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India's Indigenously Developed Artillery Gun Successfully Clears Engineering Trials

India's indigenously developed 155-mm/52-calibre towed artillery gun, called the Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS), has successfully completed "engineering trials" conducted by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) between 13 and 20 December. In July 2016, DRDO had successfully conducted the proof firing of armament system for the gun during technical trials.

ATAGS is one of DRDO's biggest projects and is aimed at meeting army's need for more than 2,000 towed artillery pieces. As a part of its 1999 Field Artillery Rationalization Plan, the army aims to acquire 2,800-3,000 artillery pieces.

With a firing range of 40 kilometres, the gun boasts of advanced features such as quick deployability, high mobility and advanced communication system with night firing capability. It weighs around 12 tonnes and is capable of firing five successive rounds in short duration. The 1999 Kargil War illustrated the utility of light-weight artillery that can be quickly deployed in mountainous regions.

It has been developed by DRDO, in partnership with two private sector firms - the Kalyani Group and Tata Power - and the Ordnance Factory Board. Each gun is expected to cost around 15 to 18 crore. A contract for building 1,580 towed guns would add up to more than Rs 25,000 crore. This can prove to be a big boost for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Make in India initiative.

The ATAGS will supplement the indigenously designed and manufactured 155 millimeter/45 calibre artillery gun, Dhanush, which is an improved version of the FH-77B 155 mm/39 calibre towed howitzer manufactured by Bofors and of which India acquired 414 between 1987 and 1991.



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Agni V Missile Is India's Most Prized Possession

This refers to the editorial, "One giant leap forward" (December 28). From Agni I to Agni V, India's nuclear missile technology has evolved into a solid system, matching the best in the business. The coming of Agni V with flying colours in all the four tests so far is a commendable statement on the unswerving preparation and meticulous planning of our scientists. The wide footprint of Agni V — its target range of 5,000kms — is special. The world is looking at India as the successful test-firing comes close on the heels of India becoming a member of the missile technology control regime.

Agni's fire and forget nature — where it does not require further guidance after launch; such as the illumination of the target — is too important to be ignored by the enemies. Now over to Agni VI, that is being given finishing touches by the Defence Research and Development Organisation. When the latest weapon in the DRDO's armoury finally sees the light of the day, countries hostile to India's interests should be literally running for cover.

Indian Defence Year Ender: Military prowess enhanced by Rafale deal, Agni 5's strike capability and LCA's Tejas induction

India augmented its naval strike capabilities by inducting the indigenously developed nuclear submarine Arihant. Indian Army's artillery firepower was boosted by the purchase of M777 Howitzers from US.

The Narendra Modi-led government had in 2015 agreed to go in for 36 Rafales in a direct deal with France, and by the end of 2016 Indian defence was able to test the inter-continental nuclear capable missile Agni V. India augmented its naval strike capabilities by inducting the indigenously developed nuclear submarine Arihant. Indian Army's artillery firepower was boosted by the purchase of M777 Howitzers from US.

Here is the list of major defence deals made by the armed forces in 2016:

1) Inter-continental nuclear capable missile Agni V

Even though the Defence Ministry was not directly involved, investigating agencies carried out raids against a number of defence middlemen while cases were registered against some staying abroad in connection with alleged corruption. Another big development that came towards the end of 2016 was the successful fourth test of the indigenously developed inter-continental nuclear capable missile Agni V that has a range to cover entire China. The missile is now ready for user trials and eventual induction into the Strategic Forces Command.

2) 36 Rafales:

The file for a medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA) was first moved in 2000. The Narendra Modi-led government had in 2015 agreed to go in for 36 Rafales in a direct deal with France while terminating the original tender for 126 MMRCA. The aircraft, equipped with latest weapons including the 150 KM range beyond visual range missile 'Meteor', can even carry nuclear bombs, will add to the strategic assets of the country.

3) Indigenously developed Submarine Arihant:

Another big move was the induction of the indigenously developed nuclear submarine Arihant. The government has still not officially announced the induction. The understanding between India and Russia to lease a second nuclear sub marine was another important strategic move.

The terms and conditions are still being worked out. The Inter-Governmental Agreement on the purchase of S400 Triumph air defence system is also a big development even though the nitty gritty are yet to be worked out.

4) Light Combat Aircraft Tejas:

The decision to finally induct the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft Tejas was also a big move. India and Russia restarted talks on the fifth generation fighter aircraft programme after a hiatus of about a year.

5) M777 light weight Howitzers:

The contract for the purchase of M777 light weight howitzers was also welcomed by the army which will deploy most of them along the borders with China.

The M777 was the first artillery deal cleared by the Indian government since the Bofors scandal of late 1980s. To ensure better deployment of these guns, the ministry also struck a deal for 15 heavy lift Chinook helicopters.

6) Apache attack helicopters:

Giving the IAF yet another fillip to its strength, 2016 saw signing of a deal with the US for 22 Apache attack helicopters. The signing of the much-debated logistics agreement with the US was also an important development. The UPA government had refused to sign it but Parrikar went along after the US rewrote the agreement as per India's conditions.



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PES University bags Rs 2.2 crore DRDO project

Bengaluru: After successfully launching a satellite developed by students with the help of ISRO, PES University has now bagged another project from Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).

Hyderabad-based Research Centre Imarat, which is a part of DRDO, has awarded a project called Sindhu Netra to PES University. The estimated cost of the project is around ₹2.2 crore.

Dr Balasubramnya Murthy, Vice-Chancellor of PES University, said, "This project by DRDO will help in identifying suspicious ships through satellite imaging."