

'Iranian anti-tank missile may fall into terrorists' hands'

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Defense officials fear newly inaugurated missile will be transferred to Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Israel is concerned that a new anti-tank missile that Iran has begun manufacturing will be transferred to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, defense officials said on Monday.

Earlier in the day, Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi inaugurated a new production line of the 73 millimeter missile, which he said has a range of over 1,000 meters and can penetrate 300 mm. of reinforced steel, according to Iranian news reports.

Vahidi said during the ceremony the missiles could be launched against tanks and armored personnel carriers (APC).

The anti-tank threat is not new for the IDF, which suffered heavy losses to its tanks and APCs during the Second Lebanon War in 2006.

Following the war, the IDF sped up development of the Trophy active protection system, which has already been installed on a battalion of Merkava Mk 4 tanks and successfully intercepted a rocket-propelled grenade along the Gaza Strip border earlier this year.

Hamas and Hezbollah are believed to already have a significant arsenal of anti-tank missiles, supplied by Syria. One of the missiles is the Russian-made Kornet, which penetrated an IDF tank along the border with Gaza in late 2010.

On Monday, The Jerusalem Post revealed the Defense Ministry has decided not to install a missile defense system on the new Namer APC due to Rafael and Israel Military Industries' refusal to combine the active protection systems that each company is independently developing into a single system for IDF use.

The Trophy provides 360° protection against anti-tank missiles. Its radar, made by Israel Aerospace Industries subsidiary Elta, detects the threats and then fires a cloud of countermeasures to intercept the incoming missile.

The other system, developed by IMI, is called Iron Fist, and in addition to the Trophy's capabilities, it is also reported to be capable of intercepting standard tank rounds.