

Russia Fired Experimental Hypersonic Missile at Ukraine in Response to Western Long-Range Missiles – Putin

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MAXIM SHIPENKOV / POOL / AFP

Russia launched an experimental hypersonic ballistic missile at Ukraine overnight in response to Kyiv being permitted to strike Russia with U.S. and British long-range missiles, President Vladimir Putin [said](#) Thursday, vowing to respond to further “escalation.”

While the Russian leader has previously said that letting Kyiv use long-range arms against Russian targets would put NATO “at war” with Moscow, Thursday’s statement marked his most direct warning yet.

“In response to the use of [American](#) and [British](#) long-range weaponry, on November 21, the Russian Armed Forces conducted a combined strike on a Ukrainian defense industry facility,” Putin said in televised comments.

“Among the operations carried out was the testing of one of Russia’s latest medium-range

missile systems. In this case, a ballistic missile equipped with a non-nuclear hypersonic warhead was used,” the Kremlin leader said. “Russian missile operators named the system ‘Oreshnik.’ The tests were deemed successful, with the target being hit as intended.”

His comments came hours after Kyiv accused Moscow of using an intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time in history amid a wider overnight missile attack on the city of Dnipro. Western officials later cited in media reports disputed Kyiv’s claim, saying that the attacks had used ballistic missiles of a shorter range.

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Putin emphasized that combat testing of the Oreshnik missile system was done directly in response to “NATO’s aggressive actions against Russia,” saying that Russia was “justified in using our weapons against military targets in those countries that allow their weapons to be used against our facilities.”

“In the event of an escalation of aggressive actions, we will respond decisively and accordingly,” he added.

Putin also said that Russia would warn Ukrainian “civilians and citizens of friendly nations present in those areas to evacuate” if its armed forces were again to deploy Oreshnik missiles in the future.

“We will do this openly and publicly, for humanitarian reasons, without fearing any opposition from the enemy, who will also receive this information,” the Kremlin leader said.

“Why no fear? Because, as of today, there is no means to counter such weapons,” Putin said, adding that Oreshnik is capable of reaching targets at a speed of 2.5 to 3 kilometers per second.

A U.S. official told The Moscow Times on condition of anonymity that Russia launched an “experimental intermediate-range ballistic missile” at Ukraine, a likely reference to the Oreshkin. According to the official, Ukrainian authorities and U.S. allies were briefed beforehand about Russia’s possible use of the missile to help them prepare.

However, the U.S. official also noted that Moscow likely only possesses a handful of these missiles and that Ukraine has withstood attacks from missiles with significantly larger warheads.

The official warned that Russia may be using the experimental warhead now in an attempt to intimidate Ukraine and its allies or to garner attention in the information space.

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The U.S. and Britain this week authorized Ukraine’s military to use long-range missiles they supplied to attack targets on Russian soil, which they said was a response to Russia deploying North Korean troops to the Ukrainian border.

The next day, Putin signed off on lowering Russia's threshold for using nuclear weapons, a move widely seen as retaliation for the U.S. and British decision.

Washington and several other Western countries temporarily closed their embassies in Kyiv on Wednesday, with the U.S. delegation saying it had received a warning of a potentially significant attack on Ukraine's capital.

Following Putin's statement on Thursday, a Pentagon spokesperson [said](#) that Moscow had notified Washington in advance of the experimental ballistic missile launch via nuclear risk reduction channels.

With reporting by Mack Tubridy.

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