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Iran Says It Has Built Hypersonic Missile

U.N. atomic agency separately reported that Tehran continues to stonewall its investigation into Iranian nuclear activities



Amir Ali Hajizadeh of the Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps earlier this year.

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Updated Nov. 10, 2022 11:58 am ET

TEHRAN—Iran said Thursday it has built a hypersonic missile capable of penetrating any air-defense system, as the United Nations atomic agency reported that Tehran continues to stonewall its investigation into Iranian nuclear activities.

As senior officials lashed out at Tehran's neighbors and other foreign foes they accuse of fomenting protests sweeping across the country, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps's Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh said the new missile could maneuver both inside and outside the atmosphere, according to state media. He provided no evidence to support the claims.

While Iran has a vast missile development program, it remains unclear if it has the capability to build hypersonic weapons, among the latest technology being developed by the U.S., China and Russia. North Korea said it tested a hypersonic missile earlier this year. Hypersonic missiles fly at least five times the speed of

sound and closer to the Earth than ballistic missiles, making them difficult to detect.

Iran regularly tests new missile technology, but the latest claim comes as it faces an antigovernment protest movement that is posing the clerical establishment one of its biggest challenges in years. As the unrest has grown, senior Iranian officials have publicly accused Saudi Arabia, along with the U.S., European countries and Israel, of orchestrating the demonstrations, without providing any evidence to support the allegation.

“If they meddle in Iran, they will pay the price,” Maj. Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi, a senior military adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, was quoted as saying Thursday by the Young Journalists Club, an affiliate of Iranian state television.

The IRGC’s top commander last month publicly warned Saudi Arabia to rein in coverage of the Iranian protests by Farsi-language satellite news channels outlets, including Iran International, a Saudi-backed satellite television channel based in London popular with many Iranians. Iran’s intelligence minister, Esmail Khatib, called Iran International a “terrorist organization” this week.

On Thursday, Iranian authorities arrested a woman they accused of passing information to Iran International, according to Fars, a semiofficial news agency. The channel denied on its website that it had ever collaborated with Elham Afkari, who is the sister of a wrestler controversially executed two years ago.

Earlier in the week, Iran International said on its website British police had notified two of its London-based journalists of “an imminent, credible and significant risk to their lives and those of their families.” The Metropolitan Police force has declined to comment.

Last week, U.S., Saudi and other military forces were on heightened alert for a possible imminent attack from Iran on the kingdom based on shared U.S. and Saudi intelligence warnings. That threat has eased but not passed, Persian Gulf and U.S. officials said. Iran denied it was planning an attack. Saudi officials suggested that Iran believed an attack would deflect attention from the protests at home.

Iranian authorities have struggled to quell the unrest that has occurred almost

daily since the death on Sept. 16 of a young woman in police custody for allegedly violating Iran's strict rules on how women dress in public. More than 200 have been killed and over 1,000 arrested in the crackdown. On Thursday, protests continued in large parts of the country.

Iran has also stepped up accusations against European nations, including Germany, that are looking to place fresh human rights sanctions against Tehran over its crackdown. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Berlin should back off what he called its interventionist stance or face "long-term consequences." The German Foreign Ministry declined to comment.

Meanwhile, the International Atomic Energy Agency reported Thursday that Iran was still obstructing its probe into undeclared nuclear material found in Iran, leading to a likely formal rebuke of Iran at the IAEA's board meeting of member states next week, Western diplomats said.

Tehran has refused to provide credible answers to the Agency's questions about the materials, the IAEA has said. Iran has demanded that the three-year-old probe be closed down as a condition for restoring the 2015 nuclear deal, a stipulation the U.S. and its European allies have refused. Talks on restoring the deal, which lifted most international sanctions on Tehran in response to tight but temporary restrictions on its nuclear program, have stalled.

In two confidential reports circulated to member states and seen by the Journal, the IAEA also said that Iran's decision to remove agency cameras from nuclear-related facilities made it harder for the Agency "to provide assurance of the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program."

An official close to the agency said that Iran's withholding of key information from the IAEA means it could take them four months to rebuild a clear picture of Iran's nuclear program if the 2015 nuclear deal was revived.



The IAEA said that after weeks of delay, Iran had this week invited an IAEA team to come to Tehran later this month for talks on the so-called safeguards probe.



Enrichment facilities at the nuclear research center in Natanz, Iran, in 2019.

PHOTO: HO/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

“The director general is seriously concerned that there has still been no progress in clarifying and resolving the outstanding” questions about the materials, the report said.

Meanwhile, the Agency reported that Iran’s stockpile of 60% enriched uranium grew by 6.7 kilograms to 62.3 kg in the three months to Oct. 22, far above the amount needed to produce enough nuclear fuel for a weapon.

Iran claims its nuclear program is purely peaceful but it is the only nonnuclear weapon country to produce 60% nuclear fuel, which can be swiftly converted into 90% enriched weapons grade fuel.

Iran has massively expanded its nuclear program since 2019, after the U.S. decision in May 2018 to exit from the nuclear deal.

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Appeared in the November 11, 2022, print edition as ‘Iran Says New Missile Can Breach Any Air Defenses’.