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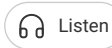
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Japan tests long-range Type 12 missile as counterstrike capability against China grows

First public flight test of upgraded Type 12 variant marks milestone in efforts to counter Chinese naval power

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Gabriel Dominguez

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Japan's efforts to build a long-range capability to strike [Chinese warships](#) reached a milestone last week as flight testing began for the air-launched variant of its upgraded [Type 12 anti-ship missile](#), a weapon with a reported range of about 1,000km (620 miles).

Photographs taken by aviation enthusiasts on July 30 at Gifu airbase in central [Japan](#) show a Mitsubishi F-2B fighter carrying two inert examples of the missile beneath its wings, marking the first public confirmation of a flight test.

The trial – which is designed to verify aerodynamic characteristics and structural loads ahead of separation and live-fire testing – brings Tokyo a step closer to fielding an indigenous family of long-range stand-off missiles that could be deployed from the land, sea and air.

China's PLA test fires missile into Pacific



China's PLA test fires missile into Pacific

The missile is part of [Japan's broader effort](#) to have locally developed, multi-domain counterstrike capabilities.

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The ground-launched variant entered service in March as the Type 25, extending the range of Japan's indigenous anti-ship missile force from about 200km to about 1,000km. Ship- and air-launched variants are expected to enter service around the next financial year. A submarine-launched version is in development.

Defence expert Yoshihiro Inaba, the Japan correspondent for the Naval News website, said the air-launched variant offered platform flexibility, making it considerably more difficult for Chinese forces to predict where strikes could come from.

"The introduction of this upgraded Type 12 fundamentally changes this equation by allowing strikes to be launched from the airspace over Kyushu, and even Honshu," Inaba said.

"From China's perspective, this increases the number of areas and platforms that must be monitored and defended against, thereby imposing a substantially greater operational burden."

Christopher Hughes, professor of international politics and Japanese studies at the University of Warwick, said it could further complicate Beijing's military presence in the region.

"The proliferation of Japan's stand-off missiles, or really cruise missile variants, is important in complicating China's freedom of action in the East China Sea, the first island chain and beyond," Hughes said.



Japan's Type 12 coastal defence anti-ship missile launcher vehicle was on show during the Fuji Firepower Exercise on June 8, 2025. Photo: Handout

He said the expanding missile family would strengthen the defence

or Japan's southwestern islands while enabling Tokyo to establish its own anti-access strategy capable of constraining PLA operations in the region. If necessary, he added, the missiles could also give Japan options to strike land-based military targets, including command-and-control nodes.

Hughes also argued that the move reinforced Japan's alliance with the US by integrating Tokyo's emerging counterstrike doctrine more closely with Washington's, making it harder for Beijing to undermine allied deterrence or split the two allies during a crisis.

Still, Masashi Murano, a defence analyst at the Hudson Institute, said the missiles were only one element of an effective long-range strike capability. To engage moving warships at extended ranges, Japan would also need a resilient network of sensors and secure communications capable of continuously tracking and updating targets.

Jeffrey Hornung, Japan lead at the Rand Corporation, said that was "the biggest challenge" Japan must overcome.

For Tokyo's counterstrike options to be effective, "they need to be able to reach their targets accurately far from Japan's current suite of air and ground-based sensors", he said, adding he was not sure how proficient Japan would be at that task today.

Once it could master that, Hornung said, Japan would have "a credible counterstrike option that any potential adversary will have to consider".

Another advantage of the upgraded Type 12 family is that, unlike imported systems such as the Tomahawk, it can be produced domestically in much larger numbers.

Murano said the Japan Self-Defence Forces could acquire an annual quantity that "should be far greater – and that matters more", arguing that indigenous production gave Tokyo greater control over procurement and reduced its dependence on the availability of foreign-made weapons.

Michael Bosack, director of the Parley Policy Institute, said: "Japan has long sought an indigenous strike capability independent of the United States, and this programme gives Tokyo the ability to manufacture, replenish and sustain its own long-range strike capability without relying on US production."

Meanwhile, the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force conducted its first live-firing of a US-made [Tomahawk cruise missile](#) from the destroyer JS Chokai on July 29, giving Japan an interim sea-based strike capability while domestic programmes are maturing.

Murano noted, however, that heavy US use of Tomahawks during Operation Epic Fury against Iran had compounded existing supply pressures, with deliveries to Japan already lagging.

