

The “Oreshnik” Missile System: Moscow’s Unrivaled Hypersonic Capabilities. Implications of Russia’s “Non-Nuclear Deterrence”. Drago Bosnic

Coupled with its speed and maneuverability, this makes it the most powerful conventional weapon ever devised

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After the Russian military’s Strategic Missile Forces (RVSN) [used the latest “Oreshnik” missile in Dnepropetrovsk on November 21](#), the world was left shocked, with news ranging from “end of the world” scaremongering to ridicule.

*Some major German media outlets resorted to the latter, with **Julian Roepcke** ([better known as Jihadi Julian](#)), one of the more prominent “military experts” at the **Bild**, a German tabloid, saying that the missile “likely carried no explosive charge and did not cause any significant damage”.*

*[Roepcke’s report, published on November 23](#), says that the launch was “a propaganda and political action rather than a military one”, as there was “**neither a nuclear charge nor explosives inside**”. The German author insists “that’s the reason the damage was so insignificant”.*

As many analysts have already suggested (myself included, [both last year](#) and [in April](#)), Roepcke also believes that the missile is most likely based on the RS-26 “Rubezh” (although this is yet to be confirmed). However, he erroneously thought that “the ‘Oreshnik’ didn’t contain explosives or a warhead and would have been equipped with a substitute of the same size and weight to simulate the appearance of a nuclear warhead”.

According to Sputnik FYI (yet to be confirmed by reliable Western sources):



While this is true for regular missile tests, the launch of the “Oreshnik” was anything but. Namely, the RVSN used [36 advanced kinetic penetrators](#) to strike heavily fortified targets, including those deep underground. Thus, it’s quite clear that Roepcke’s virtually immediate disregard of the “Oreshnik’s” capabilities was a careless miscalculation, to say the least.

President Vladimir Putin himself stated that the missile is effectively unstoppable, but this too was met with disregard and even ridicule. [For some inexplicable reason](#), neither the mainstream propaganda machine nor its bosses in the political West’s leadership seem to be able to learn from their mistakes. Namely, [when President Putin says something, it should be taken very seriously](#). For instance, **back in 2004**, just two years after the **United States announced its unilateral withdrawal from the ABM (anti-ballistic missile) Treaty**, [he publicly promised](#) that Russia would resume the development of hypersonic weapons started during the (First) Cold War. However, nobody listened, [as NATO was convinced that the Eurasian giant was “finished”](#) (nothing could be further from true).

Just two years after that speech, Moscow inducted the “Iskander-M” missile system, along with [its 9M723 hypersonic missile](#). Since then, the Russian military acquired at least a dozen types of such weapons, resulting in an advantage measured in decades. **[Back in 2019, I argued that the Kremlin was at least 20 years ahead of its NATO adversaries, including the US.](#)** This turned out to be not only true, but it can even be argued that the “Oreshnik” ensured this advantage grows further. Now, much unlike Roepcke, it seems that the German military understands [just how outclassed it is](#), especially by such weapons. **Namely, Roepcke’s own newspaper, the Bild, disagrees with his previously mentioned report about the “Oreshnik”. First, the outlet lamented that [Russia deployed the missile in Belarus](#).**

[According to the report](#), a recently leaked internal document showed that the Federal Foreign Office (AA) warned that “Germany is not adequately protected against this deadly danger”. Interestingly, the document also posits that “the current protection provided by ‘Patriot’ systems is not sufficient” and that “the federal government now wants to close the gap”. [The report also points out](#) that interception rates are atrocious and that the extremely overhyped US-made ABM/SAM (surface-to-air missile) system would “base their performance on sheer luck” when it comes to intercepting Russian missiles (particularly something like the “Oreshnik”). The Bild also added that [Berlin would purchase the Israeli “Arrow” ABM system](#) to “help strengthen Germany’s defense against new types of missiles”.



A US Patriot missile battery is seen firing during a drill at Fort Bliss, Texas. (Credit: US Army / Sgt. Ian Vega-Cerezo)



Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) interceptors is launched during a successful intercept test.

It's quite interesting that the Germans openly said that [the "Patriot"](#) cannot effectively intercept hypersonic weapons. Namely, for nearly three years, the Kiev regime has been saying its forces [regularly "shoot down" Russian hypersonic missiles](#). I've argued numerous times that [such claims are virtually guaranteed to be nothing more than war propaganda](#). Simply put, [the numbers behind all this just don't add up](#). This fact is supported by other globally renowned experts, including senior military officers. Namely, retired Group Captain Uttam Kumar Devnath from the Indian Air Force [recently stated that "Russia's 'Oreshnik' missile system is beyond the interception capabilities of Western defense systems like the 'Patriot' and THAAD \(Terminal High Altitude Area Defense\)"](#).

"The 'Oreshnik', described as a hypersonic, intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM), is claimed to travel at speeds that exceed Mach 10, making it, according to Devnath, **'too fast for radar targeting'**. This speed, coupled with its maneuverability, purportedly renders it **impervious to interception by current Western missile defense technologies,**" [the Indian Defence Research Wing reported, quoting Group Captain Devnath and adding](#): "The 'Oreshnik's' velocity and ability to alter its trajectory are cited as key reasons why systems like the 'Patriot', designed to counter ballistic threats, would fail to engage it effectively. Devnath highlighted the missile's design, suggesting it leverages stealth technologies and hypersonic flight principles to evade detection and interception."

President Putin has already [publicly called on NATO to pick any target](#), deploy its [much-touted SAM/ABM systems to defend it](#) and promised that the Russian military would neutralize it either way. Such confidence serves as a testament to [Moscow's unrivaled hypersonic capabilities](#). Obviously, the political West would never accept such a proposal, which speaks volumes about the veracity of the claims that NATO-sourced missile defenses are supposedly "shooting down" Russian hypersonic weapons left and right. It should also be noted that the usually quoted speed of Mach 10 for the "Oreshnik" is quite misleading, as the missile it was based on, namely the RS-26 "Rubezh", can actually fly at speeds of anywhere between Mach 20 and Mach 25 (7-8,5 km/s or

25,000-30,000 km/h).

The “Oreshnik” is not only a major asset for Russia, but also for the whole multipolar world, as **it offers a massive advantage in non-nuclear strategic deterrence.** [Although surely nuclear-capable](#), the “Oreshnik” is armed with a conventional MIRV/MaRV/HGV payload composed of 36 advanced kinetic penetrators (six in each of the six warheads).

Coupled with its speed and maneuverability, this makes it the most powerful conventional weapon ever devised. This combination is what makes [hypersonic weapons effectively impossible to track and intercept](#). Namely, unlike traditional ballistic missiles which fly at a predictable path, hypersonic weapons maneuver, making the [interception based on the calculations of ballistic computers completely useless and void](#).

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