

Iran test-fires longer range missile

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Iran test-fires longer range missile as part of new manoeuvres



Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard tests the long-range Shahab-3 missile during maneuvers in a central desert area of Iran, Thursday. (AP/ISNA, Ruhollah Vahdati)

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TEHRAN, Iran (AP) – Iran test-fired dozens of missiles, including the Shahab-3 that can reach Israel, in military manoeuvres Thursday that it said were aimed at putting a stop to the role of world powers in the Persian Gulf region.

The show of strength came as Iran remains locked in dispute with the West over its nuclear program, which Washington says is geared to producing atomic weapons but Tehran says is only for generating electricity. The manoeuvres came three days after U.S.-led warships finished naval exercises in the Gulf that Iran branded as “adventurist.”

State television reported that several kinds of missiles were tested, and broadcast footage of them being fired from mobile launchers.

“We want to show our deterrent and defensive power to trans-regional enemies, and we hope they will understand the message,” the head of the Revolutionary Guards, Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi, said in a clear reference to the United States, Britain and France, who were among the six countries that took part in the Gulf manoeuvres earlier this week.

Iranian state radio said: “The manoeuvre is aimed at providing security in the region without the intervention of trans-regional powers, which are trying to justify their presence by portraying the region as convulsive.”

In Israel, Infrastructure Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said he was not surprised by the missile tests, and warned that to leave Iran unchecked would pose a risk to the world.

“Iran is following a direct line after North Korea. Therefore this problem is not Israel's but that of the entire world,” Ben-Eliezer said, referring to North Korea's recent nuclear test and its frequent launches of long-range missiles.

Iran's Shahab-3 missile, which can carry a nuclear warhead and is said to have a range of more than 2,000 kilometres, is believed to be based on a North Korean missile design, although Iran denies this.

The Iranian missile tests “should bother not only Israel. It should bother the Arab countries, Islamic countries, the Gulf region, North Africa and Europe,” Ben-Eliezer said. “We are always warning the world about this phenomenon called Iran.”

Iran state radio quoted the air force chief of the Revolutionary Guards, Gen. Hossein Salami, as saying: “A large number of advanced missiles, different in range, warhead and kind, were successfully test-fired at the same time.”

The UN Security Council is considered imposing sanctions on Iran, which has ignored demands that it cease uranium enrichment, a process that can produce the fuel for nuclear reactors or material for bombs.

Iran insists it does not seek to produce nuclear weapons, but only to produce its own nuclear fuel.

The U.S.-led manoeuvres that finished Monday focused on surveillance, with warships tracking a ship suspected of carrying components of illegal weapons. The countries that took part were Australia, Bahrain, Britain, France, Italy and the United States.

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