

»» NEWSLETTER ««



OVERVIEW

»»»	LATEST HCOC NEWS	
	<u>QATAR ANNOUNCES ITS SUBSCRIPTION TO THE CODE</u>	<u>P.1</u>
	<u>CHILE TAKES OVER AS NEW HCOC CHAIR</u>	<u>P.1</u>
	<u>LOOKING BACK AT THE IRISH CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE HCOC</u>	<u>P.2</u>
»»»	NEWS ABOUT THE PROJECT	
	<u>SIDE-EVENT IN THE MARGINS OF THE ARM</u>	<u>P.3</u>
	<u>MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL SEMINAR ORGANISED IN THE UAE</u>	<u>P.4</u>
	<u>HCOC RESEARCH PAPER NO.13 PUBLISHED</u>	<u>P.4</u>
»»»	NEWS ABOUT BALLISTIC MISSILES AND LAUNCHERS	
	<u>IRANIAN MISSILES REPORTEDLY SHIPPED TO RUSSIA</u>	<u>P.5</u>
	<u>MISSILES LAUNCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST</u>	<u>P.5</u>
	<u>SELECTED MISSILE TEST LAUNCHES</u>	<u>P.6</u>
	<u>SELECTED SLV LAUNCHES</u>	<u>P.6</u>
»»»	SELECTED PUBLICATIONS	<u>P.7</u>
»»»	INFORMATION AND CONTACT	<u>P.7</u>



QATAR ANNOUNCES ITS SUBSCRIPTION TO THE CODE



Qatar subscribed to the Hague Code of Conduct on 11 March 2024, thus becoming the fourth Middle Eastern state to do so, joining Türkiye, Jordan and Iraq.

Just a few weeks prior to this announcement, the Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS) held a [seminar](#) in Dubai (UAE), to discuss current trends and future developments regarding missile proliferation with experts from the region.

There are now [145 countries](#) around the globe that subscribed to the Code.

CHILE TAKES OVER AS NEW HCOC CHAIR



On 11-12 April 2024, subscribing states gathered at the Vienna International Centre to attend the **Annual Regular Meeting of the HCoC**.

As customary, the Annual Regular Meeting was the occasion for the current Chair, Ambassador O’Leary from the Republic of Ireland, to hand over the position to Ambassador Alex Wetzig Abdale from Chile.



***Alex Wetzig Abdale** holds a degree in History and is a Professor of History and Geography from the Catholic University of Valparaíso.*

After graduating from the Diplomatic Academy “Andrés Bello”, he served in the Chilean Embassies in the Czech Republic and France; in the Mission to the European Union, in Belgium, and in the Delegation to UNESCO, where he was Deputy Permanent Representative.

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he worked in the Directorates of South America, Planning, General of Foreign Policy, General of International Economic Relations and in the Cabinet of the Minister. He was Director of Energy, Science and Technology and Innovation and has served as Secretary General of Foreign Policy.

LOOKING BACK ON THE IRISH CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE HCoC

For the year 2023-2024, Irish Ambassador Eoin O'Leary served as chair of the HCoC. He spoke to us about his experience and the importance of the Hague Code of Conduct.



HOW CAN YOU SUM UP THIS YEAR OF CHAIRING THE CODE?

It has been a very interesting year and I have very much enjoyed the engagement with the subscribing states and indeed the newer states that have joined us during my chairmanship. I have certainly seen how vital the Code is as our international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture has come under even more severe strain in the past. We must reinforce the existing structures and institutions and ensure their full implementation through joint efforts and exchanges, e.g. in various outreach activities I have been involved in throughout my chair. The Code is still quite a new instrument, having entered into force in November 2002. Despite this, it has already attracted impressive membership with the current number of Subscribing States to the HCoC standing at 145. The latest Subscribing State, Qatar, joined just last month. Throughout Ireland's chairmanship, which I took in June 2023 and will still hold until the Code's annual regular meeting next month, I take the opportunity to further strengthen the Code and support the well-established cooperation and trust-building measures between Subscribing States in the field of ballistic missile proliferation. Together with the Secretariat of the HCoC (Immediate Central Contact), I stand ready to provide any information that States interested in joining the HCoC may require.

HOW DO YOU ASSESS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CODE IN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT?



