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Pakistan Launches New Missile Force with China

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Pakistan has announced the creation of a new Army Rocket Force Command (ARFC), modeled on China's People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF), aiming to strengthen its missile capabilities in conventional warfare. The announcement came on August 13, just before the country's Independence Day, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif calling the move a milestone for the military.

“It will be equipped with modern technology,” Sharif said, emphasizing the importance of the ARFC in enhancing Pakistan’s defense readiness.

The ARFC is intended to centralize and improve Pakistan’s missile command, following a four-day conflict with India in May, during which Pakistani missiles failed to penetrate India’s advanced air defense systems. India deployed its domestically developed BrahMos and Akash systems alongside Russian-origin S-400 missiles, while Pakistan relied on Chinese-made PL-15 missiles, which were largely intercepted.

The new force will oversee platforms including the Babur cruise missile, Shaheen ballistic missiles, and Fatah guided rockets, focusing on rapid, coordinated operations. It is designed to operate under a corps-level command led by a lieutenant general, reporting directly to Army Chief Asim Munir.

Experts note the ARFC reflects a growing military alignment between Pakistan and China. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, China supplied 81% of Pakistan’s arms imports between 2020 and 2024. The new command is expected to adopt Chinese technology and structural models to enhance precision, range, and operational efficiency.

During Operation Sindoor, China reportedly provided Pakistan with intelligence support, satellite surveillance, and advanced weapons, including J-10 fighter jets and AI-based systems from the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Computing (CENTAIC). Analysts suggest the ARFC, while focused on conventional missiles, complements these broader military collaborations, signaling deepening strategic ties.

Group Captain MJ Augustine (Retired), writing for the Eurasian Times, said the ARFC’s structure is likely to mirror China’s PLARF, which manages Beijing’s land-based missile arsenal, including ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missiles for both nuclear and conventional roles. The PLARF, established in 1966 as the Second Artillery Corps, was renamed in 2016 and remains a cornerstone of China’s strategic deterrence.

The new Pakistani missile command appears to be aimed at addressing gaps revealed during the May conflict. A senior Pakistani security official told Reuters that the ARFC is “obviously meant for India,” underscoring the country’s intent to counter India’s missile defense capabilities.

Indian officials have previously expressed concern over growing Pakistan-China military cooperation. In March, Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi warned of “a high degree of collusion” between the two countries, noting the strategic implications of shared technology and intelligence systems.

The ARFC’s creation represents Pakistan’s effort to modernize its conventional missile capabilities while deepening military cooperation with China. As Islamabad continues to invest in missile technology and command structures, the move reflects both a response to prior operational setbacks and a strategic alignment with Beijing.