

Did Russia Really “Steal” American Hypersonic Technology? Or Does the U.S. “Lag Far Behind”?

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On October 23, [former US President Donald Trump held a rally in Derry, New Hampshire](#). During the speech, Trump made several accusations on the account of his predecessor Barack Obama. Among other things, he claimed that the latter was responsible for Russia’s ability to build “super-duper rockets”, a colloquialism of Trump’s mint that broadly refers to hypersonic weapons.

“Russia stole the super. We call them the super-dupers, right? They go superfast. They stole that during the Obama administration. They stole the plans. It was all very highly classified. They stole the plans and they built it,” [he said at the rally](#).

Trump didn’t go into details about the supposed “intellectual property theft” and given the rather rudimentary phraseology he used (or the complete lack thereof), he probably couldn’t.

Trump’s extremely limited understanding of advanced military technology, combined with an attempt to appease his potential voters resulted in an “unfortunate” choice of words. While it’s true that the United States has a number of hypersonic weapons programs, [the reality is that the country lags far behind](#) both Russia and China in terms of deployment and weapons capabilities. Worse yet, even regional powers such as North Korea and Iran are now either on par with the US or have even eclipsed it in both the deployment and the overall performance of such weapons.

Currently, the weapons Washington DC can field are nonexistent. As previously mentioned, the Pentagon is working on several programs, but is nowhere near an operational weapon, despite claims and futile attempts to present itself as a global leader in such technologies.

On the other hand, [Russia has already deployed HGVs \(Hypersonic Glide Vehicles\) and HCMs \(Hypersonic Cruise Missiles\)](#), both ship and ground-based, as well as air-launched hypersonic

missiles that aren't based on either, but a highly maneuverable propulsion technology derived from earlier ballistic missiles (primarily the legendary Soviet-era "Oka-U"). Thus, the claim that Russia "stole" the required technology from the US under the Obama administration is completely illogical, [given that Washington DC is the one significantly lagging behind Moscow](#), not vice versa.

Another important thing to note is that it's also impossible to just "give" someone such advanced technology as if it were a physical object that one loses the moment they part ways with it.

This laughable claim has been parroted by many US officials in an attempt to support the myth of America's supposed "technological superiority".

[In order to better understand just how far behind the US is](#), we'll use the example of HGVs only, without going into details about other types of weapons that the belligerent thalassocracy is years away from deployment. Publicly available stats of deployed and prospective strategic HGVs are certainly not conclusive, as the actual data is indeed highly classified. However, the information published so far indicates the following.

Russian "Avangard" HGV: maximum speed - Mach 28 (34301.23 km/h or 9.6 km/s). Operational status - Active (2019).

China's DF-ZF HGV: speed - classified, presumed to be between Mach 5 (6,173 km/h or 1.7 km/s) and Mach 10 (12,360 km/h or 3.4 km/s). Operational status - Active (2019).

American AGM-183A ARRW: maximum speed - claimed to be Mach 8 (9,541 km/h; 2.7 km/s). Operational status - initially planned for deployment in 2023, [canceled after repeated failures and/or falsely reported "successful" launches](#).

It should be noted that the cancelation of the air-launched AGM-183A was a major setback for the US, as it came the furthest in the development of at least nine R&D programs currently underway. It's unclear if the US was motivated by the sheer embarrassment of being so far behind or some other reasoning, but the US Army officially announced it would induct the land-based LRHW (Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon) into service, [even though the weapon had no successful operational tests](#).

What's more, in early September, the Pentagon canceled testing for the third time in a row and announced it would be postponing it, which is wholly unheard of for a weapon system that's already supposed to be "operational".

Worse yet, American military experts keep parroting that the missile is ["far more advanced" than the Russian 9-A-7660 "Kinzhal"](#) because its range and speed are 2,875 km and Mach 17 (20,275 km/h or 5.8 km/s), respectively. Indeed, on paper, the LRHW's speed is approximately 50-70% greater than the "Kinzhal's". However, in reality, those numbers mean nothing, because they are based on program calculations, not actual tests. As previously mentioned, not a single operational LRHW has been fired so far. Also, it's important to understand that there is a vastly different technological approach in the development of two weapons. The "Kinzhal" is not an HGV, meaning that LRHW should be compared to "Avangard" or DF-ZF.

[Firstly, HGVs are not exactly missiles](#). Namely, they are unpowered and require a launch

vehicle or a booster. The AGM-183A ARRW that the United States recently canceled went through a rather rocky R&D process, with the weapon initially being unable to go past the Mach 5 mark, which is the bare minimum required to attain hypersonic speed (5+ times faster than the speed of sound). Lockheed Martin's R&D team projected that the weapon is capable of speeds of up to Mach 20, but encountered insurmountable obstacles while trying to achieve it. The problem mainly involves the HGV's (in)ability to survive extreme heat generated during hypersonic flight, probably resulting in the destruction of its highly sensitive microelectronics.

While the US is struggling to make a functioning HGV, which is by far the highest level of hypersonic technology a country could possibly develop, Russia is quite literally decades ahead, both in weapon capabilities and deployment. Namely, [Moscow recently rearmed half of its ICBMs \(intercontinental ballistic missiles\) with HGV warheads](#). On the other hand, Russia is also even further ahead in the development of hypersonic missiles such as the "Kinzhal" and [the scramjet-powered "Zircon"](#), in addition to a plethora of other types such as SAMs (surface-to-air missiles) and AA (air-to-air) hypersonic missiles it uses on its unrivaled air defense platforms and [superb fighter jets](#).

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