

Yemen's hypersonic missiles: A West Asian military revolution

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Earlier this year, news reports surfaced suggesting that Yemen had conducted experiments on hypersonic missiles. While the Sanaa government remained silent then, recent events have shattered any ambiguity on this development.

In late June, Yemen officially announced the use of the “Hatem-2” hypersonic ballistic missile to strike an Israeli ship, MSC Sarah, in the Arabian Sea. The revelation places Yemen among an elite group of states that possess such advanced weaponry, highlighting Sanaa’s unexpected advancement in military technology despite almost a decade of war.



The deployment of the Hatem-2 missile is not just a demonstration of technological prowess but a complex signal to various international actors. Yemen's actions align with West Asia's broader Resistance Axis and reflect continued support for Gaza amidst the US-backed Israeli war on the besieged Palestinian enclave.

This support is not merely rhetorical; it has now been amply demonstrated through concrete actions, such as deploying advanced weaponry. Importantly, the development and use of hypersonic missiles highlight the erosion of US military deterrence in the region, a concern exacerbated by recent failures and the potential escalation in Palestine.

Redefining regional power

The presence of such advanced technology in Yemen complicates the strategic calculations of the US and its allies, who must now contend with a more capable and unpredictable adversary.

Crucially, these actions are a response to the nine-year-long Saudi–Emirati aggression, which has persisted due to multiple factors. These include direct US and British military intervention and the establishment of a militia-backed presidential council aimed at achieving the strategic political objectives of foreign actors. Sanaa’s military advancements are, therefore, deeply intertwined with its political stance and national/regional strategic goals.

The Ansarallah-aligned armed forces’ targeting of an Israeli ship with a hypersonic missile marks a significant shift in West Asia’s military dynamics. Unlike experimental tests on static targets, this operation showcased Yemen’s capability to engage moving targets rapidly.

Hypersonic missiles, which travel at speeds exceeding Mach 5 and possess exceptional maneuverability, are notoriously difficult for existing air defense systems to intercept. This capability introduces a new threat level in the regional conflict, complicating – and even rendering useless – defense strategies for Yemen’s adversaries.

The Hatem-2 represents a new generation of Yemeni ballistic missiles featuring advanced smart guidance systems, high maneuverability, hypersonic speeds, solid fuel propulsion, and multiple versions with varying ranges. This makes the Hatem-2 a formidable weapon capable of precise and rapid strikes. The development of such advanced technology within Yemen, a country that has been under severe blockade and continuous aggression for nearly a decade, is noteworthy. It reflects a significant leap in indigenous military technology and strategic capability.

Response to Saudi–Emirati aggression

The use of hypersonic missiles also sends a potent message to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Sanaa has repeatedly warned Riyadh against facilitating US military actions launched from its territory. The recent targeting of the US aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower in the Red Sea is an example.

The implications for Saudi Arabia are severe: continued aggression against Yemen could provoke more devastating retaliatory strikes. Sanaa’s readiness to strike high-value targets signals its intent to lift the blockade through military means if necessary. Moreover, the

chances for a peaceful resolution are dwindling as military confrontations intensify.

Sanaa, which did not fear the US navy and its allies, struck deep into Israeli territory, will not hesitate to inflict painful strikes against Saudi Arabia to lift the blockade. The hypersonic missile message provides a glimpse of what the resistance front in the region possesses, showing its integrated and unified operations under the Resistance Axis' "Unity of Fronts" banner, capable of delivering devastating strikes across a vast geographical area.

Sanaa shatters the status quo

Yemen's resilience is also a testament to the country's ability to adapt and innovate under extreme conditions. By integrating hypersonic missiles and other sophisticated technologies, such as the Toofan-1 drone boat which targeted and sunk the Tutor vessel in the Red Sea, Sanaa can not only defend itself but also challenge adversaries with deterrence.



The military messages coming from Sanaa, whether related to its alignment within the Resistance Axis or concerning Yemen's reality in confronting aggression and blockade, are part of the scene of changing dynamics in the region, reshaping power balances that cannot be skirted in any settlements with the enemy, if they even occur. This allows Yemeni forces to continue the military confrontation at will or even escalate it further into new arenas.

The debut of the Hatem-2 missile represents a pivotal shift in regional power dynamics, with Yemen's military advancements reshaping the strategic reality of West Asia. Whether the conflict continues at its current intensity or escalates further, the implications of Yemen's hypersonic missile capability are already reverberating across the region.

Yemen's hypersonic missiles are not merely a technical achievement for Sanaa; they are best understood as a strategic maneuver that alters the balance of power in favor of the Axis of Resistance and reshapes the future trajectory of war in the region.