

## Iran rocket launch 'troubles' US

Contributed by Our Foreign Staff, The Telegraph  
Monday, 18 August 2008

Iran said it had sent a rocket carrying a dummy satellite into space on Sunday, triggering fresh concern in Washington that the technology could be diverted to ballistic missiles.

The launch is likely to further exacerbate tensions with the West over its nuclear drive, which Iran's arch-foe Washington and its allies claim is a cover for atomic weapons ambitions.

"The Safir (Ambassador) rocket was successfully launched. All its systems...are Iranian-made," Reza Taghipour, head of Iran's space agency, told state television, adding that a "test satellite was put into orbit."

"We have paved the way for placing a satellite in space in future," state television said, showing images of the pre-dawn rocket launch which was attended by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Western governments, already concerned over Iran's nuclear activities, have warned that the technology used in the Islamic republic's space programme could be diverted to military use, claims denied by Tehran.

"The Iranian development and testing of rockets is troubling and raises further questions about their intentions," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said.

"This action and dual use possibilities for their ballistic missile program are inconsistent with their UN Security Council obligations."

Iran sparked international concern back in February by testing the rocket designed to carry the satellite.

The United States were swift to condemn the February launch as "just another troubling development," saying it was a cause for concern about Iran's continuing development of medium- and long-range missiles.

At the time, Mohsen Mir Shams, the deputy head of Iran's space organisation, said the satellite would be put into orbit at an altitude of 650 kilometres (400 miles) above the earth, passing over Iran six times every 24 hours.

Iran has pursued a space programme for several years, and in October 2005 a Russian-made Iranian satellite named Sina-1 was put into orbit by a Russian rocket.

Yet despite the anxiety over Iran's space program, it is not exactly clear how developed it is.

Iran claims it wants to put its own satellites into orbit to monitor natural disasters in the earthquake-prone nation and improve its telecommunications.

Iranian officials point to America's use of satellites to monitor Afghanistan and Iraq and say they need similar abilities for their security.

Iran also said yesterday that it has increased the range of its warplanes, allowing them to fly as far as Israel and back without refuelling.

State TV quoted Air Force Chief General. Ahmad Mighani as saying that Iranian warplanes can now fly 3,000 kilometers (1,865 miles) without refuelling. He didn't specify the aircraft type or explain how the range was extended.

Such a range could be achieved by using external fuel tanks attached to the wings or fuselage that can be released when empty.

Sunday's report did not refer to Israel by name, but Mighani's remarks come after an Israeli air exercise in June that U.S. officials described as a possible rehearsal for a strike on Iran's nuclear facilities.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2576267/Iran-rocket-launch-troubles-US.html>

Iran says it has successfully launched a rocket capable of carrying its first domestically built satellite.

BBC World News - Aug 17, 2008

{flv}BBC-Iran-Satellite-Launch-Aug-17-08{/flv}

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MK Ben-Yisrael: Iran far from launching espionage satellite

Aug. 18, 2008

JPost.com Staff , THE JERUSALEM POST

Iran is very far from launching an espionage satellite, former head of the Israel Space Agency, Kadima MK Prof. Yitzhak Ben-Yisrael, said Monday morning, following the Islamic Republic's claim that it had successfully test-launched a rocket capable of carrying a satellite to outer space.

In an interview with Army Radio, Ben-Yisrael added that in his opinion, Iran was attempting to deter the US and Israel from attacking its nuclear facilities, and therefore, the exaggerated Israeli scare following the announcement was playing into the hands of Teheran.

"If Iran were to announce it had successfully launched a satellite into space, this claim could be verified within a day or two," Ben-Yisrael said.

This article can also be read at <http://www.jpost.com>

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Iran Launches Satellite-Carrier Rocket, US Expresses Concern

By VOA News

17 August 2008

Iran says it has successfully test-launched a rocket capable of carrying a domestically-built satellite into space.

Officials say Sunday's launch sent the satellite-carrier rocket known as Safir, or Ambassador into orbit from an Iranian space center. The officials corrected earlier reports in the Iranian media that said the rocket sent a domestic satellite into space.

White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe says the Iranian rocket launch is troubling because the technology could be diverted to ballistic missiles. He says Iran's actions are inconsistent with its United Nations Security Council obligations.

Iranian media say President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad attended the launch. State television broadcast video of a rocket heading into space.

Tehran says its space program is aimed at launching research and telecommunications satellites into orbit. In February, Iran first tested a rocket it said was capable of delivering a satellite into space.

In another development, Iran's air force commander said Sunday that Tehran has upgraded its warplanes to fly 3,000 kilometers without refueling. Brigadier General Ahmad Mighani did not specify the type of aircraft or say how the range was extended.

Israel is about 1,000 kilometers away from Iran. Iranian leaders have frequently called for the Jewish state's destruction. Israel refuses to rule out military action to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Tehran says its nuclear program is peaceful.

Some information for this report was provided by AFP and AP.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-08-17-voa25.cfm>