

New rifle ready, but Army holds fire

By Dinakar Peri

The force is planning to float a global tender despite Ordnance Board developing gun in record time

The Ordnance Factory Board has developed a new 7.62-mm assault rifle for the Army, which will begin trials of the weapon in June. But the Army remains unenthused about the gun and is going ahead with a global tender for procuring new rifles.

“The trials of the new 7.62x51mm assault rifle were to happen in May but got delayed. The first trial will now happen in the first half of June at the Rifle Factory, Ishapore. Eight rifles have been prepared for the trials,” a senior OFB official told *The Hindu*. Work on the gun began on October 1, 2016 and was completed in a “record six months” as per the requirements of the Army, the official said.

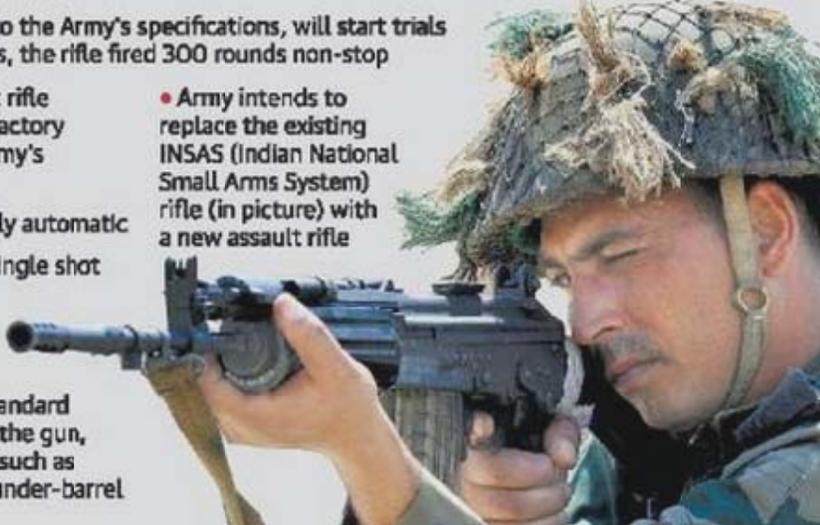
Long firing range - The rifle weighs 4.5 kg and is fully automatic. It has two firing modes, single shot and automatic, and has a lethal firing range of 500 metres. “The function of a self-loading rifle (SLR) has been transferred to the new rifle,” the official said referring to the superior lethal effect of the SLRs used in the past.

Adding to firepower

A new assault rifle, built to the Army's specifications, will start trials in June. During basic trials, the rifle fired 300 rounds non-stop

- New 7.62x51mm assault rifle developed by Ordnance Factory Board in six months to Army's requirements
- Weighs 4.5 kg and is fully automatic
- Has two firing modes: single shot and automatic
- Lethal firing range of 500 metres
- Has a picatinny rail, a standard bracket above and below the gun, for mounting accessories such as night-vision devices and under-barrel grenade launchers

- Army intends to replace the existing INSAS (Indian National Small Arms System) rifle (in picture) with a new assault rifle



The rifle also has a picatinny rail, a standard bracket on the gun, both above and below, where various accessories such as night-vision devices and under-barrel grenade launchers can be mounted. Basic trials were conducted during the development.

The trials this month will be before the

Project Management Team comprising representatives of the Army's Infantry Directorate, the Rifle Factory, the Director-General, Quality Assurance, and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

“During the basic trials, the rifle fired 300 rounds non-stop,” the official said and added that two representatives from the Army's Infantry Directorate were involved in the entire trial process.

Once the rifle clears the PMT trials, it will be put through extensive field trials.

The Army has an initial requirement of 1,85,000 guns and much more later.

The OFB has so far supplied over 10 lakh INSAS (Indian National Small Arms System) rifles to the Army so far and the plan is to replace all of them.

The indigenously built 5.56-calibre INSAS rifle was cleared for induction into the Army in 1999 and was fully inducted by 2004.

Bid to replace INSAS

The Army has been trying to replace the INSAS and had launched an ambitious global tender for interchangeable barrels capable of firing both 5.56-mm and 7.62-mm-calibre bullets.

The tender for assault rifles with interchangeable barrels issued in December 2011 was cancelled in 2015 as none of the companies could meet the service quality specifications.

The Army has now decided to go for 7.62-mm calibre, and fresh General Staff Quality Requirements (GSQR) have just been issued.



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Sponge to stop bleeding, herbs for burns to be tested at AIIMS

The AIIMS Trauma Centre will soon test a few products under the “combat casualty” banner.

A specially designed needle to stop oxygen escaping from the lungs during a chest injury; a sponge to control bleeding; and an extract from flowers to heal burns — these are a few products that will soon be tested at the AIIMS Trauma Centre under the “combat casualty” banner.

One of the apex referral centres for treatment of armed forces with life-threatening injuries sustained during conflict, the Jai Prakash Narayan Apex (JPNA) Trauma Centre at AIIMS will soon be collaborating with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on “capacity building of combat casualty”.

Senior AIIMS officials told The Indian Express that over a dozen initiatives will be taken up by the trauma centre and the DRDO to conduct research in the field of combat casualty. “An MoU is being prepared. We will finalise the details soon. We have already identified the team of doctors which will be coordinating with the DRDO,” Dr Rajesh Malhotra, chief, JPNA Trauma Centre, said.

He added, “Products will be developed under the combat casualty banner. These will encompass all injuries that you see — not just during armed conflict but also civilian unrest. We will not just undertake capacity-building but conduct research in the field of combat casualty, focusing on reducing disability.”

Combat casualty care is the treatment of wounded combatants and non-combatants in or near an area of combat. The field has made advances in the US after specialised procedures and products were developed to treat wounds sustained during conflict. Sources said a contingent from the US mission shared their experience during the process of finalising the collaboration.

Dr Malhotra said 15 doctors from the trauma centre and 15 scientists from DRDO will be working on the project. “A major emphasis will be on wound management and haemostasis. We also plan to develop an agent to stop bleeding and that will help in the treatment of burns... We will also conduct advanced MRI-based studies on how to recover from head injuries,” he said.

“To prevent air escaping from the lungs, in case of a chest injury, the DRDO is working on a needle where the lung is filled up by air. Once the MoU is finalised, AIIMS doctors will suggest ways to test the efficacy of the needle. Similarly, in burns cases, the damaged skin gets stuck to the underlying area and cannot be operated upon... The herbs are being prepared to avoid surgery in such cases,” Dr Malhotra added officials said ethical clearance will be taken from AIIMS to develop low-cost indigenous products.

“An anaesthesiologist will coordinate on research of chest injuries and a plastic surgeon will work on burn injuries and test herbal products,” an official said.