



## Pakistan's Nuclear Capabilities

Pakistan tested its first nuclear weapon in [1998](#), becoming the world's 7th state to officially test a nuclear weapon. The exact yields of the weapons in the country's current arsenal are not known, but general [estimates](#) are between 5-12 kilotons (kt) for most weapons, with some longer-range ballistic missiles possibly reaching 40 kt. Pakistan has not declared a strategic nuclear policy, but [appears](#) to maintain "minimum credible deterrence" against India's nuclear and superior conventional forces. Pakistan has adopted a [position](#) of "[no first use](#)" against non-nuclear weapon states.

### How Many?

Pakistan is believed to have a stockpile of [approximately](#) 160 warheads, making it the [6th](#) largest nuclear arsenal. Pakistan is actively developing nuclear weapons, and experts project that it may have the 5th largest arsenal by 2025 with 220-250 warheads.

Pakistan has been working toward a sea-based deterrent, and has successfully tested a nuclear-capable submarine-launched cruise missile from a submerged platform [twice](#), once in January 2017, and again in March 2018. Once this missile is fully developed and tested on-board a submarine, Pakistan will have a nuclear triad, with air, sea and land capabilities.

### Air

The F-16 combat aircraft, along with some Mirage III and V aircraft, are believed to be dual-capable (capable of both conventional and nuclear strikes) and [constitute](#) the air component of Pakistan's nuclear force. Pakistan has [approximately](#) 36 warheads for the nuclear air branch. The F-16 A/B has about 24 launchers and a range of 1,600 kilometers (km) while the Mirage III/V has approximately 12 launchers and a range of 2,100 km. A new, highly accurate air-launched cruise missile, the [Ra'ad](#), has a range of 350+ km.

### Sea

In January of 2017 Pakistan [tested](#) for the first time the Babur-3, the sea-launched version of the ground-launched nuclear-capable Babur-2. Because the test launch took place on a submerged platform, not a submarine, Pakistan is not yet considered to have a sea-based deterrent.

### Ground

Pakistan's nuclear missile arsenal consists primarily of short to medium-range ballistic missiles but is making [significant](#) progress in its cruise missile capabilities. The ground arsenal consists of [approximately](#) 102 land-based missiles with yields of 5-40 kt. Pakistan is in possession of several nuclear-capable, road-mobile ballistic missiles, [including](#) the short-range Abdali, Ghaznavi, Shaheen-1 and NASR and medium-range Shaheen-2 and Ghauri. Pakistan has 6 operational nuclear-capable ballistic missiles. The Shaheen III and Shaheen 1A are under development with ranges of 2,750 km and 900 km, respectively. Pakistan is also developing the [Ababeel](#) medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) that is believed to have multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) capabilities.

Pakistan's development of non-strategic nuclear weapons has been criticized as destabilizing for severely lowering the nuclear-use threshold. Pakistan has developed the [NASR](#) (Hatf-9) ballistic missile, which, with a range of just 60-70 km, cannot hit strategic targets in India. The new weapon has been tested using a road-mobile launcher and is thought to have been created for combating conventional Indian forces. In February 2021, Pakistan [tested](#) a short-range ballistic missile, capable of carrying a nuclear or conventional warhead over 289 kilometers (180 miles).

*Sources: Federation of American Scientists, Congressional Research Service, CSIS Missile Defense Project, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Reuters*