 launchers, respectively.

In South Korea, the positive development continued with the U.S. announcing the withdrawal of ground combat forces.

Selected pages from the 1978 CINCPAC history are provided below:

Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, "CINCPAC Command History 1978," September 28, 1979, Volume 1. Only selected pages. Partially declassified and released under FOIA. (0.80 MB)

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