The HCoC remains a key transparency and confidence-building measure, reducing the risks of misperception, miscalculation, and unwanted escalation. The HCoC proves to be a key instrument in the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture as we see the number of countries using ballistic missiles, both for military and peaceful uses, e.g. for space launches, increasing and programmes getting more and more sophisticated. In other words, the impact of ballistic missiles on international peace and security more broadly is growing. At the same time, with no legal regimes in the horizon, it is one tool we have in this area and is open to all states. Particularly, in light of current geopolitical tensions, the HCoC is a crucial multilateral transparency instrument. The fact that all decisions within the Code are taken based on consensus builds a common ground among Subscribing States and further contributes to their convergence. The Code builds trust and confidence between States, prevents miscalculations and is a key tool to reduce the risk of destabilisation. In doing so, it has the potential to play an important role to ease current tensions in the nuclear field and contribute more in other areas, possibly including the space domain.



HOW CAN THE HCoC BETTER INTERACT WITH OTHER INSTRUMENTS AIMING AT CURBING THE PROLIFERATION OF MISSILES?

The HCoC is a crucial multilateral transparency instrument. The Code has also become increasingly pertinent due to its role in the space domain. Not only do we see an unprecedented number of launches – including by private actors – but we also see a clear increase in the number of countries establishing their own launchers. With the advent of ever-smaller satellites and the added value of space assets, this will likely only continue to grow. The HCoC will be essential in order to prevent misunderstanding and miscalculation in light of these increasingly dense skies.

SIDE EVENT IN THE MARGINS OF THE ARM



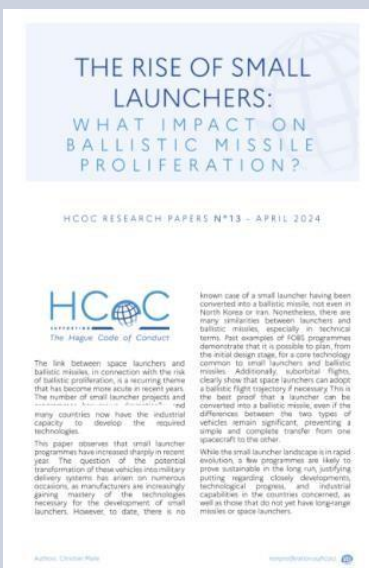
In the margins of the **Annual Regular Meeting of the HCoC**, the Foundation for Strategic Research, which is in charge of implementing the Code's dedicated support project, organised a side event focused on the role of Code as a risk reduction measure.

After reflecting on the current level of support for the Code and recent events organised, including the invitation of international observers to the Republic of Korea to visit the Naro Space Centre, the session started by outlining priorities for the year ahead. Those include cooperation between past and current Chairs to promote the HCoC, putting emphasis on the goal of universalisation to encourage major actors who have yet to subscribe to it to do so, as well as encouraging open discussion about the Code and what it entails.

The 75 attendees enjoyed remarks from the new Chair, as well as presentations on national risk reduction initiatives, the role played by HCoC in limiting the risk of misunderstanding and misinterpreting actions, and more broadly on the role played by risk reduction in the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Find the list of speakers and more information about the event [here](#).



THE RISE OF SMALL LAUNCHERS: WHAT IMPACT ON BALLISTIC MISSILE PROLIFERATION?



In this [paper](#), Christian Maire notes that small launcher programmes have increased sharply in recent years. Their potential transformation into military delivery systems has been debated on numerous occasions, as manufacturers become able to operate the necessary technologies. However, to date, there is no known case of a small launcher having been converted into a ballistic missile – not even in North Korea or Iran. There are nonetheless many similarities between launchers and ballistic missiles, especially when looking at them through a technical lens.

While the differences between the two types of vehicles remain significant and prevent a simple and complete transfer from one spacecraft to the other, a launcher could still in theory be converted into a ballistic missile. One should therefore monitor developments, technological progress and industrial capabilities of countries that have long-range missiles and/or space launchers, but also those who have yet to do so.

MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL SEMINAR ORGANISED IN THE UAE



Thanks to the support of the European Union, the Foundation for Strategic Research is able to organise a series of seminars all over the globe to spread awareness on the role of the Hague Code of Conduct.

In January 2024, the FRS and the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre (B’huth) thus co-organised a seminar in Dubai (UAE) to engage with representatives from 10 countries and key actors from the region.



The seminar was an opportunity to evoke the Code and exchange views on its impact on global and regional security. The participation of international and regional experts, along that of the Chair and the Executive Secretariat, enabled the audience to discuss the overall goal and the main features of the Code.



