

CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



CENJOWS

CHINESE SPY DRONE: DR-8

1. DR-8 Spy Drone



2. Several interesting pieces of hardware were unveiled during the military parade to commemorate China's 70th anniversary on Oct. 1, 2019. However, the most mysterious weapon system to roll past President Xi Jinping was a pair of pointy, supersonic UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) that someone identified as the DR-8 or Wuzhen 8 (WZ-8) spy drones but were simply called "High Altitude and High Speed Reconnaissance Drone" in Chinese TV.

3. At that time, the aircraft was covered by protective tarp that didn't make any real analysis possible. The two that appeared during the parade seem to be powered by two engines and are equipped with a seemingly robust, retractable landing gear.

4. The DR-8 is a blade-like supersonic spy drone designed to soar over the Pacific ocean at speeds ranging between three and five times the speed of sound using a mysterious propulsion system.

5. The DR-8 appears may have been influenced by the American high-speed D-21 spy drone, several of which were recovered after unsuccessful spy missions. For sure there's a loose resemblance to the Lockheed D-21. The Chinese drone features a similar delta-shaped wing but lacks the vertical stabilizer mounted centrally on the fuselage, replaced by stabilizers mounted on two big winglets. The combination of this aerodynamic configuration and the presence of two attachment points on the fuselage should hint that the drone is meant to be air-launched (as the D-21).

6. Someone speculated the spy drone was designed to be air launched from an H-6N and would also have identified the attach points:-

(a) According to the *South China Morning Post*, the DR-8 is intended to provide post-strike damage-assessment of attacks by truck-borne DF-21D and DF-26B 'carrier killing' missiles, which can theoretically strike moving ships from over one or two thousand miles away from the Chinese mainland.

(b) Military analysts say the DR-8, which already may be deployed with People's Liberation Army forces, is a key element needed for targeting and guiding China's large missile force, especially its DF-21 anti-ship ballistic missile. The drone would function as a critical sensor platform to identify the locations of U.S. aircraft carriers and then provide signals used by precision guided missiles.

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/these-new-weapons-prove-china-superpower-97352>

<https://theaviationist.com/2019/10/01/china-unveils-a-new-supersonic-spy-drone-during-massive-military-parade-in-beijing-and-heres-our-analysis/>

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/sep/18/chinas-supersonic-dr-8-done-revealed/>