

China hails a 'successful' test of a new hypersonic weapon that could slip a nuke past US defenses

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Ryan Pickrell, Business Insider

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Chinese soldiers march after the inspection of the honor guard in Beijing [Elizabeth Dalziel/AP Pool](#)

- **China claims to have successfully tested a hypersonic experimental waverider vehicle able to fly at speeds as high as Mach 6.**
- **China claims the aircraft reportedly has the potential to be used as a hypersonic strike platform capable of carrying conventional and nuclear warheads and evading modern missile defense systems.**

- **The US and Russia are also experimenting with hypersonic systems, but China's progress in this area has some observers on edge.**
- **Additional testing of the new Chinese vehicle is expected to be carried out at an accelerated pace going forward.**

China has successfully tested a new hypersonic aircraft, a potential "hypersonic strike weapon" that could one day be capable of carrying multiple nuclear warheads and evading all existing defense networks like the US missile shields, according to Chinese state-run and state-affiliated media, citing experts and the domestic designers.

The Xingkong-2 (Starry Sky-2) hypersonic experimental waverider vehicle designed by the China Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics in Beijing can reportedly achieve a top speed six times the velocity of sound.

During the recent test, conducted last Friday at an unspecified location in northwestern China, the aircraft was first carried by a multistage solid-fueled rocket before it separated to rely on independent propulsion — it is said to have maintained speeds above Mach 5.5 for 400 seconds. The max speed was reportedly Mach 6 or 4,600 miles per hour, [according](#) to the state-run China Daily.

The wedge-shaped vehicle made several high-altitude and large-angle maneuvers at a maximum altitude of a little over 18 miles. The aircraft then landed in the targeted area as intended, with observers touting the test as a "huge success."

Watch: China tests hypersonic experimental waverider vehicle

Source: [South China Morning Post](#)

Source: [Defense Daily](#)

A waverider is a type of hypersonic aircraft that rides the shock waves generated during hypersonic flight. The supersonic lift-to-drag ratio is improved through a process known as compression lift. The speed, as well as the unpredictable flight trajectories, of these vehicles make them particularly difficult for existing defense systems to intercept.

"Announcing the successful test to the public indicates that China must have already made a technological breakthrough with the weapon," Chinese military expert and commentator Song Zhongping **told** China's highly-nationalist Global Times, adding, "The test showed that China is advancing shoulder to shoulder with the US and Russia."

Like China, both the US and Russia have experimented with various hypersonic vehicle systems. Russia, for instance, is **expected** to deploy its Avangard hypersonic boost-glide vehicle on the country's Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile within the next year or so.

China's progress in this area is particularly alarming for the US, as evidence suggests that the development of these systems is a state-level priority.

"If you look at some of our peer competitors, China being one, the number of facilities that they've built to do hypersonics... surpasses the number we have in this country. It's quickly surpassing it by 2 or 3 times. It is very clear that China has made this one of their national priorities," DARPA director Steven Walker **told** Defense One in March, "We need to do the same."

US projects include the Hypersonic Technology Vehicle 2 and a hypersonic missile that could be launched from a US warplane.

China's new hypersonic aircraft is expected to be put through additional testing at an accelerated pace going forward. This first test "has laid a solid technological foundation for engineering applications of the waverider design," the China Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics said in a statement, **according** to the South China Morning Post.

China has been testing hypersonic glide vehicles since 2014, but this is the first hypersonic aircraft to use waverider technology. Expert observers suspect that the design is still three to five years away from being weaponized.