Specific sessions were also organised to discuss missile proliferation concerns in the region. It was recalled that the level of use of ballistic missiles since 2015 has been unprecedented, with at least 162 missiles intercepted between 2015 and 2022. Despite regular interception, ballistic missiles remain destabilising for a number of reasons, ranging from their psychological effect to the difficulty of striking preemptively on mobile and hidden launchers. When used by non-state actors, they provide them with military advantage and act as a propaganda tool that may elevate tensions to regional level. The last session was indeed an opportunity to put the discussion in perspective with ongoing space developments in the Middle East. After introducing some general elements in the field of space, which are leading to a major increase in space assets in orbit, the focus shifted to a more regional perspective. Other issues addressed by participants included the importance of cooperation in the region despite current difficulties, as well as the possibility of doing regional or bilateral confidence building measures and the importance of interpersonal and military exchanges. Report, pictures and videos about the seminar [here](#).




IRANIAN MISSILES REPORTEDLY SHIPPED TO RUSSIA

➤➤➤ In February 2024, six sources interviewed by [Reuters](#) indicated that Iran has provided Russia with ballistic missiles. Such transfer reportedly entailed 400 missiles, including missiles from the Fateh-110 family of short-range ballistic weapons. Following talks in Moscow in late 2023 and the announcement by the Russian Foreign Ministry that it expected a new cooperation treaty to be signed thereafter, Iran's shipment of the weapons may have begun in January and was understood to be split between transit by plane and by ship through the Caspian Sea. At least four more shipments are expected to happen by an Iranian official interviewed by Reuters. While this information has been so far denied by [Iran](#), G7 leaders issued a [statement condemning the transfer on 15 March](#).

Commentators pointed to the expiry of UN Security Council sanctions on Iranian exports of some missiles, drones and other technologies, which ended in October 2023, as a facilitating factor in the shipment. With the end of the arms embargo, sanctioning Iran for supplying missiles became voluntary, thus making a potential transfer easier to happen. Conscious of this fact, European countries and the United States continue to [uphold sanctions](#) on missile exports after the end of the sanctions.

MISSILES LAUNCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

On the evening of 13 April, [Iran simultaneously launched a number of missiles and drones at Israel](#). The operation, coined 'True Promise', was said to include about 170 drones, 120 surface-to-surface ballistic missiles, and 30 cruise missiles. It came in retaliation to an Israeli airstrike on April 1 against an Iranian diplomatic base in Damascus, Syria, which killed seven officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The attack was notable for its scale, which involved about [ten times the number of ballistic missiles Iran had previously used](#). 

State-run media in Iran [claimed](#) the operation used Emad and Kheibar Shekan-1 ballistic missiles and Paveh cruise missiles, while other reports mentioned the possible use of Ghadr ballistic missiles. Inconsistencies did arise within official channels, as mentions of the Fattah hypersonic missiles were made along that of older models. [Reports](#) so far indicate that at minimum, the attack entailed Paveh land-attack cruise missiles, Kheibar Shekan solid-propellant medium-range ballistic missiles and Emad and Ghadr liquid-propellant medium-range ballistic missiles. State media mentioned also the use of Shahed drones, which were confirmed by reports as Shahed-131 and -136 variants. On 16 April, the [Israel Defense Forces \(IDF\) pulled out an 11-metre long piece of one of the ballistic missiles](#) that had crashed into the Dead Sea. Analysis of released photographs and statements aligns with the specifications of the Iranian Emad missile.

On 18 April, Israel responded to the attack with [airstrikes](#) near Isfahan and Tabriz, Iranian territory. [Reporting](#) indicates that Israel fired multiple missiles from outside Iran. One missile reportedly struck its target, while a second detonated mid-air.

[Post-attack images](#) show damage done to a S-300 mobile radar, deployed on the Isfahan Air Base, near Natanz. The radar appears damaged, though the extent of the damage remains unclear. There is so far no official confirmation on the weapons used by Israel. According to [experts](#), an air-launched two-stage missile was probably used. Many identify the debris with Israeli-produced Blue Sparrow missile series, [some](#) pointing to it being the ROCKS. If confirmed, this would be the first use in combat of this air-launched ballistic missile developed by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd. Incidentally, this weapon was also tested by the Indian Air Force in April 2024.

SELECTED MISSILE TEST LAUNCHES

Trident II-D5:

- 30 January 2024

Failure of a sea-launch test from [HMS Vanguard](#) of the United Kingdom's nuclear-armed SLBM system, which makes it the second successive failure following one in 2016 from HMS Vengeance.

