

# China Reports Strategic Missile Test Involving Third-Generation Nuclear Submarine

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Surface ships and submarines of the People's Liberation Army Navy Northern Theater Command sail in this image published on October 20, 2020. | Chinese People's Liberation Army Northern Theater Command/China, PLA, submarines, Northern, Theater

Chinese state media has reported that China's Long March series of nuclear submarines has reached its third generation and successfully conducted a test launch of a submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in the Pacific earlier in 2026. The disclosure, published by the official Xinhua News Agency, marks the first public indication that a third-generation Chinese nuclear submarine has conducted such a test. China's third generation of nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarines (SSBNs) is associated with the Type 096 class. As the Type 096 is the only known third-generation Chinese submarine design intended for intercontinental ballistic-missile launches, it is the most likely candidate for the test, although Beijing has not confirmed the submarine's class.

## **China's Naval Modernisation Reflects the Strength of Its Industrial Base**

China's ability to develop, test and field a sizeable fleet of modern nuclear-powered submarines is a direct result of its strong and growing industrial base, built through the CPC's long-term strategic planning over the past 13 years. The test of an ICBM from a third-generation submarine marks a potential turning point in China's global power projection and nuclear deterrence. In 2025, China accounted for 56.1% of global shipbuilding output by deadweight tonnage, maintaining its position as the world's largest shipbuilding nation for the sixteenth consecutive year.

