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U.S. Concerned About Iran's Assault Boats and Drone

AFP news reported on August 25 that Iran's recent unveiling of new missile-firing assault boats and an aerial drone is a source of concern for U.S. officials. State Department spokesman Philip Crowley told reporters: "This is ... something that is of concern to us and ... concern to Iran's neighbors."

Crowley acknowledged that every country has the right to provide for its self-defense and that the United States will "take into account ... systems that can potentially ... threaten particular countries or peace and stability in the region."



In response to "the growth [of] Iran's capabilities over a number of years, we've stepped up our military cooperation with other countries in the region," Crowley said.

"This is one of the reasons why ... we believe that if Iran continues on the path that it's on ... [it] might find itself less secure because you'll have countries in the region that join together to offset Iran's growing capabilities."

AFP cited Iran's state news agency, IRNA, which reported that the Seraj ("Lamp") and Zolfaqar (named after Shiite Imam Ali's sword) boats would be manufactured at Iran's marine industries complex, part of its defense ministry.

IRNA reported that Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi officially opened the boat production assembly lines, stating:

"Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran is relying on a great defense industry and the powerful forces of Sepah [Revolutionary Guards] and the army, with their utmost strength, can provide security to the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and Strait of Hormuz."

Vahidi issued a stern warning to Iran's "enemy," without specifically naming a country, though Iran often names both Israel and the United States as potential adversaries. "The enemy must be careful of its adventurous behavior and not play with fire because the Islamic Republic of Iran's response would be unpredictable," IRNA quoted him.

"If enemies attack Iran, the Islamic Republic of Iran's reaction will not be restricted to one area. The truth of our defense doctrine is that we will not attack any country and that we extend our hand to all legitimate countries." Vahidi also claimed: "The Iranian-made missile-launching boats rank first in the world when it comes to their velocity."

Iran's announcement about its new missile-launching boats comes just a day after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad unveiled Iran's jet-powered bomber drone. Employing bravado that has become typical of Iran's current regime, Ahmadinejad nicknamed the drone the "ambassador of death," though it is officially named Karar ("Assailant" or "Striker").

Despite Iran's pointed sabre-rattling, Western analysts were less than impressed with the new pilotless plane. A Time.com report cited Richard Aboulafia, a veteran analyst with the Teal Group, a Washington,



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D.C.-area aerospace-consulting firm, who described Karar as “more like the ‘ambassador of minor damage to unintended target.’ ” The report also quoted Kenneth Katzman, described as an Iranian-military expert with the Congressional Research Service, who opined: "It is likely to have virtually no actual military value." Also cited in the Time report was a comment left on an aviation website by a poster who asked facetiously: "Is Estes the prime contractor?" ([Estes](#) is known among hobbyists for its model rocket kits.)

The Karar drone, which is 13 feet long and can carry up to a 450-pound payload, has a range of about 600 miles, incapable of reaching Israel, its logical intended target.

Weapon number three in Iran’s recently unveiled new fall line is the Fateh-110 missile, which has a longer range than previous models, Iranian news agencies reported on August 25, citing Iran’s Defense Minister Vahidi.

Iran’s semi-official Fars news agency quoted Vahidi that the production of the missile was "another victory in the field of defense and technology, and was another example of busting the sanctions and getting rid of them." The sanctions that Vahidi referred to were imposed by the UN Security Council on certain companies working on Iran’s nuclear fuel enrichment program.

Fars reported that Vahidi also denied that Iran’s implementation of the Fateh missile was linked to the recent purchase of U.S.-made Patriot missiles by Kuwait. "Kuwait is not a threat to us because we have friendly relations with Kuwait ... however, there was no need to have that system [Patriot] in Kuwait."

One would expect that a nation which has aggressive military ambitions would go about its work quietly, as did both Germany and Japan prior to World War II. Iran’s obvious publicity-seeking and braggadocio of late suggests that its strategy is based more on verbal intimidation than on military prowess.

*Photo: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, right, applauds during a ceremony of inauguration of the Karrar, which Iran claims is first domestically-built, long-range, unmanned bomber aircraft, while chief of the General Staff of Iran’s Armed Forces, General Hasan Firouzabadi looks on, Aug. 22, 2010:
AP Images*



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