



Russia: Security Concerns About Iran's Space Program Growing (U//FOUO)

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An OSW review of open source material indicates that there has been a consensus for several years among prominent Russian space experts that Iran is seeking to develop space launch technology to develop an ICBM capability but there is disagreement about how quickly that goal can be achieved. In contrast, most statements from Russian officials and legislators have tended to downplay both Iran's technical capabilities as well as its intentions to develop ICBMs, calling them "groundless" in some cases. Nonetheless, over the past year Moscow appears to have become more worried about the security implications of assisting Tehran with the further development of its space capability. Iran's Ambassador to Russia, for example, complained publicly about a slowdown in space-related cooperation. (U//FOUO)

Russian Experts Convinced Iran Making Progress ... (U)

Most Russian military and scientific space experts judge that recent Iranian space launches demonstrate that Iran is moving forward in developing multistage separation and propulsion technology and is increasingly capable of developing a space launch vehicle with an advanced payload capacity.

- Viktor Mizin, deputy head of the Moscow State University of International Relations' Institute of International Studies, in September 2009 said that "over the past five to seven years, Iran has mastered technology to develop both liquid-fueled and solid-propelled rocket engines, as well as multistage launch vehicles."
- Col. Gen. Viktor Yesin, first vice president of the Russian Academy of Security, Defense and Law and a former Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Strategic Rocket Troops, in March 2009 said that, in "addition to work to develop rocket staging, the Iranians appear to have acquired a more sophisticated rocket propulsion capability."
- Russian space expert Igor Lisov, commenting on Iran's successful launch of Omid satellite on a Safir-2 rocket last year, noted that "It is quite extraordinary to use a two-stage rocket of such a

small launch mass (up to 25 ton) for a spacecraft launch mission. In order for the upper stage to gain the required velocity to deliver even a small satellite into orbit, it should have a rather sophisticated design.”

- Vladimir Yevseev, a senior research fellow with the Moscow-based Center for International Security of the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of World Economy and International Relations, told the state-controlled RIA Novosti news agency in February 2009 that, since 2005, Iran has been developing space launch vehicles (SLVs) “rumored to have an improved range of up to 10,000 km and featuring a three-stage design, with the first and second stages being propelled by liquid fuel, and the upper stage—by solid fuel.” (U//FOUO)

A Glossary of Iran’s Spacecraft and Space Launch Vehicles (U)

Ashoura: Iranian-built ICBM with a reported range of up to 2,000 km.

Kavoshgar-1: Iranian-built sounding rocket—also called a research rocket—designed to take measurements and perform scientific experiments during sub-orbital flight.

Kavoshgar-3: Iranian-built rocket carrying an experimental capsule for research purposes.

Mesbah: Partially Iranian-built low orbiting research satellite with a suspected reconnaissance capability.

Omid: Iran’s first domestically-built satellite, designed to provide telecommunications services.

Rasad: New, domestically-developed weather and navigation satellite.

Safir-2: Iranian carrier rocket used to put into orbit the Omid-1 spacecraft.

Shahab-3: Medium-range ballistic missile with a range of up to 2,000 km.

Sinah-1: Iran’s first satellite. Designed to provide telecommunications and imaging services, the spacecraft was also rumored to have a reconnaissance capability. The satellite was built by Russia and launched in 2005 on a Kosmos-3 booster rocket from North Russia’s Plesetsk Space Center.

Zohreh: A planned telecommunications satellite with a design lifespan of 15 years. (U//FOUO)

... And Seeking ICBM Capability (U)

A variety of Russian experts over the past few years have said that Tehran intends to use SLV technology to develop ICBM systems that could reach targets throughout most of the Middle East and Russia. There is less consensus among Russian experts regarding the pace at which Iran will be able to develop ICBMs.

- RIA Novosti in July 2010 noted Iran’s launching into orbit of the Rasad-1 satellite and reported that Iran may be developing a ballistic missile with a range of 4,000-5,000 km.

- In a February 2010 interview, the late Aleksandr Pikaev, then head of the Center for International Security of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economy and International Relations, said that Iran has been actively developing its space rocket technology and that their primary goal is to build ICBMs.
- Russian space analyst Andrei Kislyakov wrote in April 2009 that Iran's development of the solid-fuel ballistic missiles Shahab-5 and Shahab-6, with a range of between 3,000 km and 5,000 km respectively, means that Tehran is on the verge of creating ICBMs.
- Mizin asserted in September 2009 that he expects Iran within the next 10 years to develop reliable medium-range missile systems with a range of about 3,000 km and to move to the testing phase for its first ICBM with a range of between 3,500 km to 5,000 km. (U//FOUO)

Russian Officials Largely Downplay Iranian Capability and Intentions ... (U)

Most statements from Russian officials and legislators—in contrast to the views of Russian scientific experts—have consistently focused on Iran's current limited capability in missile technology while asserting Iran's benign future intentions or its inability to develop ICBMs.

- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in March 2010 said that Iran currently has no missiles with a long-range strike capability and is unlikely to develop such missiles in the foreseeable future.
- Maj. Gen. Vladimir Dvorkin during a press conference in March 2009 cited the 2009 assessment by the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces that “Tehran only possesses missiles with a limited range of up to 1,000 km.”
- Chairman of the Russian Federation Council's Committee on International Affairs Mikhail Margelov in a February 2009 interview said that the Iranian space launches do not mean that “Iran is capable of using its achievements for military purposes” and that “there is no reason to believe that Iran's space program poses some kind of a global threat.”
- Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrei Nesterenko in August 2008 said that concern over Tehran's intentions to use space rocket technology for the development of an indigenous ballistic missile is groundless and that, “if Iran strictly adheres to its announced plans to use space for peaceful purposes, then its space program will pose no threat for international stability and security.”
- In November 2007, Army Gen. Yuri Baluevsky, then Joint Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, was quoted by the Strana.ru online news agency as saying that the Iranian missile threat is grossly exaggerated and that Iran would not be able to build an ICBM until at least 2020. (U//FOUO)

... But Signs of Official Concern Growing (U)

Although Russia has approved a new round of international sanctions against Iran's nuclear program passed by the UN Security Council in June 2010, Moscow has said that sanctions will not hamper its

military-technical cooperation with Iran in civilian rocket technology. Nonetheless, over the past year Moscow appears to have become more worried about the security implications of assisting Tehran with the further development of its space capability. One concern that has surfaced is the impact of Iran's space program on Russian efforts to prevent the militarization of space.

- Despite strong interest from the Iranian government, Russia appears reluctant to help Tehran develop the Zohreh telecommunications satellite. The head of the Russian Federal Space Agency Anatoly Perminov, while speaking with reporters during the 2009 Paris Air Show, said that “no work is currently being done on a second Iranian satellite.”
- Iran's Ambassador in Moscow Seyyed Mahmoud-Reza Sajjadi complained in a November 2009 interview that many programs had been “struck down” in various Russian agencies, while a number of joint projects were halted by “hidden factors.” The Iranian Ambassador noted that joint projects in the area of satellite communications had been negatively affected.
- Yevseev wrote in February 2009 that “by launching its dual-use satellites, Iran provokes the United States to develop and deploy both spaceborne and ground-based anti-satellite (ASAT) systems, which complicates the ratification of the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects (PPWT), jointly submitted by Russia and China at the February 2008 International Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.” (U//FOUO)

Selected Milestones of Russian-Iranian Space Cooperation (U)

1998: Russia and Iran sign an agreement that would transfer Russian technology enabling Iran to build the Mesbah communications satellite.

1998: The United States imposes economic sanctions against Russia's Glavkosmos space agency, accusing it of export control violations and engaging in proliferation activities related to Iran's rocket program.

1999: During a hearing at the US House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics in July, a number of Russian firms were reported to be actively involved in the sale of space technology to Iran.

2001: Russia and Iran sign a contract to build the Zohreh telecommunications satellite for Iran. After cancelling the deal in 2003, the two sides sign a new agreement in 2005. The Krasnoyarsk-based Reshetnev Research and Production Association of Applied Mechanics was named the primary contractor in the project.

2005: A Russian Kosmos-3M carrier rocket launches Iran's first satellite, Sinah-1, from the Plesetsk cosmodrome in the northwestern Arkhangelsk region. The Sinah-1 spacecraft was built by the Russian Polyot Production Association.

2006: Yuri Nosenko, deputy head of Roscosmos, was quoted by the ARMS-TASS wire service as saying that the Zohreh launch, initially planned for 2007, was pushed back to 2009. Nosenko described Zohreh as the Express-series next-generation satellite, adding that “it would be similar to spacecraft Russia builds for itself.”

2007: Russian President Vladimir Putin at a press conference in Tehran says that “Iran and Russia are now cooperating on wide range of issues such as space, aviation industry, and large infrastructure projects.”

2007: Russia supports tougher UN economic sanctions against Iran’s nuclear program. A decree of President Putin called for strict restrictions on financial transactions with certain Iranian individuals and companies. Neither the Iran Aerospace Association nor the Iranian Space Agency, however, were on the list of banned Iranian government entities, allowing Moscow’s assistance to Iran’s space program to continue.

2010: Iran and Russia reach an agreement to orbit Iranian telecommunications and remote sensing satellites on a Russian rocket, according to MIGnews.com website. (U//FOUO)