Hwasong-18:

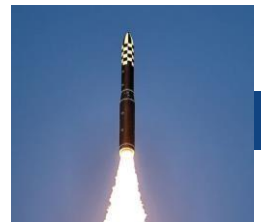
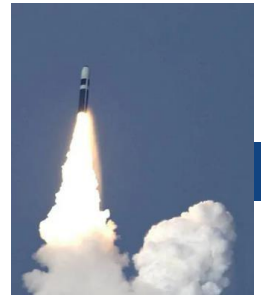
- 18 December 2023

First test of North Korea's newest [ICBM](#), launched from a site east of Pyongyang. The missile reached an altitude of 6,518 km, flying 1,002 km and accurately hitting the intended target according to state media.

Agni-V MIRV:

- 11 March 2024

Test of the indigenously-developed [Agni-V](#) from India, launched from a site located on Abdul Kalam Island, off the coast of the eastern part of the country, for the first time in a MIRVed configuration.



SELECTED SLV LAUNCHES

Vulcan Centaur:

- 08 January 2024

First launch of the [Vulcan Centaur](#), the new heavy launcher of United Launch Alliance, which carried Astrobotic's private Peregrine moon lander. The launch was a success but the spacecraft failed to land on the moon and was destroyed after six days in orbit.

Gravity-1:

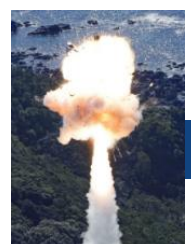
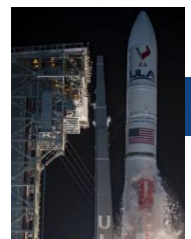
- 11 January 2024

Chinese company Orienspace's [Gravity-1](#) lifted off for the first time and successfully deployed three Yunyao-1 commercial satellites into their planned orbit. This launch makes Gravity-1 the most powerful Chinese commercial rocket and solid-fuel launcher to successfully complete an orbital mission.

KAIROS:

- 13 March 2024

Japanese [KAIROS rocket](#) by private company Space One undertook its inaugural launch on 13 March 2024, however the vehicle exploded five seconds after liftoff as a result of the activation of the autonomous flight termination system. Causes of the launch failure remain under investigation.



SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Conflict Armament Research, 'Documenting a North Korean missile in Ukraine', *Ukraine Field Dispatch*, [CAR](#), January 2024.
- Conflict Armament Research, North Korean missile relies on recent electronic components, *Ukraine Field Dispatch*, [CAR](#), February 2024.
- Jürgen Altmann, Mathias Pilch and Dieter Suter, *Preventive Arms Control for Small Armed Aircraft and Missiles*, [DSF](#), 2023.
- Masao Dahlgren, *Getting on Track, Space and Airborne Sensors for Hypersonic Missile Defense*, [CSIS](#), 18 December 2023.
- Antoine Levesques, *Pakistan missile test confirms its MIRV ambitions*, Missile Dialogue Initiative, [IISS](#), 7 November 2023.
- Christian Maire, 'The Rise of Small Launchers: What Impact on Missile Proliferation?', [HCoC Research Paper n°13](#), April 2024.
- Christian Maire and Stéphane Delory, 'Analyse de l'ICBM Hwasongpho-18 (HS-18)', *Notes de la FRS*, [Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique](#), January 2024.
- Frederick Mertens, *The Dangers and Limitations of the Russian Missile Campaign*, [The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies](#), 11 January 2024.
- Natalya Romashko, *Missions Beyond Language: Submarine Missile Elimination in Russia*, [Stanley Center for Peace and Security](#), 30 November 2023.
- Daniel Salisbury and Darya Dolzikova, 'Profiting from Proliferation? North Korea's Exports of Missile and Nuclear Technology', *Occasional Papers*, [RUSI](#), 15 December 2023.
- Wilfred Wan and Nivedita Raju, *Escalation Risks at the Space–Nuclear Nexus*, *SIPRI Research Policy Papers*, [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute](#), February 2024.
- Lauriane Héau et Kolja Brockmann, 'Intangible Transfers of Technology and Software: Challenges for the Missile Technology Control Regime,' [SIPRI](#), April 2024.

INFORMATION AND CONTACT

- Organisation website: [Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique](#)
- Further information on the project implementation available [here](#).
- Project website: [Supporting the Hague Code of Conduct](#).

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