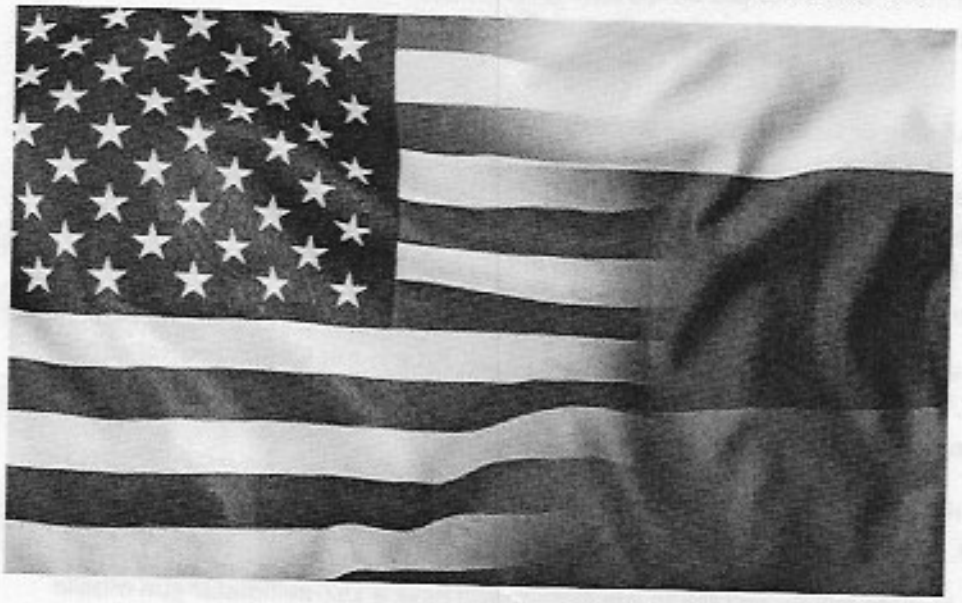
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US Army Exploring 'Devastating' New Weapon For Use In War with Russia



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By Patrick Tucker Defense One April 12, 2017

Were the United States to go to war with Russia, both sides could draw on deadly weapons the world has never seen on a battlefield. On the Russian side, there are new and smaller tactical nuclear weapons. To counter them, the U.S. Army is taking another look at a "devastating" weapon it first tested in 2013: the Kinetic Energy Projectile, or KEP, a tungsten-based charge moving at three times the speed of sound that can destroy anything in its path.

"Think of it as a big shotgun shell," Maj. Gen. William Hix, the Army's director of strategy, plans and policy, said a few weeks ago at the Booz Allen Hamilton Direct Energy Summit. But unlike a shotgun shell, Hix said, the KEP moves at incredible speeds of "Mach 3 to Mach 6."

Randy Simpson, a weapons programs manager at Lawrence Livermore National Lab, explains kinetic energy projectiles are warheads that "take advantage of high terminal speeds to deliver much more energy onto a target than the chemical explosives they carry would deliver alone."

Said Hix: "The way that [Lawrence Livermore] have designed it is quite devastating. I would not want to be around it. Not much can survive it. If you are in a main battle tank, if you're a crew member, you might survive but the vehicle will be non-mission capable, and everything below that will level of protection will be dead. That's what I am talking about."

The general emphasized the exploration was in a conceptual phase and not yet any sort of actual program: "We're looking at ways we might — key, *might* — use that capability in one of our existing launch platforms as part of the weapons suite that we have," he said.

He said the main contender for a launcher would be the Army Tactical Missile System, made by Lockheed Martin.

In October 2013, an Air Force test team strapped the projectile to a "sled" on the high-speed test track at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico. The goal: to get it moving faster than Mach 3 and see how it might actually work in the air. The test showed the warhead design worked; it also provided data to help simulations and modeling.