Faster, Further, Together: Germany and the UK Go Hypersonic

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Joint deep strike and AI plans put Berlin at the centre of Europe's missile build-up.

Germany and the UK have reaffirmed plans for a jointly developed deep strike weapon with a range of more than 2,000 km, to be delivered by 2035, and agreed to bring artificial intelligence into their joint Cyber Lighthouse Project. According to internal documents reported by Politico, Germany would lead the production of a hypersonic glide vehicle, with Munich-based start-up Hypersonica among the contenders. The plans place Berlin at the heart of Europe's missile build-up, but the ministers' joint statement makes no reference to arms control, stability or rules for military AI.

For Berlin, this marks a shift from buying long-range systems to co-developing them, with venture-funded start-ups alongside established firms. It is part of a broader pattern of Germany now domestically developing missiles alongside AI targeting systems, following Helsing's unveiling of the Contra system and two new missiles last week. Still Germany's approach to long-range missiles is hesitant, as it is still deliberating whether to send Ukraine 500 km Taurus missiles.

The rationale is conventional deterrence against Russia and greater European sovereignty. A 2,000 km weapon would give Europe what it lacks: the ability to hold targets deep inside Russia at risk without US help. Launched from Germany, it could reach Moscow and would not require aircraft to penetrate Russian air defences. A hypersonic glide vehicle would also be hard to intercept. But Berlin and its allies must be cautious of the risks: a missile coming in at hypersonic speed may be difficult to differentiate from a nuclear warhead, giving only minutes to decide on an appropriate response.

The joint venture appears to be a full strike chain: the missile, space cooperation for sensing and communications, AI to process targeting data, and the Cyber Lighthouse to secure networks.

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