Today's Insight

**Missile Defense: Targeting a Technological Solution** | Will Edwards, The Cipher Brief
A key challenge for developing missile defense systems lies in the speed and unpredictability of an offensive missile. The defender must react to the threat without knowing precisely where the launch will come from or where it will go. Therefore, any defense inevitably trades response time for information - the longer the defender waits, the more information there is on where the missile is going, but there is less time to react.

Expert Commentary

**The Sky is [not] the Limit: the Evolution of the Standard Missile** | Mitch Stevison, Vice President, Raytheon
Ballistic missile threats continue to advance, and in the same way, the Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) is evolving with the help of innovative engineering. A “crawl, walk, run” development approach that builds on proven systems has created an unparalleled ballistic missile killer. It destroys short-to-intermediate range ballistic missiles in space by colliding with its target – like hitting a bullet with a bullet. The SM-3 is the only missile in existence today that can be launched from a ship at sea or from land, offering extraordinary versatility to the warfighter.

**Defense Policy Review: A Ripe Opportunity** | Thomas Nagel, Senior Fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies
In November 2014, Navy and Army heads General Raymond Odierno and Admiral Jonathan Greenert sent an “eight-star memo” to then-secretary of defense Chuck Hagel, noting that budget pressures had allowed evolving missile threats to outpace defenses and called for a comprehensive strategic review. In reply, Hagel noted that a new Joint Capability Mix (JCM) study would begin, hopefully in time to inform the 2017 budget. As it turns out, the Joint Integrated Air and Missile Defense Office (JIAMDO) has just now concluded a new JCM to help inform the 2018 and subsequent budgets.

Today's Column: Fine Print

**Watching a Three-Ring Circus** | Walter Pincus, The Cipher Brief
Soon it will be apparent to enough Republicans in Congress that only a joint House-Senate committee, an independent special counsel, or bipartisan special commission can undertake investigating these many elements enveloping Trump’s White House.

Podcasts

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15 Minutes
This week, The Cipher Brief's Executive Producer and Reporter Leone Lakhani speaks to John Nixon, author of Debriefing The President: The Interrogation of Saddam Hussein. John – who spent much of his career profiling Saddam – was the first CIA analyst to question the Iraqi leader after his capture. In this interview, John describes the interrogation process, and the challenges of analyzing high-profile targets like Saddam.

Listen to 15 Minutes with John Nixon on Interrogating Saddam Hussein (Part 2) - or listen on iTunes.

Click here to listen to Part 1.

Don't Miss On The Cipher Brief

Trump Signs Revised Travel Ban, Excludes Iraq | Mackenzie Weinger, The Cipher Brief
The new order, signed by Trump without any media present, goes into effect on March 16. While the ban was re-tweaked and narrowed in an effort to address the court challenges against the original version, it will continue to face legal scrutiny. And experts still question the national security justification the administration has claimed is behind Trump's order.

Russia-Gulf Arab States: A Marriage of Convenience | Leone Lakhani, The Cipher Brief
At the region's largest defense fair, IDEX, this month, the UAE awarded $1.9 billion in military contracts to Russia, including one to Russia’s Rosoboronexport. That consisted of anti-armor missiles, and training and support to the UAE armed forces.

Iran Strategy Must Balance Deterrence with Diplomacy | Thomas Buonomo, Geopolitical Analyst, Stratas Advisors
Even if he continues to scorn negotiations with the U.S. on regional issues, the 77-year-old Khamenei may soon follow his late revolutionary companion Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who passed away in January at 82. This could open new diplomatic opportunities however improbable they appear at present. The U.S. should plant the diplomatic seeds for this now, maximizing the 10-year window of opportunity the Iran nuclear agreement provides to pursue a more transformational evolution in relations.

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The Cipher Take
North Korea Test Fires 4 Missiles
Pyongyang tested four missiles on Monday, three of which traveled more than 600 miles and landed within 200 nautical miles of Japan. While the type of missile was not immediately known, the range indicated that these were intermediate range ballistic missiles. In official statements, the United States, South Korea, and Japan protested the action, while Russia and China urged restraint by all parties.

The Cipher Take:
While the specific missile type remains unclear at this time, experts are in agreement that this was not an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test and was likely an intermediate range missile, such as a Musudan or the newer Bugkuksong that was launched in February. An ICBM test would be a more serious provocation, second only to a nuclear test. Whatever the type, the missiles are in violation of UN Security Council resolutions and could result in more economic sanctions on North Korea. Pyongyang tested the missiles amidst a joint military exercise between the U.S. and South Korea, and as China’s National Party Congress holds its annual meeting. It was likely meant to be a signal to all three countries.

The latest tests also coincided with the publication of a New York Times report that indicated the U.S. has been attempting to sabotage the North Korean missile program through cyber capabilities. Some of the details of the program were buried in publicly available congressional hearing reports that suggest it has been ongoing for at least three years. Whether the U.S. program has been successful is not publicly known, but it did coincide with an uptick in missile test failures last year.