

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2318

To develop a strategy for deploying ground-based theater-range missiles in the Indo-Pacific region, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 13, 2023

Ms. ERNST introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To develop a strategy for deploying ground-based theater-range missiles in the Indo-Pacific region, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Rings of Fire Act of
5 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. INDO-PACIFIC MISSILE STRATEGY.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
8 ings:

9 (1) The 2022 National Defense Strategy states:
10 “The [People’s Republic of China (PRC)] has ex-

1 panded and modernized nearly every aspect of the
2 [People’s Liberation Army (PLA)], with a focus on
3 offsetting U.S. military advantages. The PRC is
4 therefore the pacing challenge for the Department.”.

5 (2) The 2020 report of the Department of De-
6 fense entitled “Annual Report to Congress Involving
7 the People’s Republic of China” states that—

8 (A) “[t]he PRC has more than 1,250
9 ground-launched ballistic missiles (GLBMs) and
10 ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) with
11 ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers. The
12 United States currently fields one type of con-
13 ventional GLBM with a range of 70 to 300 kil-
14 ometers and no GLCMs.”; and

15 (B) “[i]n 2021, the [People’s Liberation
16 Army Rocket Force] launched approximately
17 135 ballistic missiles for testing and training.
18 This was more than the rest of the world com-
19 bined excluding ballistic missile employment in
20 conflict zones.”.

21 (3) In 2019, the United States withdrew from
22 the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty,
23 which eliminated ground-launched ballistic and
24 cruise missiles with a range capability between 500
25 and 5,500 kilometers and their associated launchers,

1 due to the Russian Federation’s continuing violation
2 of the treaty.

3 (4) The United States does not deploy or de-
4 velop ground-based intermediate-range missiles.

5 (5) In September 2021, the United States en-
6 tered a security partnership with the United King-
7 dom and Australia (commonly known as
8 “AUKUS”). In April 2022, AUKUS leaders com-
9 mitted to “commence new trilateral cooperation on
10 hypersonic technologies, counter-hypersonic defense
11 systems, and electronic warfare capabilities, as well
12 as to deepen cooperation . . . on defense innova-
13 tion.”.

14 (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
15 gress that—

16 (1) United States conventional ground-based
17 theater-range missile systems in the Indo-Pacific re-
18 gion provide operational and strategy utility in—

19 (A) availability of persistent, prompt, and
20 survivable strike options;

21 (B) deterrence of enemy attack or esca-
22 lation;

23 (C) imposition of operational costs on
24 enemy forces;

1 (D) responsive strikes against time-critical
2 enemy targets; and

3 (E) destruction of high-value targets to en-
4 able other joint forces; and

5 (2) an Indo-Pacific Missile Strategy should—

6 (A) provide coherent direction to concept
7 and capability development, including procure-
8 ment, deployment, and employment;

9 (B) distribute integrated capabilities at
10 operationally relevant ranges;

11 (C) coordinate and differentiate strike mis-
12 sions among United States military services and
13 its allies; and

14 (D) pursue co-development and co-produc-
15 tion of capabilities with partners, including
16 through existing institutional mechanisms.

17 (c) STRATEGY.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
19 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
20 retary of Defense shall submit to the congressional
21 defense committees (as defined in section 101 of
22 title 10, United States Code) a strategy for deploy-
23 ing ground-based theater-range missile in the Indo-
24 Pacific region.

1 (2) ELEMENTS.—The strategy required by
2 paragraph (1) shall include the following:

3 (A) An assessment of gaps in conventional
4 theater-range precision strike capabilities in the
5 area of responsibility of the United States Indo-
6 Pacific Command.

7 (B) An identification of military require-
8 ments for conventional ground-based theater-
9 range missile systems, including range, propul-
10 sion, payload, launch platform, weapon effects,
11 and other operationally relevant factors.

12 (C) An identification of prospective basing
13 locations in the area of responsibility of the
14 United States Indo-Pacific Command.

15 (D) A description of operational concepts
16 for employment, including integration with
17 short-range and multi-domain fires, in denial
18 operations in the Western Pacific.

19 (E) An identification of prospective allies
20 and institutional mechanisms for co-develop-
21 ment of new theater-range conventional mis-
22 siles.

23 (F) An assessment of the cost, schedule,
24 and feasibility of ground-based theater-range
25 missiles programs, including any potential cost-

1 sharing structure through existing institutional
2 mechanisms.

3 (G) The designation of a theater compo-
4 nent commander responsible for theater missile
5 strategy.

6 (3) FORM.—The strategy required by para-
7 graph (1) may be submitted in classified form but
8 shall include an unclassified summary.

9 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

10 (1) GROUND-BASED THEATER-RANGE MIS-
11 SILE.—The term “ground-based theater-range mis-
12 sile” means a conventional mobile ground-launched
13 ballistic or cruise missile system with a range be-
14 tween 500 and 5,500 kilometers.

15 (2) INTERMEDIATE-RANGE.—With respect to a
16 missile system, the term “intermediate-range”
17 means a missile system with a range between 3,000
18 and 5,500 kilometers.

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