



VINTAGE BOEING B-52 GETS NEW LONG-RANGE LOCKHEED CRUISE MISSILE

News / Manufacturer



The **Boeing B-52H** is the vintage bomber that just won't quit, and now the Cold War-era "Stratofortress" is being outfitted with one of America's newest and longest-range conventional cruise missiles.

Lockheed Martin has been put on contract to arm the 54-year-old aircraft – which has outlived many of those who predicted its retirement – with the extended-range Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Weapon (JASSM) under a \$9.1 million contract announced earlier this month.

In a statement to Flightglobal, LM director of long-range strike systems Jason Denney confirms that the B-52 will be updated to carry the turbofan engine-powered cruise missile internally on a new digitised rotary launcher and externally on its pylons.

The bomber has long carried conventional cruise missiles, namely the non-nuclear derivative of the AGM-86 "ALCM" that has an unclassified range of 600nm and is being retired as supplies run

low.

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Boeing B-52s can carry up to 20 nuclear-armed Air-Launched Cruise Missiles (ALCMs) and by 2018 will probably be carrying a similar number of smarter, non-nuclear Lockheed Martin JASSM-ERs.

US Air Force

Already equipped to carry the shorter-range baseline JASSM missile on its pylons, adding the extended range variant more than doubles the bomber's JASSM strike distance to 500nm (926km). That allows lumbering, non-stealthy B-52H to punch out targets while keeping clear of hazardous air defence systems well into the future.

According to Lockheed, the B-52 has only fired the JASSM-ER during operational testing off its

external pylons, and the bomber now joins the Lockheed F-16 and soon the Boeing F-15E on the integration to-do list. B-52 integration will wrap up in 2018, as will the project to arm the F-16.

“F-15E integration will be next in line,” says Denney. “The expansion of the JASSM-ER employment aircraft set will significantly enhance the US warfighter’s first-day, first-strike capabilities.”

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The baseline JASSM missile has been in serial production for over a decade but production recently switched to the new double-range JASSM-ER (500nm unclassified).

Lockheed Martin

The beefing up of Stratofortress weaponry for conventional warfighting comes as the air force removes nuclear weapons from dozens of B-52s previously assigned to the strategic deterrence

mission to achieve compliance with new strategic arms limitations agreed with Russia.

The air force currently plans to retire the supersonic Boeing/Rockwell B-1B and the B-52H in the 1940s as their Long-Range Strike Bomber (LRS-B) replacement steps in.

JASSM-ER takes advantage of several concurrent digital upgrades that will allow every B-52 to carry smart weapons internally for the first time and on its pylons. The Boeing-led Combat Network Communications Technology improvement will further allow B-52s to update their missions plans via satellite and retarget weapons in flight – as most other combat aircraft have been doing for decades.

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The B-52's rotary launcher, seen here carrying up to eight ALCM cruise missiles, is being upgraded to carry fully digital smart weapons and decoys.

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