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Russia's New Sarmat Heavy Nuclear Missile Delayed Again

By The Moscow Times

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The Sarmat is slated to enter service in 2018.

Russia is gearing up to test its newest heavy nuclear missile in early 2016, but a working prototype of the rocket is still nowhere to be seen after the weapon's production deadlines slipped again, news agency TASS reported Wednesday.

The Sarmat heavy intercontinental ballistic missile is a flagship nuclear rocket project currently under development in Russia as part of the government's program to re-equip the country's nuclear forces with modern missiles by 2020.

An unidentified defense industry source told TASS that the Sarmat prototype would be completed by the end of the year and that "tests could begin early next year."

This timeline points to additional delays in the missile's development program, which has already seen deadlines slip twice this year. In February, Deputy Defense Minister Yury Borisov

was quoted by TASS as saying tests would begin in mid-2015. But an unidentified defense industry official in June told the agency the weapon was only 60 percent complete and the missile would be ready at the end of October — a timeline that appears to have now been abandoned.

The Sarmat is slated to enter service in 2018. It will be Russia's largest nuclear missile — big enough to handle 10 nuclear warheads — and carry equipment designed to confuse missile defense systems.

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