



Security Council

Distr.: General
4 June 2020

Original: English

Letter dated 3 June 2020 from the representatives of France, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Further to our letter dated 21 November 2019 (S/2019/911), France, Germany and the United Kingdom wish to bring to the attention of the Security Council recent actions undertaken by Iran which are inconsistent with paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution 2231 (2015), regarding Iran's ballistic missile programme.

As the Security Council is aware, paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution 2231 (2015) states:

Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology, until the date eight years after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action adoption day or until the date on which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) submits a report confirming the Broader Conclusion, whichever is earlier.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom note that the launch of the Qased space launch vehicle on 22 April 2020 is inconsistent with this provision.

Background

In forming an assessment of what constitutes a “ballistic missile designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons”, we have applied the performance characteristics of the Missile Technology Control Regime Category-1 systems. These comprise rocket systems capable of delivering a payload of at least 500 kg to a range of at least 300 km, the recognized minima for the mass of a nuclear warhead and the distance required to ensure self-preservation after delivery. Missile Technology Control Regime Category-1 systems are recognized through long-standing international consensus as being the systems of most concern with respect to the delivery capability for a nuclear payload. These criteria have been widely used among Missile Technology Control Regime and non-Missile Technology Control Regime members, including with respect to implementing obligations under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). “Designed to be capable” in this context means having the capabilities by virtue of technical design, regardless of claimed intent.

Qased space launch vehicle

On 22 April 2020, media reporting indicated Iran launched a Qased space launch vehicle, successfully placing what Iran described as its first “military satellite”, Nour-1, into orbit. Iran stated that, unlike all of its previous space launch vehicle tests,



this programme was developed and conducted by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is a military entity known to control Iran's strategic missile forces. The launch was conducted from an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps facility in Shahrud which was not previously associated with such launches.

Previous launches, such as the Simorgh on 22 February, took place under the auspices of the civilian Iranian Space Agency, using technology primarily developed by organizations operating under the control of the Iranian Ministry of Defence. We remain concerned by all launches which employ ballistic missile-related systems and technologies.

The Qased was launched from a mobile launch pad, a so-called transporter/erector/launcher, which minimizes pre-launch detection and is typically used for military ballistic missiles to increase second strike capabilities rather than for civil purposes. We note with concern that this launch undertaken by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps sends a destabilizing message into the region and beyond.

Technical features of the Qased

This was the first public demonstration of the Qased which retains the Shahab-3 ballistic missile as its first stage.

The Qased incorporates new developments in the design of its second stage. These developments are directly applicable to the development of long-range ballistic missiles.

The United Nations Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution [1929 \(2010\)](#) concluded in its final report dated 4 June 2012 ([S/2012/395](#)) that the Safir was derived "from two nuclear-capable missiles (the Shahab-3 and the R-27 submarine-launched ballistic missile in its second stage)" (para. 36). As the Qased makes use of the ballistic missile technology of the Shahab-3 ballistic missile, which is capable of delivering nuclear weapons, it shares these inherent design features, thereby making it nuclear-capable.

The design of the Qased second stage is based on a new solid-propellant motor and incorporates a new attitude control module. This solid-propellant motor design is similar to the Salman system unveiled by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in February 2020 along with a range of other new ballistic missile technology, including the Raad-500 short-range ballistic missile. The Salman featured a flexible-nozzle control system, rather than jet vanes used on other Iranian solid-propellant motors. This technology improves the motor's efficiency and is essential for the development of larger-diameter solid-propellant motors suitable, primarily, in the design of long-range ballistic missiles. Official Iranian media reporting in February 2020 showed a static test of the Salman motor at the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Shahrud facility. The test facilities at the Shahrud site include four additional static motor test platforms, which are only suitable for testing such larger-diameter solid-propellant ballistic missile motors.

Iranian state media reporting shows the Qased uses an attitude control module to control its orientation and flight path prior to satellite release. This technology has been derived from Iran's development of ballistic missiles with manoeuvrable re-entry vehicles, such as the Emad variant of the Shahab-3 and the Qiam-2.

The attitude control system on the Qased demonstrated the capability to accurately control and orient a vehicle outside the atmosphere. This is an essential technology for the development of a long-range ballistic missile system capable of deploying both multiple re-entry vehicles and multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles.

Conclusion

France, Germany and the United Kingdom assert once again our firm conviction that Iran's development of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles and related technologies is inconsistent with paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). These most recent activities are merely the latest example of an enduring trend whereby Iran demonstrates its continuing intent to advance its ballistic missile capability and improve its ballistic missile technologies, as we argued in our letters of November and December 2018 and February, March and November 2019. Furthermore, Iran continues its proliferation of ballistic missile technology in the region, in breach of Security Council resolutions [2231 \(2015\)](#), [2216 \(2015\)](#) and [1540 \(2004\)](#).

We further request that you once again report fully and thoroughly in your next report on Iran's ballistic missile activity that it is inconsistent with resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). We should also be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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