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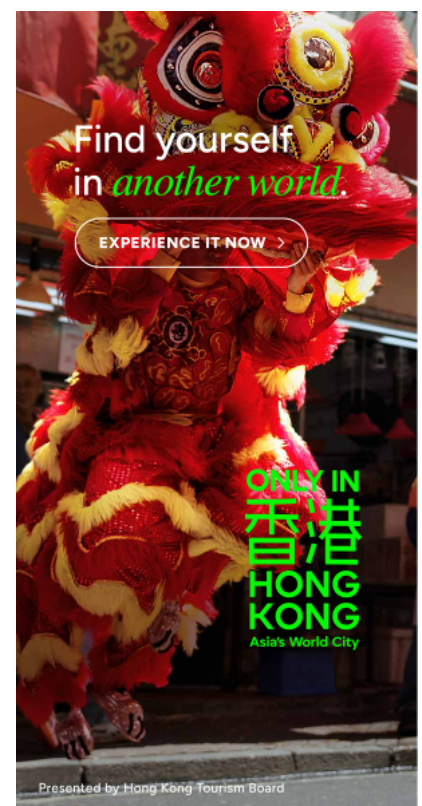
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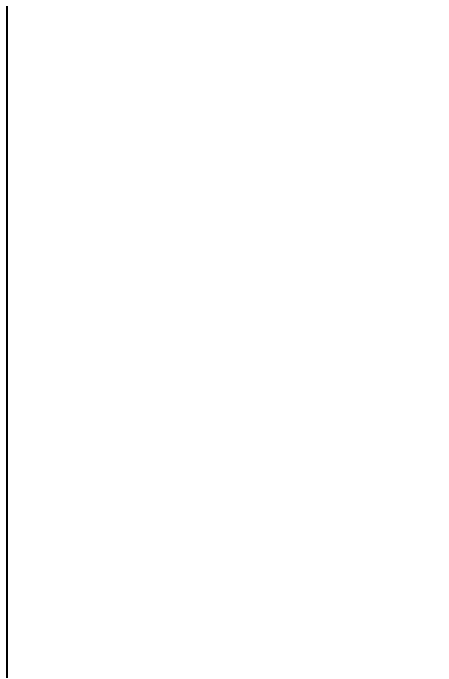
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Even if delivery timelines are met, hardware is only part of the equation. Long-range strikes depend on identifying, tracking and targeting adversary forces through a robust intelligence architecture.

Against this backdrop, experts say Japan's newly established National Intelligence Bureau, which replaces the Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office, should help improve the collection and integration of

intelligence needed to generate target information for long-range strike operations.

One of Japan's persistent challenges had been developing "the robust intelligence architecture necessary for targeting", Bosack said.

He said the launch of the bureau last week was "a step towards advancing intelligence collection and analysis necessary for development of effective target packages, particularly against potential Chinese threats".



Gabriel Dominguez +FOLLOW

Gabriel Dominguez is a veteran defence journalist covering Indo-Pacific security, military affairs and geopolitics. His reporting focuses primarily on Chinese military...

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Gabriel Dominguez and Dannie Peng in Beijing

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Japan's latest defence white paper warns of China's growing ability to sustain military operations farther into the western Pacific Ocean, while pledging to bolster its own monitoring systems, strike capabilities and ammunition production.

Released on Tuesday, the 610-page document cautions that Beijing is strengthening its aircraft carrier force as it steadily improves its capacity to operate in more distant seas and airspace.

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US State Department to close consulates in Canada, Japan and Indonesia, sources say

The State Department did not confirm the closures but said it was focused on ensuring that America's diplomatic footprint was efficient

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**Reuters**

Published: 7:21am, 4 Aug 2026

The US State Department has notified Congress that it plans to close five foreign missions in a rare downsizing of America's global diplomatic footprint, according to people familiar with the notice.

In the notice sent to some congressional committees late last week, the State Department said it planned to close its posts in St George's, Grenada; Nagoya, Japan; Medan, Indonesia; Douala, Cameroon; and Winnipeg, Canada. The people familiar with the notice spoke on condition of anonymity because the notice was not public.

The expected closures, which have not been previously reported, represent a rare example of the United States closing multiple foreign missions in a downsizing that is not tied to a particular geopolitical event.

Early last year, during the opening months of the Trump administration, the State Department began preparations to shut down nearly a dozen foreign missions, Reuters and other media outlets reported at the time, as part of a broader push by the Republican president to transform the US bureaucracy so that it is fully aligned with his "America First" agenda.

The White House Office of Management and Budget had advocated for an even more ambitious closure programme, targeting up to 30 foreign missions. Some administration officials have privately argued that some smaller foreign missions are inessential and not cost effective.

Democrats and some former foreign policy and national security officials argue that cuts to the US diplomatic footprint – coupled with the dismantling of the US Agency for International Development, which provided billions of dollars worth of aid globally – risk undermining American leadership, while leaving a dangerous vacuum for adversaries such as China and Russia to fill.

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