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The U.S. Army's Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW): Dark Eagle

What Is the Army's Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon?

The Army's Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW)—also known as Dark Eagle (**Figure 1**)—with a reported range of 1,725 miles, consists of a ground-launched missile equipped with a hypersonic glide body and associated transport, support, and fire control equipment. The LRHW is intended to provide the Army with a long-range, conventional precision strike capability against time sensitive and heavily defended targets, particularly in contested environments.

Figure 1. LRHW Transporter Erector Launcher (TEL)

Source: Army News, https://www.army.mil/article/265349/1st_multi_domain_task_force_deploys_the_armys_first_long_range_hypersonic_weapon_system, accessed March 29, 2026.

The Director of Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E) notes that

> Army commanders will use the LRHW (Dark Eagle) to engage adversary high-payoff and time-sensitive targets. U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), with direction from the National Command Authority, will serve as the employment authority for LRHW missions.

On April 24, 2025, the Army formally designated the LRHW as the Dark Eagle.

LRHW Components

Missile

The missile component of the LRHW is being developed by Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman. When the hypersonic glide body is attached, it is referred to as the Navy-Army All Up Round plus Canister (AUR+C). The missile component serves as the common two-stage booster for the Army's LRHW and the Navy's Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS) system, which can be fired from both surface vessels and submarines.

Common Hypersonic Glide Body

The Common Hypersonic Glide Body (C-HGB) is based on the Alternate Re-Entry System developed by the Army and Sandia National Laboratories. Dynetics, a subsidiary of Leidos, currently is under contract to produce C-HGB prototypes for the Army and Navy. The C-HGB uses a booster rocket motor to accelerate to well above hypersonic speeds and then jettisons the expended rocket booster. The C-HGB, which can travel at Mach 5 or higher on its own, is planned to be maneuverable, potentially making it more difficult to detect and intercept.

LRHW Organization and Units

The LRHW battalion is organized into batteries. According to the Army, the "LRHW system [battery] consists of Army ground support equipment—one battery operations center (BOC), four transporter erector launchers, a BOC support vehicle and up to eight All-Up Rounds plus Canister."

The 5th Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), WA, was designated to operate the first battery of eight LRHW missiles. The battalion, also referred to as the Long-Range Fires Battalion, is part of the Army's 1st Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF), a unit in the Indo-Pacific-oriented I Corps stationed at JBLM. Other LRHW batteries are planned for Long-Range Fires Battalions in the remaining MDTFs scheduled for activation.

LRHW Testing and Program Activities

According to the January 2023 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) study *U.S. Hypersonic Weapons and Alternatives*, extensive flight testing is necessary to shield "hypersonic missiles' sensitive electronics" to understand "how various materials perform," and predict "aerodynamics at sustained temperatures as high as 3,000° Fahrenheit." The Army originally planned for three flight tests of the LRHW before the first battery fielding in FY2023. On October 21, 2021, the booster rocket carrying the C-HGB vehicle reportedly failed a test flight, resulting in what defense officials characterized as a "no test," as the C-HGB had no chance to deploy. Reportedly, a June 2022 test of the entire LRHW missile also resulted in failure.

Flight Test Delays

In October 2022, the Department of Defense (DOD), which is "using a secondary Department of War designation" under Executive Order 14347 dated September 5, 2025, "delayed a scheduled LRHW test to assess the root cause of the June 2022 no-test."

March 2023 LRHW Test Scrubbed

On March 10, 2023, it was reported that

> On March 5, [DOD] was preparing to execute Joint Flight Campaign-2 featuring the Army version of the prototype weapon launched at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, FL, when the countdown was halted.... "As a result of pre-flight checks during that event, the test did not occur."

Cancelled September 2023 LRHW Test and Program Delay

On September 6, 2023, it was reported that

> [DOD] "planned to conduct a flight test at the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida, to inform hypersonic technology development. As a result of pre-flight checks, the test did not occur."

On September 14, 2023, in an Army statement to Bloomberg News, the Army reportedly acknowledged it would not be able to meet its goal of deploying the LRHW by the end of FY2023.

Successful LRHW Flight Test

On June 28, 2024, DOD announced that

> The U.S. Navy and U.S. Army recently completed an end-to-end flight test of a hypersonic missile from the Pacific Missile Range Facility, Kauai, HI.

Reportedly, the two-stage missile was launched from a ground stand in Hawaii across the Pacific Ocean more than 2,000 miles to a test range in the Marshall Islands, with the missile flying its intended course and releasing the C-HGB, which flew to the target.

December 2024 LRHW Flight Test

On December 12, 2024, DOD announced that

> The U.S. Army's Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office, in collaboration with the U.S. Navy Strategic Systems Programs, recently completed a successful end-to-end flight test of a conventional hypersonic missile from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida.
>
> This is the second successful end-to-end flight test of the All Up Round (AUR) this year and was the first live-fire event for the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon system using a Battery Operations Center and a Transporter Erector Launcher.

March 2026 LRHW Flight Test

On April 2, 2026, DOD announced that

> The U.S. Army's Portfolio Acquisition Executive Fires, in partnership with the U.S. Navy's Portfolio Acquisition Executive Strategic Systems Programs, conducted a successful launch of a common hypersonic missile from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida, on March 26, 2026.

First Operational LRHW Fielding Expected

Reportedly, on March 20, 2026, an Army official stated that "the Dark Eagle battery based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord [JBLM] in the Pacific Northwest will receive its first operational [LRHW] missiles soon" and that "Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 17th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Multi-Domain Task Force, based at JBLM, has been designated to operate" the LRHW.

LRHW Procurement and Estimated Missile Cost

According to the January 2023 CBO study, purchasing 300 Intermediate-Range Hypersonic Boost-Glide Missiles (similar to the LRHW) was estimated to cost $41 million per missile (in 2023 dollars). In CRS discussions with Army program officials, the Army stated that the "fly away cost" for the eight missiles requested in the Army's FY2025 budget request would exceed CBO's 2023 per missile cost estimate, but future missile costs could likely decrease as order quantities increased.

During June 4 and 5, 2025, Army Posture testimony to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, then Chief of Staff of the Army General Randy George stated the following regarding the LRHW:

> We are getting ready to do some tests this summer, with long-range missiles that are a tenth of the price. And when you start talking about "magazine depth" ... we can invest in things that are much more cost-effective.

FY2027 LRHW Budget Request

According to DOD's FY2027 Budget Program Acquisition Cost by Weapons System, the Army is requesting $446.6 million in Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) funding and $301.8 million in procurement funding for the LRHW program.

Oversight Consideration for Congress

Congress could consider additional oversight of the LRHW program.

LRHW Missile Costs, Operational Testing, and Stockpile

Congress has expressed its concern regarding the cost of LRHW missiles as well as further operational testing and missile stockpile requirements. As the Army begins procurement of its first eight missiles, continues fielding LRHW batteries, conducts additional operational tests, and builds missile stockpiles, Congress might decide to require more frequent updates from Army program officials. Enhanced oversight of the LRHW program as it attempts to achieve full operational capability could better inform future congressional budgetary decisions and the program's overall direction.

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