

Analysis of Pakistan's Taimoor missile test launch

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Taimoor missile test

On 3rd January 2026, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of Pakistan Army, announced that Pakistan Air Force (PAF) has successfully tested Taimoor Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM), which was developed domestically and can hit targets from a distance of 600 kms with a conventional warhead. They claimed that with its cutting-edge navigation and guidance system and an ability to fly at extremely low altitudes, it can successfully avoid adversary air and missile defence systems.¹ This test was conducted using a Mirage-III fighter jet. Pakistan's integration of an ALCM into its fighter fleet is an interesting development and should be analysed to understand future threats.

Estimated technical parameters

Taimoor is derived from RAAD- II ALCM. It claims to offer long-range precision strike options against land and sea targets. It's classified as a subsonic cruise missile, designed to be more accurate, durable, and survivable. According to its engineers, it has a small turbofan propulsion system that allows it to fly at low altitudes for longer periods of time while keeping its flight envelope steady over difficult terrain. Its airframe design includes material selection and shaping techniques that reduce radar cross-section (RCS), significantly improving penetration capability versus layered air defence systems.²

High midcourse accuracy is claimed even in GPS-degraded conditions due to combination of satellite navigation updates with a ring-laser or fibre-optic inertial navigation system. It's claimed that it uses a sophisticated scene-matching or imaging-based seeker (DESMAC) in terminal phase, which offers excellent accuracy against both stationary and movable targets. Circular Error of Probability (CEP), according to Pakistani officials, is in low single-digit metre range, putting it within precise range of modern ALCMs used by top air forces.³

Its warhead is evaluated as traditional penetrator-type or high-explosive payload, best suited for command centers, air-bases, fortified infrastructure, and naval ships. With a payload anticipated to be between 400- 450 kgs, it allows for mission customisation with choices such as airburst for area targets or delayed fusing for bunker defeat. It could attack both land and sea targets implying that selective attack profiles and seeker modes should be included before launch. With avionics and fire control interfaces that are comparable to contemporary mission computers and data buses, it's reported as operationally designed to be carried on a

variety of PAF fighter jets. This strategy claims to expedite integration delays and facilitate swift fleet-wide adoption.⁴

Taimoor's comparison with Indian missiles

Pakistan's national media went a step further and published an article explaining why Taimur cruise missile is more effective at evading Indian air defences because its more durable and stealthier. They emphasized that missiles like Brahmos and Nirbhay prioritise either raw speed or range, whereas Taimur's doctrine is focused on assured deterrence, penetration, and stealth. They claim its RCS is greatly reduced by its small airframe, smooth exterior shape, and fewer protrusions. They argue that India's Nirbhay is subsonic, but it values extended range and multi-platform functionality over intricate stealth shaping. Its greater size naturally improves radar visibility, especially when flying over defensive areas. BrahMos doesn't try to be covert. Its supersonic profile makes it quite apparent to contemporary sensors due to its powerful radar and infrared signature. Speed can reduce reaction time, but it doesn't mean that detection won't happen.⁵

Further they claimed Taimur and other ultra-low-flying cruise missiles are far more difficult to distinguish from background disturbance, particularly in crowded areas or mountainous terrain. Although Nirbhay promises to follow topography, its size and lack of sophisticated stealth limit how aggressively it can take advantage of low-altitude masking. Even with a low terminal phase, BrahMos has to ascend and fall in motion that makes it vulnerable to radar detection well before impact. Taimur's survivability is said to be further improved via infrared signature suppression. Effective engine design reduces exhaust temperature, and subsonic speed results in reduced aerodynamic heating. This reduces efficiency of infrared sensors and heat-seeking interceptors, especially in congested settings. Radar and infrared tracking devices can see BrahMos from a great distance because of its supersonic speed, which produces extreme heat.⁶

Another Pakistani news article claims that it would be very difficult for Indian Air Defence like the S-400 systems to track and destroy Taimoor in air because of its high speed and low-level trajectory. They maintain that its useful for precise strikes in disputed settings and for suppressing enemy air defences. It said its test flight confirms that missile can manoeuvre precisely and hit targets with accuracy.⁷ It's still quite interesting to observe here that while one news article writes that Taimoor has low subsonic speed, another article claims that it has high speed, thereby raising doubts that Pakistani media outlets are creating a hype without even knowing exact technical details.

