

India's Bunker Buster Development Sparks Alarm in Pakistan: "Nothing's Safe Anymore"



India's reported development of a powerful 7,500-kilogram bunker-buster missile, capable of penetrating 80 meters deep, has ignited significant concern across the border, with a leading Pakistani strategic expert admitting a palpable sense of fear. This new conventional weapon, based on the Agni-V missile platform, signals a notable shift in India's military capabilities and strategic thinking, prompting questions about its implications for regional stability.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is reportedly working on a modified version of its nuclear-capable Agni-V intercontinental ballistic missile. Unlike its nuclear counterpart, this variant is designed to carry a massive conventional warhead specifically engineered to destroy deeply buried and fortified enemy targets, such as command centers, missile silos, and other critical infrastructure. Indian media reports suggest the missile, while having a reduced range of around 2,500 kilometers due to the heavy payload, will achieve hypersonic speeds (Mach 8 to Mach 20).

The development is seen as influenced by recent international events, particularly the United States' use of Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP) bombs against Iranian nuclear facilities. India's approach, however, differs significantly. Rather than relying on large, expensive bomber aircraft like the U.S. does, India is pursuing a missile-delivered system, which offers greater flexibility, cost-efficiency, and rapid response capabilities. Two variants are believed to be in development: one for airburst detonation against surface targets and another for deep penetration.

Rabia Akhtar, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Lahore, articulated Pakistan's unease in an op-ed for Pakistan's Dawn newspaper. She warned that such a weapon risks a "hazardous entanglement" between conventional and nuclear strategies. "Nothing's safe anymore," Akhtar stated, highlighting concerns that a conventional missile capable of destroying command-and-control centers, which might also serve as nuclear command posts, could trigger unintended escalations. She further argued that Pakistan's early-warning systems might struggle to differentiate between a conventional Agni missile and a nuclear one, thereby increasing the potential for miscalculation and an overreaction during a crisis.

While India has not officially commented on the new missile, defense experts in India suggest it could be aimed at deterring adversaries by holding their most secure military assets at risk, all without resorting to nuclear weapons. This development marks a significant enhancement in India's conventional strike capabilities, poised to reshape strategic calculations in South Asia and beyond. The coming months will likely see continued regional and international scrutiny over this potent new addition to India's arsenal.