

Hypersonic Weapons: Why the Need for Speed?

High tech weapons with incredible abilities were once considered to be real only in children's imaginations. Now there are weapons in development that can travel at speeds we never even dreamed possible. Hypersonic weapons are a crucial element to United States weaponry because of their ability to protect Americans against the threat posed by unfriendly nations, their ability to ward off terrorism, and their unrivaled features.

Right now, the United States is experiencing something similar to the arms race that occurred during the Cold War. Instead of developing nuclear weapons, the United States, China, and Russia are now competing to develop hypersonic weapons. For a while, there has been tension among these three nations, and there have even been rumors of war. This is why the U.S. development of hypersonic weapons is extremely important. In order for the United States to be able to protect itself if conflict were to arise, it is essential to have hypersonic weapons in its range of artillery. Hypersonic weapons will be even more advantageous to the United States if the military can successfully develop them in order to be able to compete with and protect America from China and Russia. Not only would hypersonic weapons assist in the arms race against China and Russia, but they would also prove to be beneficial in other areas of protection.

Hypersonic weapons in the United States were originally developed after the terrorist attacks that occurred on 9/11. According to "Why the Pentagon Fears the U.S. Is Losing the Hypersonic Arms Race with Russia and China" (*The Washington Post* 8 June 2018), "Military officials decided they needed a weapon that could strike quickly if, say [the Pentagon] received word on [Osama bin Laden's] whereabouts or if intelligence showed that a rogue nation was about to launch a missile attack." Clearly, such weapons could be beneficial in the ongoing war

against terrorism. Hypersonic weapons are essential for defending national security and allowing the United States to remain dominant over its enemies.

These new weapons hold many distinctive features that make them a necessity for the United States. According to “Hypersonic Weapons are Game-Changers, and America Doesn’t Have Them” (*The Wall Street Journal* 18 Sept. 2023), “Hypersonic missiles combine speed with the ability to fly at low altitude and maneuver in flight, making them more difficult to spot by radar or satellite. That makes them almost impossible to intercept with current systems.” Hypersonic weapons are extremely hard to track, intercept, and defend against due to their ability to move unpredictably at such high speeds. These features allow hypersonic weapons to leave the enemy almost completely defenseless because there is no way to track or locate the missile. If the United States can successfully produce hypersonic weapons, it will serve as a huge advantage. While hypersonic weapons are costly, the benefit of having these weapons on our side outweighs the cost. The amount of protection that they provide in a short amount of time is unmatched. According to the Congressional Budget Office website, “Hypersonic weapons would provide a niche capability, mainly useful to address threats that were both well-defended and extremely time-sensitive (requiring a strike in 15 minutes to 30 minutes).” The cost is no match for the benefits that hypersonic weapons would provide.

Given the number of benefits hypersonic weapons hold for the United States, it is important that the government utilize its funding and resources for their development. Although hypersonic weapons are expensive, it is clear that their unrivaled features and the amount of protection they can provide against the United States’ enemies prove that they are of the utmost importance in the defense of the United States of America.