

# USAF's B-52H Stratofortress tests AGM-86B air-launched cruise missile

*Airforce-technology*



***A US Air Force (USAF) operated B-52H Stratofortress jet-powered strategic bomber has launched three unarmed AGM-86B air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) to demonstrate its nuclear capability.***

The B-52H aircrews launched the unarmed ALCMs in three separate sorties at the Utah Test and Training Range.

Tests were carried out as part of the Air Force Global Strike Command's nuclear weapon system evaluation programme.

Built by Boeing, the AGM-86B has been designed to deliver a nuclear payload on target and is a key air component of the nuclear triad.

The ALCM can be launched from outside the combat area, allowing aircrews to strike distant targets without exposing themselves to potentially deadly enemy fire, the USAF stated.

A B-52H can be fitted with six ALCMs on each of the two externally mounted pylons and eight internally on a rotary launcher, giving the aircraft a maximum capacity of 20 missiles.

The ALCM was initially designed with a ten-year life span but has been in use for about 35 years, largely due to successful sustainment programmes, the statement said.

A long range standoff weapon (LRSO) is being developed to replace the ALCM and will be fielded by the USAF by 2030.

Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center commander major general Scott Jansson said: "The LRSO will be a critical element of the United States' nuclear deterrence strategy, but we must continue to support the ALCM programme until it is fielded and these recent tests are clear indicators of the ALCM's effectiveness and reliability.

Up to two LRSO contracts are expected to be awarded in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2017.

**Image:** An unarmed AGM-86B air-launched cruise missile is released from a B-52H Stratofortress. Photo: courtesy of US Air Force photo / Staff Sgt. Roidan Carlson.