

# After Two Failures, Nuclear-capable Agni-II Successfully Test-fired

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After two failures in a row last year, India tested its nuclear-capable Agni-II ballistic missile successfully from Wheelers Island off the Orissa coast on Monday morning. The tri-service Strategic Forces Command (SFC) test-fired the 2,000-km-plus Agni-II, which carries a one-tonne warhead, in a “user training trial” towards making the two-stage, solid-fuelled missile fully operational in the country’s nuclear arsenal.

“Agni-II, which is around 20 metres tall and weighs 17 tonnes, was tested for the full range and met all mission objectives. With this launch, the SFC has carried out launches of Agni-I (700-km), Agni-II and Agni-III (3,500-km) within a time span of five months,” said a defence ministry official. DRDO officials, incidentally, have blamed the two Agni-II failures last year, on May 19 and November 23, on manufacturing problems rather than any design and development defect.

At present, the only ballistic missiles which can be said to be “100% operational” are the short-range Prithvi missile (150-350 km) and the 700-km-range Agni-I. Both Agni-II and Agni-III are still in the process of being inducted by the SFC. India’s most ambitious strategic missile Agni-V, in turn, will be ready for its first test only by early-2011. With a proposed range of 5,000-km, Agni-V will have near ICBM capabilities (strike range in excess of 5,500-km) and give India’s “dissuasive deterrence posture” against China some credible much-needed muscle.

Interestingly, Agni-V will be a canister-launch missile system to ensure it can be swiftly moved closer to the border with China to bring the entire country within its strike envelope. As reported earlier, DRDO is also working on MIRV (multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles) technology for the Agni

series of ballistic missiles. An `MIRVed' missile can carry a bunch of nuclear warheads in a single payload, each of which can hit different targets along separate trajectories.

**Source:** <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/After-two-failures-nuclear-capable-Agni-II-successfully-test-fired/articleshow/5941459.cms>