India, Pakistan Test New Missiles; U.S. Urges Restraint

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BUILDING ON their tit-for-tat nuclear tests of May 1998, India and Pakistan conducted test flights of new nuclear-capable ballistic missiles on April 11 and on April 14 and 15, respectively, bringing both states closer to deploying strategic arsenals based on ballistic missiles. In keeping with the February 1999 Lahore Declaration, both states informed each other in advance of their tests, and also gave advance notice to the five permanent (P-5) members of the UN Security Council. (See ACT, January/February 1999.) Depending on their payloads, India's Agni-2 and Pakistan's Ghauri-2 and Shaheen-1 missiles could enable both states to reach important new targets: Islamabad may be able to strike all of India, and New Delhi, already capable of striking any target in Pakistan, may be able to reach Beijing and Shanghai.

The P-5 states, Japan and Australia have condemned India's missile test and Pakistan's two tests in response. China, which New Delhi has identified as its primary security concern, warned on April 13 that the Agni-2 test "could trigger a new round of arms race in South Asia," and called on India and Pakistan to resolve their differences "through continuous patient, frank and meaningful dialogue." The statement from Beijing's Foreign Ministry made no reference to any effect the Agni-2 test would have on China's own strategic modernization efforts.

When asked on April 14 about Pakistan's response to New Delhi's missile test, Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh asserted, "There is no arms race. There is no danger." Islamabad's Foreign Ministry issued a statement later that day saying, "Pakistan does not want a nuclear and missile race in South Asia" and called on New Delhi to accept Pakistani proposals for a strategic restraint regime. New Delhi has resisted regional and international efforts to limit its nascent nuclear arsenal, insisting that no limitations are feasible without including China.

At an April 14 hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth said that India bore a "special responsibility" for preventing a South Asian arms race, noting that in both the nuclear and missile areas Pakistan "is responding" to Indian actions. "Both sides have said they want to meet their security requirements at the lowest possible level," Inderfurth said. "We would now like to see concrete steps from both countries that they intend to do so."

According to a U.S. official, the Clinton administration has restrained its criticism of the tests, recognizing both countries' stated intentions to develop nuclear deterrent capabilities. Washington has "urged both sides not to test or to do anything to provoke the other" and is trying to persuade the South Asian rivals to accept the need for a stable "minimum deterrent framework," the official said. In discussions with U.S. officials, both India and Pakistan have so far resisted requests to define their concepts of credible minimum deterrence or discuss stable basing modes.

Extended Range

According to reports in the Indian press, tests of the Agni-2 had been canceled in late-January and early-March for a combination of political and technical reasons. The January test would have conflicted with the arrival of U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott for non-proliferation talks.
with Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, and the March test would have come too soon after the successful Indian-Pakistani summit in Lahore. The nature of the so-called "technical hitches" referred to by officials from India's Defense Research and Development Organization as having influenced the two postponements was unclear. India has developed the nuclear-capable Prithvi family of 150-, 250- and 350-kilometer-range ballistic missiles and is alleged to be interested in developing an intercontinental ballistic missile, sometimes referred to as the Agni-3.

According to New Delhi, the Agni-2 missile traveled over 2,000 kilometers and has an estimated range of 2,500 kilometers. Indian officials said the tested missile had a payload of 1,000 kilograms. Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes said the Agni-2 could carry a "special weapons payload" and that a decision on whether to deploy a nuclear or conventional warhead "would depend upon the circumstances." Fernandes noted the Agni-2 was rail mobile and could be deployed to "rugged areas" on a "very compact system." With the single test flight, India has "reached the point of operationalization of the Agni-2 as a weapon system," Fernandes said.

Reports in the Indian press offered some additional details about the missile. Unlike its predecessor, the two-stage solid-liquid Agni-1, the Agni-2 used two solid stages which would make the missile easier to deploy and keep ready for launch on short notice. The Agni-2 may also be highly accurate. Flight control was claimed to have been aided by an on-board computer using information from global positioning system (GPS) satellites. The 1,500 to 2,000-kilometer-range Agni-1, which New Delhi has consistently labeled as a technology demonstration project, reportedly uses an on-board computer for terminal guidance of a separating reentry vehicle. India last tested the Agni-1 in February 1994.

**Pakistan's Response**

Responding to the Agni-2 test—despite international pleas for restraint—Islamabad test-fired its Ghauri-2 missile on April 14 and its Shaheen-1 missile on April 15. A statement from Islamabad on April 14 claimed the missile tests "strengthened national security and will help in maintaining a strategic balance in South Asia." The Ghauri-2 was tested to a range of 1,400 kilometers, but Pakistan claims the missile has a range of 2,000 kilometers and can fly up to 2,300 kilometers if its 1,000-kilogram payload is reduced. The technical differences between the Ghauri-1 and -2 remain unclear.

According to another U.S. official, however, there may not actually be a Ghauri-2 missile at all. Based on images of the tested missile, the profile of the flight test and the specifics offered in Islamabad's initial announcement of the test, the missile fired may have actually been a Ghauri-1. When asked for a rationale, the official suggested Islamabad was probably trying to maintain the appearance of keeping pace with the range of India's Agni-2. Pakistan last tested the 1,500-kilometer-range Ghauri-1 in April 1998. Following that test, the United States imposed sanctions on Pakistan and North Korea, claiming the Ghauri-1 was derived from the liquid-fueled 1,300-kilometer-range Nodong missile.

The Shaheen-1 was tested to a reported range of 600 kilometers, but is claimed to be capable of traveling 750 kilometers with a 1,000-kilogram payload. The road-mobile solid-fuel Shaheen is believed to utilize technology from China. According to the Pakistani newspaper The News, the Shaheen-1 is meant to counter India's Prithvi missiles. Pakistan has said it is prepared to test its 2,300-kilometer-range Shaheen-2 missile, but that with the Shaheen-1 test it has completed its current missile testing activities.

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