



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

Strategic Digest

Vol. 2 | No. 21 | 27 November 2020

US Intercepts ICBM with BMD Platform

US Electromagnetic Spectrum Superiority Strategy, 2020

Russian Naval Logistics and Support Base in Sudan

Australia Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement

US Intercepts ICBM with BMD Platform

On 16 November 2020, the US Missile Defence Agency successfully intercepted an inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) using a Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA missile deployed on an Aegis-class destroyer, the USS John Finn. The ‘threat-representative’ ICBM was fired from Kwajalein Atoll in the Republic of Marshall Islands. It was intercepted by the SM-3 from the USS John Finn positioned in the Pacific Ocean. The interception occurred in the oceanic area northeast of Hawaii, simulating a ‘defence of Hawaii’ scenario’.



Source: stripes.com

Designated Flight Test Aegis Weapons System-44, the latest not only marks the first ever ICBM interception for the Aegis-based BMD platform but also the first from a naval platform. In addition, the Aegis-based BMD is capable of intercepting and destroying satellites

in outer space, which it first demonstrated in February 2008 using an earlier version of SM-3.

With an interception success rate of 28 out of 36, Aegis is the frontline US BMD system. It has both sea- (Afloat) and land-based (Ashore) versions, with some six ships patrolling the Pacific and five the Atlantic as well as onshore deployments in Hawaii, Poland and Romania.

The latest successful interception test fulfils a Congressional mandate to evaluate the feasibility of the SM-3 Block IIA defeating an ICBM threat before the end of 2020, a requirement that was made in the context of the missile threat from North Korea.

US Electromagnetic Spectrum Superiority Strategy, 2020

The unprecedented increase in the demand for electromagnetic spectrum, especially with the rapid rise of mobile broadband technologies such as 5G, is constraining the spectrum that has hitherto been earmarked for military purposes in the mid-band spectrum in particular. In addition, China and Russia have been integrating their military capabilities across the domains of space, cyberspace and electromagnetic spectrum. In the face of these aggregating commercial interests

and the growing capabilities of strategic rivals in the electromagnetic spectrum, the US Department of Defense (DoD) released a new Electromagnetic Spectrum Superiority Strategy (ESSS) in October 2020.

The strategy's objective is to maintain American dominance and freedom of action in the electromagnetic spectrum. It, however, does not see the electromagnetic spectrum as a separate domain of war because attaining superiority in the spectrum is fundamental to operational success on land, in the air, at sea, and in cyberspace.



Source: US Department of Defense

The ESSS builds on and supersedes the DoD's 2013 Electromagnetic Spectrum Strategy and 2017 Electronic Warfare Strategy. It also aligns the DoD's activities in the electromagnetic spectrum with the objectives of the 2017 National Security Strategy and the 2018 National Defense Strategy.

The ESSS notes that the DoD is transitioning from the traditional consideration of electromagnetic warfare as separable from spectrum management to a unified treatment of these activities as Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (EMSO), thus integrating the functions of Electromagnetic Spectrum Management and Electromagnetic Warfare.

ESSS 2020 sets five strategic goals: development of superior capabilities, building an agile and integrated EMS infrastructure, preparedness, partnerships and electromagnetic spectrum governance. These strategic goals encompass 18 distinct objectives which broadly look at improvement in technologies, acquisition of capabilities in tandem with the unfolding competition, leveraging commercial technologies, development of electromagnetic battle management systems, providing dedicated intelligence for electromagnetic spectrum, interoperable architectures and standards, training and expertise building, incorporation of new concepts and doctrine into military education, and unification of the Department-wide activities in the electromagnetic spectrum.

Russian Naval Logistics and Support Base in Sudan

On 16 November 2020, Russia announced the plan to establish a naval logistics and support base in Sudan. The base facilities will reportedly be constructed near the Sudanese Navy's main base at Flamingo Bay, which is situated just north of

Port Sudan, the country's main port city on the Red Sea. As per the draft agreement hosted on Russia's Official Internet Portal of Legal Information, the proposed base will have facilities to support nuclear powered ships, berthing space for up to four warships at a time, and be staffed by 300 personnel. While Port Sudan has been hosting Russian warships in accordance with a cooperation agreement signed in 2017, the new facility will be the Russia's first official military base on the African continent since the fall of the Soviet Union, and the second naval facility abroad after Tartus in Syria.



The Red Sea has long represented a critical link in a network of global waterways stretching from the Mediterranean to the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The region has seen intense geopolitical jostling for influence in recent years. Djibouti hosts military bases of the United States, China, France (including German and Spanish contingents), Japan and Italy. In addition, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey are seeking to expand their influence on the Red Sea coast, including through commercial ports and military outposts.

Amidst such intense geopolitical jostling, Russia has been striving for a strategic presence in the Horn of Africa. It had initially endeavoured, without success, to join the club of foreign militaries in Djibouti. It has also been pursuing basing facilities in the Port of Berbera in Somaliland and Massawa Port in Eritrea. While no concrete details of Russia's presence in the Red Sea have been divulged so far, the latest declaration about the establishment of the logistics base in Sudan indicates Moscow's seriousness about expanding its military footprint in the region.

Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement

Following six years of negotiations, Japan and Australia have agreed in principle on a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) during Prime Minister Scott Morrison's visit to Tokyo. The RAA's objective is to deepen cooperation and improve interoperability between the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the Australian Defence Force during joint exercises and disaster relief operations. It does that through agreed upon procedures and grant of legal status to each other's visiting military personnel in their territory.

This is the second such agreement that Japan has signed, the first and only one so far being the Status of Forces Agreement with the United States. To become operational, however, the RAA needs to be ratified by the Japanese Diet. Like in the case of US forces, Australian forces in Japanese territory would be covered under the legal ambit of Article 95-2 of the Self-Defense Forces law.



Source: news18.com

Australia-Japan security cooperation has been growing steadily since they signed the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2007. The two countries declared a Special Strategic Partnership in 2014. RAA is expected to form the “key plank” in their responses to an increasingly challenging security environment in the

Indo-Pacific. The United States has welcomed the Japan-Australia agreement since it would bolster military cooperation between its two main allies in the region as well as benefit trilateral cooperation among the three countries in the region.