

Iran launches new submarine production line: report

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TEHRAN -- Iran has launched a production line of a newly home-made submarine, local Press TV satellite channel reported on Sunday.

Iranian Defense Minister Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar inaugurated the production line of the new submarine Qaaem, which is capable of carrying and firing various torpedoes and subsurface missiles with a special operation crew onboard, according to the report.

"The Islamic Republic has become self-sufficient in manufacturing all types of military vessels," Mohammad-Najjar was quoted as saying during the inauguration.

He noted that the development of new military equipment, such as the surface and subsurface missiles, would increase navy ability to defend Iranian territorial waters and prevent an attack against the country.

"Iran is the main force safeguarding peace and security in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman with its strong presence in the strategic region," he added.

The launch of the submarine production line came amid reports that an armada of US and European warships will be deployed in the Gulf in an unprecedented build-up.

The United States and its allies have accused Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear program. Iran has denied the US charges and insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

The Bush administration said it focused on diplomacy to try to resolve Iran's nuclear issue, but insisted it will take "no option off the table."

Some observers believe that it is possible that the United States and Israel would attack Iranian targets for Tehran's suspicious nuclear program.

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Iran has launched the production of an all-domestically built, mid-size submarine that will be able to fire missiles and torpedoes, state TV reported.

Defense Minister Gen. Mostafa Mohammad Najjar inaugurated the production line of the sub, named Ghaem, at a ceremony Monday.

According to the TV channel, he said Iran has made huge investments to attain self-sufficiency and equip its armed forces with modern weapons.

The TV channel also said two other submarines, named Ghadair, have been delivered to the Iranian Navy. Their production began in 2005.

Iran occasionally announces making advanced weapons but rarely makes statements about submarines.

Years ago, Teheran said it bought some Russian subs and would produce its own, smaller-sized ones.

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