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Military Begins Switch to Upgraded ICBM

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The military will begin replacing its staple intercontinental ballistic missile Topol-M, or Sickle B in NATO classification, with its upgraded version RS-24 Yars, said Sergei Karakayev, commander of the strategic nuclear missile forces, Interfax reported Tuesday.

While the Topol-M can carry a single warhead, the Yars is capable of carrying several, which boosts its chances of penetrating an enemy's anti-missile defense, Karakayev said.

Of the two Topol-M versions, one of which is launched from a silo and the other from a mobile launcher, only the latter is scheduled for gradual replacement, he said. The military will not dismantle existing Topol-Ms, he said, but will only purchase Yars missiles from now on.

Karakayev did not say how many Yars missiles the military expects to deploy, but they will be the staple along with Topol-M until at least 2020.

The RS-24 Yars was first tested in 2007, and earlier this year, the first division equipped with the missiles was deployed in the Ivanovo region town of Teikovo.

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