China’s arms transfers have become the focus of considerable attention. In the 1980s, China emerged as a major supplier of conventional weapons to the developing world. More recently, China’s transfers of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons technology, as well as equipment and materials that could be used in the manufacture of chemical and biological weapons, have seized world attention, particularly in the United States. This study documents China’s principal arms-transfer relationships, analyzes the motivations of supplier and recipients, evaluates which arms transfers are of greatest concern, and identifies possible constraints on China’s arms sales. It then assesses the threat posed by the transfers.

This study is part of a larger, multiyear project on “Chinese Defense Modernization and Its Implications for the U.S. Air Force.” Other reports from this project include:


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PROJECT AIR FORCE

Project AIR FORCE, a division of RAND, is the Air Force federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) for studies and analysis. It provides the Air Force with independent analysis of policy alternatives affecting the development, employment, combat readiness, and support of current and future aerospace forces. Research is performed in four programs: Aerospace Force Development; Manpower, Personnel, and Training; Research Management; and Strategy and Doctrine.