



China's New Road-Mobile ICBM DF-41 Officially Unveiled

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 October, China held a large military parade in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. The Chinese military used the occasion to show off a number of pieces of new equipment, including a new road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the DF-41.

According to the accompanying article, the DF-41 is a “mainstay of China’s...nuclear deterrent.” While China maintains a small number of silo-based DF-5 ICBMs, it has historically pursued mobile launch systems for its ballistic missiles to improve their survivability in a conflict. Adoption of an off-road-capable transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) gives the missile a much greater range of launch and concealment positions.

Separate Chinese media reporting on the DF-41 noted that the missile has a range of 14,000 and can carry up to ten independently targetable nuclear warheads. However, there is a compromise between distance and “throw weight”—the number of warheads and penetration aids (decoys) that a missile can carry—and the missile likely carries considerably fewer when fired to maximum range.

Researchers using commercial imagery previously identified what appears to be a nuclear silo for the DF-41, likely used as part of testing the missile. Reporting in *China Daily* in 2017 claimed that it could be launched from trains and silos as well as the road-mobile configuration.

The DF-41 was accompanied by 16 DF-31AG missiles, an improved version of the DF-31 mobile ICBM. The smaller missile was until the development of the DF-41 China's most capable and survivable land-based nuclear deterrent, with an estimated range of 11,200km and the ability to carry between 1-3 warheads.

Further highlighting the improvements to China's strategic and nuclear deterrence was the appearance of the DF-17, a medium-range ballistic missile equipped with a hypersonic glide vehicle. While all ballistic missiles' warheads are hypersonic, glide vehicles are more maneuverable, make use of specialized materials and shaping to travel further and follow a less predictable (and therefore easy to shoot down) trajectory.

For many decades the Chinese military has keenly felt the strategic imbalance between itself and the superpowers due to its much smaller nuclear arsenal. These new systems, in conjunction with expanding numbers of Type 094 ballistic missile submarines, are a step toward greater parity. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

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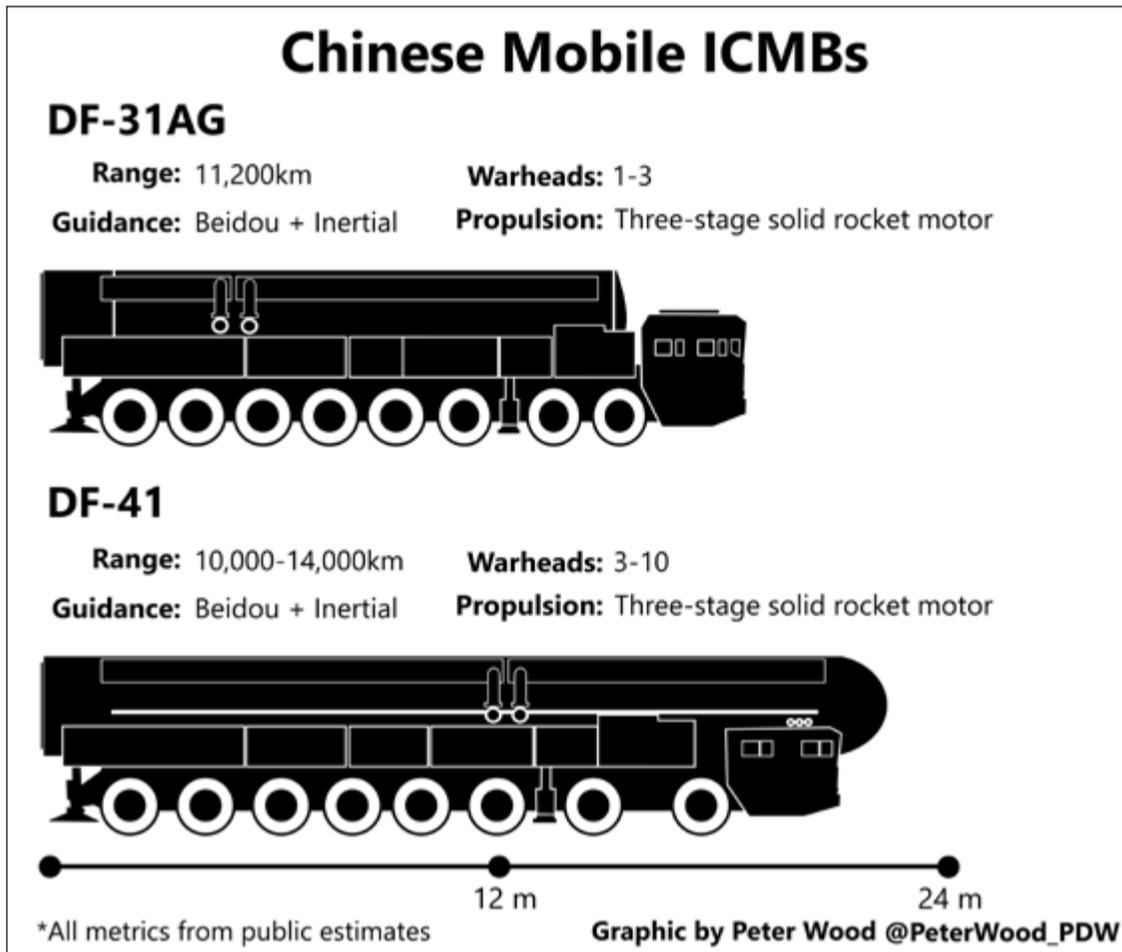
Source: “China unveils most advanced Dongfeng-41 intercontinental strategic nuclear missiles,” *China Military Online*, 1 October 2019. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-10/01/content_9642096.htm

China unveiled Dongfeng-41 intercontinental strategic nuclear missiles, the country’s most advanced and powerful deterrent, in a National Day military parade in central Beijing Tuesday.

A formation consisting of 16 new-type strategic nuclear missile launchers carrying Dongfeng-41 passed through Tian’anmen Square in the massive parade in celebration of the 70th founding anniversary of the People’s Republic of China.

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The formation is made up of two missile brigades from the rocket force.



Chinese Mobile ICBMs.
Image by Peter Wood