Test launch video assessment

The location of test and type of target weren't made public by PAF or ISPR raising doubts about authenticity of this test.⁸ Days prior, India had announced tests, which included the first flight test of Pinaka long-range guided rocket, test of nuclear-capable K-4 submarine-launched ballistic missile, user evaluation trials of next-generation Akash missile system, and rapid firing of two Pralay missiles.⁹ The test video is of 52 seconds but it doesn't show any integration process of missile which raises doubts about total integration time as Pakistan claims about swift integration and platform adoption.¹⁰

A small turbofan engine is visible with foldable wings and tail fins. The missile is integrated at the central axis of aircraft. Next, jet flies and releases missile from an unknown altitude. It's not clear whether foldable wings are deployed before launch or after launch. The missile is seen dropping under gravity but it can't be made out whether its cruising or not. The camera angle is maintained at such an angle to show that its cruising, but common sense will question whether its cruising or dropping. Finally, at 42nd second it hits ground but misses marked target area raising doubts about its CEP. The missile hits ground with a vertical ballistic trajectory profile rather than a low-flying horizontal cruise profile vindicating Pakistani claims, indicating a fault with its either its navigation, guidance, engine or everything.

Limitations and conclusion

Defence analysts predict that Taimoor's operational deployment may not happen before 2028 and it doesn't appear to present Indian Navy with any further threats at that time due to anti-missile capabilities.¹¹ Despite having comparable low-observable flying profiles and precise attack capabilities, Taimoor's lesser range significantly limits it compared to Storm Shadow / SCALP.¹² Also Taimoor's indigenous development claims need to be probed further. Taimoor's deterrence value is negligible in Indian context at present.

Pakistani media's vague efforts to hype Taimoor missile test is irrelevant as they aren't aware of missile technologies, let alone speak about Brahmos and Nirbhay. Their knowledge about Brahmos and S-400 systems is insufficient which is reflected from the fact that Brahmos penetrated Pakistan's Chinese origin air-defence during operation Sindoor at multiple locations while S-400 downed few of their missiles. Pakistan should continue improving their dying science and technology sector rather than comparing their missile arsenal to India. To

conclude, Taimoor is at best an effort by ISPR to showcase its citizens and world that it's capable to reply similar to Indian missile attacks observed during Operation Sindoor.

Endnotes:

¹ "Pakistan Successfully Conducts Flight Test of Taimoor Missile", The Times of India, January 4, 2026, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/pak-successfully-conducts-flight-test-of-taimoor-missile/articleshow/126330411.cms>

² "Pakistan Air Force Confirms First Flight Test of Taimoor Air-Launched Cruise Missile", Army Recognition, January 5, 2026, <https://www.armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2026/pakistan-air-force-confirms-first-flight-test-of-taimoor-air-launched-cruise-missile>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Taimur Cruise Missile: Pakistan's Stealth Spear That Outclasses India's Cruise Arsenal", Times of Islamabad, January 3, 2026, <https://timesofislamabad.com/03-Jan-2026/taimur-cruise-missile-pakistan-s-stealth-spear-that-outclasses-india-s-cruise-arsenal>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Can Indian Air Defence S400 Stop Pakistan Advanced Taimoor Cruise Missile?", Times of Islamabad, January 3, 2026, <https://timesofislamabad.com/03-Jan-2026/can-indian-air-defence-s400-stop-pakistan-advanced-taimoor-cruise-missile>.

⁸ Clement Charpentreau, "Pakistan Launches Taimoor Cruise Missile from Mirage III E", Aero Time, January 6, 2026, <https://www.aerotime.aero/articles/mirage-iii-e-launches-taimoor-pakistan-cruise-missile-test>.

⁹ "How Efficient Is Pakistan's Taimoor Weapon System? Pakistan Air Force Tests the Missile with 600-Km Range", The Week, January 3, 2026, <https://www.theweek.in/news/defence/2026/01/03/how-efficient-is-pakistans-taimoor-weapon-system-pakistan-air-force-tests-the-missile-with-600-km-range.html>.

¹⁰ "(VIDEO) Pakistan Air Force Successfully Flight-Tests 600km Taimoor Air-Launched Cruise Missile", Defence Security Asia, January 3, 2026, <https://defencesecurityasia.com/en/pakistan-air-force-taimoor-600km-air-launched-cruise-missile-test/>.

¹¹ John Hill, "India, Pakistan Advance a Diverse Range of Missiles", Naval Technology, January 5, 2026, <https://www.naval-technology.com/features/india-pakistan-advance-a-diverse-range-of-missiles/>.

¹² Boyko Nikolov, "Pakistan Showcases Taimoor AGM Missile with Anti-Ship Role", Bulgarian Military Industry Review, November 20, 2024, <https://bulgarianmilitary.com/2024/11/20/pakistan-showcases-taimoor-agm-missile-with-anti-ship-role/>.

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