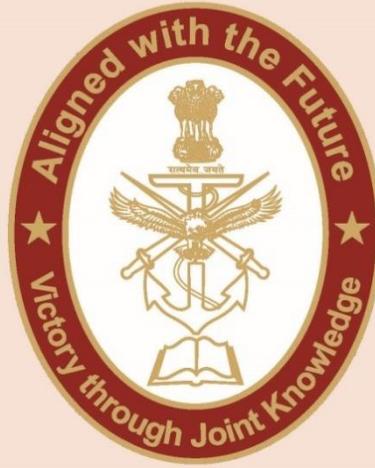


CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



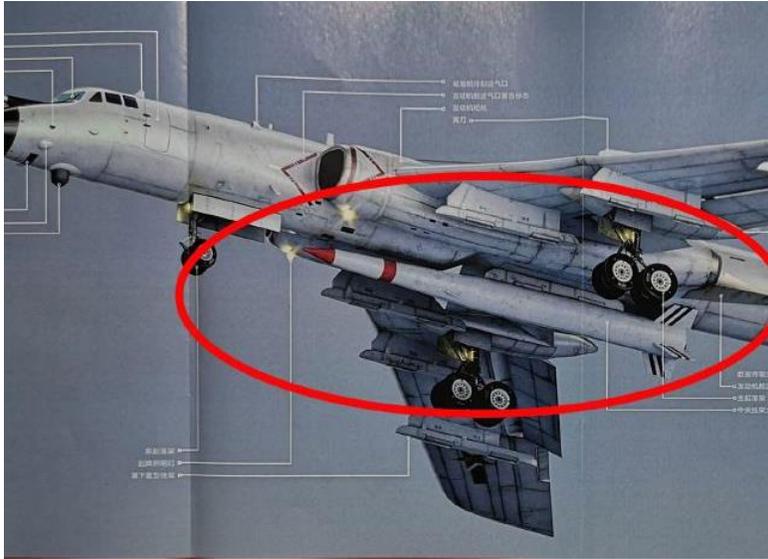
CENJOWS

CHINESE BOMBER WITH ASBM: H-6N

1. **Chinese Magazine Reveals New H-6N Bomber with Possible ASBM.** A government approved magazine named 'Modern Ships' has shown the photo of the Chinese modified bomber aircraft H-6N carrying a large ballistic missile slung under its fuselage. The missile looks quite similar to the DF-21D ASBM. The magazine also showed high-resolution computer-generated images of H-6N bomber aircraft along with this missile on its centerfold.



Cover of the 'Modern Ships' magazine showing H-6N bomber with a large missile.



Detailed plans of H-6N Bomber that appeared as 'Modern Ships' centerfold

2. **Comments.** Chinese State-controlled media seems to be covering up the apparent mistake in publication of this news and related photos, with the 'Global Times' declared that these images were merely conceptual and generated by computer; thus had no official backing. However, the defence analysts are concerned that China could be close to realising an anti-ship standoff capability for the PLA that would extend the range of DF-21D ASBM well beyond the first island chain. The development, if true, would make China only the second nation to do so. Russia displayed an air-launched ballistic missile, the hypersonic Kinzhal, slung under a MiG-31 interceptor aircraft, in 2017.

3. Several modifications were noted on H-6N variant of China's Xian H-6 series of bombers when it was flown at the 70th National Day parade in October 2019. Though Xinhua news said that it was a 'homemade strategic bomber capable of air refuelling and long-range strike', observers had noticed that the flying H-6N bombers did not have bomb-bay doors. Instead, there appeared to be new heavyweight attachment points in a recess along the centre-line at the bottom of its fuselage. Thus the cover of 'Modern Ships' magazine showing the missile fitted at under-fuselage hard-point seems to fit in logically with the observation of the analysts during the military parade.

4. Some speculations also assert that the semi-recessed area under the fuselage of the H-6N is designed to carry either the WZ-8 supersonic glide vehicle or the CJ-100 large cruise missile which is larger than the CJ-10 carried by the H-6K variant. The CJ/DF-100 may have a 2000km range at supersonic speed as compared to 1500 km of the earlier CJ-10 subsonic cruise missile. In the past, Chinese media has not been hesitant to claim a pending ballistic missile capability for its bombers. In August 2019, the Global Times had declared the H-6 was 'expected to be armed with hypersonic weapons'. The appearance of the H-6N on the magazine's cover indicates this expectation could be nearing reality. It also gives strength to their assumption that these changes enable the H-6N bomber to carry huge, nuclear-capable or hypersonic vehicle or an ASBM.

5. Further, aerial refuelling could expand the H-6N's operational range by 500 km over the H-6K, to more than 4000 km. So, in theory, the H-6N bomber armed with CJ-100 cruise missile could extend the total strike range to about 6000 km. It would then increase the threat range for US aircraft carrier battle groups operating in the western pacific, and thus make it costlier for the US to project power in the area.

6. But the bomber still faces challenges, the biggest being that it is an old airframe not having stealth characteristics. Therefore it will face great threat while crossing the adversary's air defences between Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines before it can attack targets deep in the Pacific Ocean. There is no confirmation of the progress timeline of China's next generation Xian H-20 bomber, though some estimate that it might enter service by 2025.

Source: <https://www.news.com.au/technology/innovation/military/embarrassing-mistake-chinese-magazine-accidentally-reveals-new-top-secret-weapon/news-story/99967f182da868ba6321d559cde96e62>