



India to Dispatch Ballistic Missiles Near China and Pakistan

SINGAPORE — India has authorized the purchase of 120 Pralay quasi-ballistic surface-to-surface missiles to be stationed along the country's borders with Pakistan and China, the ANI news agency reported, quoting sources in the ministry.

According to ANI, Pralay missiles can hit targets at a distance of up to 500 kilometers (310 miles) and intercepting them would be a challenge owing to their ability to divert their path. The development of the missile started in 2015, and in December 2021, Indian armed forces successfully tested it twice.



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Constructed by DRDO, Pralay is a canisterized tactical, surface-to-surface, short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) and has frequently been likened to the Russian Iskander ballistic missiles.

The recently developed missile, launched from a canister, adhered to the intended quasi-ballistic path and made a highly precise strike on the target, validating the control, guidance, and mission algorithms. This quasi-ballistic missile can make accurate maneuvers before striking a target. One of the most prominent characteristics of the Pralay missile is that it uses a fused silica Radar-dome (RADOME) developed by DRDO for locating its target. Radomes are dome-shaped structures that protect radars from inclement weather while ensuring the radar can receive electromagnetic signals without distortion or attenuation to guarantee accuracy.

The Rudra Mk-2, NGARM, and QRSAM are other domestic-made Indian missiles that use the fused silica Radome manufactured by the DRDO. The missile guidance system of the brand-new Pralay missile boasts a modern navigation system and integrated avionics.

Pralay can launch a payload of about 350 to 700 kilograms at targets up to 150 to 500 kilometers away and can be prepared for launch from a mobile launcher without much notice. Combining several unique technologies, the Pralay also relies on a solid-propellant rocket motor.

While reports hinted that the Pralay is based on the Indian ballistic missile Prithvi, the former is more like the 9K720 Iskander-M SRBM of Russia, designated as SS-26 "Stone" by NATO, that has been massively deployed against Ukraine and shown its combat abilities. Each launcher vehicle can dispatch two missiles with a maximum flying range of 310 miles, similar to the range of Iskander, the latter having impacted targets deep inside the Ukrainian territory.

The payload capacity of Iskander is about 1,500 pounds, or over 680 kilograms. Previous reports had hinted that with a high payload it could travel a distance of 350 kilometers. Should the payload mounted on Pralay be bisected, the missile can reach a target as far as 310.65 miles.

Although the range and trajectory parameters of the Pralay missile are similar to those of the Iskander,



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 1, 2023

the Iskander missile depends on an optical Digital Scene Matching Area Correlator (DSMAC) to identify targets. While both missiles contain an Inertial Navigation System (INS), or satellite navigation, the Iskander uses Terrain Contour Matching (TERCOM), making it harder to intercept than the Pralay. The TERCOM system greatly boosts a missile's accuracy, so a TERCOM-equipped missile can fly closer to obstacles and at generally lower altitudes, making it more challenging for ground radar to locate.

The Indian military's plan to procure the Pralay is notable because it comes at a time when the Indian Defense Ministry's top echelons have been considering the development of a rocket force for the Indian army.

As the strategic forces command is overseeing long-range strategic weapons, the Pralay missile and BrahMos supersonic cruise missile will be the longest-range tactical weapon systems for the Indian defense forces. The Pralay missile development began in 2015, and it took four years to test the requisite technology.

According to Indian media reports, Pralay will permit the Indian army to target dual-use Chinese infrastructure and military bases on the Tibetan Plateau, allowing the Indian military to create an effective deterrence with China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). India had previously deployed the BrahMos cruise missile along the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC), unnerving the PLA.

Nonetheless, only two tests have been conducted using the Pralay ballistic missile so far. This could imply that the missile would not be combat-ready for at least a couple of years since supporting mobile platforms will have to be built for the ballistic missile. Following high-level talks concerning its procurement, more information will be disclosed by the relevant parties.

Earlier this year, India accused China of attempting to "unilaterally change the status quo" on their contested Himalayan border, when confrontations left troops on both sides injured.

The un-demarcated 3,800km frontier between India and China had remained generally peaceful following a war in 1962, before the clashes two years ago sent relations plummeting. India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told Parliament that relations with China could not be normalized without peace on the border.

In July 2022, India declared plans to deploy a new squadron of S-400 Triumph surface-to-air missile systems along the northern border with China in the next two to three months.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's short discussion with Chinese President Xi Jinping at this year's G-20 summit was futile in matters pertaining to the border dispute. A key decision India presently faces is whether to officially join forces with the United States to counter China. Most observers see the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, known as the Quad (comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the United States), as a potential platform for that collaboration.

In addition, India also has a long-standing territorial dispute with Pakistan. The clash over the Kashmir region has been ongoing between New Delhi and Islamabad since 1947, causing wars and skirmishes.



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