

# Russia's SS-27 Makes Bush's Missile Defense A Fantasy

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On November 2, a rather staid little story appeared on a ticker powered by Itar-Tass, a Russian News Agency. The tone was decidedly Russian-matter-of-fact and shorn of all hyperbole. It reported the test launch of a ballistic missile called the Topol RS 12 at 8:10 pm Moscow time. After taking off from the Kapustny Yar test range in the Astrakhan region, it hit the intended target at Balkhash in Kazakhstan at 8:34-24 minutes later.

"The target was precisely hit," said the report, quoting a top-ranking official from the Russian armed forces.

In conclusion, Itar-Tass added some jargon that sounded like regulation copy to most people tracking defence:

"The advanced Topol missile has three cruise engines and can develop hypersonic speed. The high thrust-to-weight ratio allows the warhead to manoeuvre on the trajectory and pass through a dense air defence system."

At that time, not many defence analysts thought much of the report. After all, Kapustny Yar, located on the banks of the Volga river, 75 miles east of Volgograd (formerly

Stalingrad), had gone to the dogs and was infrequently used. Whenever the base was lucky to see some action, all it witnessed was small payloads.

But what the mainstream media missed was analysed in great detail on internet discussion boards. For starters, something about the time mentioned in the report sounded astounding.

For anything to travel from Kapustny to Balkash in 24 minutes, it had to fly at a speed of three miles a second. That's 180 miles a minute or 10,800 miles an hour.

If the reports were indeed true, the Topol RS 12 or the Topol SS 27, as it is known in military circles around the world, had to be the fastest thing man has ever seen. And if you will for a moment excuse the breathlessness, it also represented the pinnacle of modern missile technology. Until this test, the fastest thing known to man was the X43 A. A hypersonic, unmanned plane built by NASA. It flew at 10 times the speed of sound—almost 7,200 miles per hour.

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But the Topol isn't attracting attention for its speed alone. It has got more to do with the sheer viciousness it demonstrates. A conventional intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), once deployed, takes off on the back of a booster. After attaining a certain altitude, it follows a set flight path or trajectory. When it reaches the intended target, it lets loose a set of warheads that home in on the target with devastating accuracy. Given these dynamics, military establishments build defence systems that can intercept an ICBM before it strikes. Often, the defence works.

With the Topol, these dynamics simply don't come into play. To start with, the damn thing can be manoeuvred mid-flight. This makes it practically impossible for any radar system in the world to figure out what trajectory it

will follow.

The other thing is the kind of evasion technology built into the missile. That makes it invulnerable to any kind of radiation and electromagnetic and physical interference.

Then there is the question of ground-based nuclear warheads traditionally deployed to stop ICBMs in their path. Until now, any ICBM can be taken down by detonating a nuclear warhead from as far as 10 kilometres. The Topol doesn't blink an eyelid until the time a nuclear warhead gets as close as 500 meters. But given the Topol's remarkable speed and manoeuvrability, getting a warhead that close is practically impossible.

That leaves defence establishments with only two options. Target the missile at its most vulnerable points - either when it is on the ground or when it is just being deployed (also known as the boost phase).

Apparently, the Russians have gotten around that problem, too. Unlike virtually every ICBM that exists on some military base or the other, the Topol doesn't have to be on a static base. All it needs is the back of a truck. And trucks can be driven anywhere, anytime. That makes it practically impossible for any country to monitor how many of these missiles have been deployed and where.

Writes Scott Ritter, a former intelligence officer and weapons inspector in the Soviet Union and Iraq in the Christian Science Monitor:

"The Bush administration's dream of a viable NMD has been rendered fantasy by the Russian test of the SS-27 Topol-M.. To counter the SS-27 threat, the US will need to start from scratch."

But when you're done marvelling at the technology, sit

back for a moment and consider this. You thought the cold war was over. You thought wrong. Cold War II has just begun. And the world just became a more dangerous place.

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To recap the SS-27 'highlights'...

The Topol SS 27 can be manoeuvred mid-flight. this makes it impossible for radar systems to figure out its flight path.

It is invulnerable to radiation and electromagnetic and physical interference.

It can be mounted on the back of a truck, which makes it difficult to monitor how many of these missiles have been deployed and where.

## **Comment**

Neal

Let's just ignore the great figures this missile is capable off, let's look at the timing of the press release.

We have the West gathering behind The Great Satan to bomb Iran for doing what it has every right under international law to do. Then we have Russia showing off the fastest missile ever made 180 miles a minute or 10,800 miles an hour. This is no accident or misprint. What we have here is a very clear message written in the universal language of "Threat".

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