

Iranian claims of jet range dismissed

Contributed by Yaakov Lappin , THE JERUSALEM POST
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Iran's claim of having increased the range of its fighter jets, allowing them to fly as far as Israel and back without refueling, did not signify any new operational abilities, an arms expert said on Sunday.

Iranian state TV quoted the Islamic Republic's air force chief Gen. Ahmad Mighani as saying Iranian warplanes could now fly 3,000 kilometers without refueling. He didn't specify the aircraft type or explain how the range was extended. Israel is about 1,000 kilometers from Iran.

But Yiftah Shapir, head of the Middle East Military Balance project at Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies, said there was a major difference between being able to fly 3,000 kilometers and actually carrying out a successful airstrike on a distant target.

"You may be able to technically fly the distance at high altitude without arms on the jet," Shapir said.

"But there's a big difference between that and flying low as you would on a mission to avoid radar, laden with arms, which takes up more fuel. You would need a plan to reach the target, hover it for five to ten minutes as you strike it, and then escape the area without being shot down and escape fighter jets.

"You would need the intelligence on targets, and a rescue plan. This is a very complex business, and I'm certain the Iranians are far from having that capability," he added.

Iran has 203 combat jets in service, according to Shapir's data. It possesses four types of ground-attack jets - the SU-24 (23 in service), the SU-25 (13 in service), the Saegheh (3 in service), and the indigenously developed Azarkhsh plane (6 in service). The SU jets are named after the Russian Sukhoi company which produced the warplanes.

Iran also possesses three types of multi-role fighter jets; 49 F4 jets, 22 phantoms, and 10 Mirage F1-E type aircraft.

In March 2007, Jane's Defense Weekly reported that "Iranian pilots are stepping up training and exercises for long-range missions."

Quoting "Western defense sources," the report said "Iran is pursuing a longer-range strike capability for its air assets to support the delivery of more powerful strategic weapon systems," adding that Teheran was "investing considerable resources" in aerial refueling capabilities. The training involved the Iranian air force's Sukhoi Su-24MK strike aircraft, Jane's Weekly said.

AP contributed to this report.

This article can also be read at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1218710384313&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>

SU-24 Fencer

{youtube}PXW0-OryNbQ{/youtube}

Sukhoi Su-24 (Fencer)

Even after its Cold War decades of service, the nuclear-capable Su-24 Fencer still presents a fearsome foe.

The Su-24 (NATO series name of "Fencer") was a successful Sukhoi product requested by the Soviet government to replace their aging IL-28 and Yak-28 medium-class bombers. Though initial research resulted in a delta-wing design with additional auxiliary jets for assisted take-offs on short runways, the system gradually developed into the highly-capable sing-wing bomber seen throughout the latter decades of the Cold War.

Superficially, the Su-24 Fencer shares an external appearance with the American-produced General Dynamics F-111 Aardvark series of strategic bombers. Both are also nuclear capable, offer variable swing-wing performance and top speeds above Mach 1. The Su-24, like it's F-111 counterpart is also a two-engine bomber, fitted with the Lyulka AL-

21F3A series of turbofan engines with afterburn capabilities. The Su-24 is also a two-crew aircraft with pilot and copilot seated side by side. The twin engines are fed by two side-mounted intakes on the fuselage and a single large rudder is adorned on the tail assembly, just above the engine exhausts.

The Su-24's versatility has spawned numerous variants of both major and limited production release. Chief among those are the Su-24M "Fencer-D" that saw the implementation of a terrain-following radar system, improved avionics in a redesigned nose assembly, a retractable fuel-probe and the additional of fences near the wing roots. The system went on to become a major production model and was considered the "definitive" Su-24. Success of the design went on to become the Su-24MK for export purposes, sans the wing root fences mentioned.

Systems such as the Su-24 benefit from the versatility inherent in their design. With the availability of up to nine hardpoints, the aircraft is quite capable of fitting a dazzling array of munitions for mission-specific threats. These can include the gamut of laser-guided bombers, conventional bombs and a variety of air-to-surface missiles as necessary. Additionally, the Fencer is supplied a single 23mm six-barreled cannon for aerial threats and can field the potent AA-8 "Aphid" air-to-air missiles for self-defense. Up to 17,635 pounds of external stores can be carried.

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Specifications: Sukhoi Su-24 (Fencer)

Dimensions:

Length: 80.71ft (24.60m)

Width: 57.87ft (17.64m)

Height: 20.31ft (6.19m)

Performance:

Max Speed: 1,439mph (2,316kmh; 1,251kts)

Max Range: 652miles (1,050km)

Climb Rate: 29,525 ft/min

Ceiling: 57,415ft (17,500m; 10.9miles)

Structure:

Accommodation: 2

Hardpoints: 9

Empty Weight: 49,163lbs (22,300kg)

MTOW: 87,524lbs (39,700kg)

Power:

Engine(s): 2 x Saturn/Lyulka AL-21F-3A turbojet engines with afterburn generating 24,690lbs of thrust each.

Weapons Suite:

1 x 23mm GSh-23-6 six-barreled cannon

Mission-specific ordnance on nine external stores amounting to 17,635lbs can comprise of any of the following munitions:

2 x AA-8 "Aphid" (R-60) air-to-air missiles

AS-7 "Kerry" (Kh-23) air-to-surface missile

AS-10 "Karen" (Kh-25ML) air-to-surface missile

AS-11 "Kilter" (Kh-58) air-to-surface missile

AS-12 "Kegler" (Kh-25MP) air-to-surface missile

AS-13 "Kingbolt" (kh-59) air-to-surface missile

AS-14 "Kedge" (Kh-29) air-to-surface missile

AS-17 "Krypton" (Kh-31) air-to-surface missile

TN-1000 Nuclear Weapon

TN-1200 Nuclear Weapon

Laser-Guided Bombs

Rocket Pods

Conventional Bombs

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Su-24>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Iranian_Air_Force_aircraft