



Security Council

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Letter dated 18 February 2021 from the Permanent 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 3 June 2020 ([S/2020/400](#)), France, Germany and the United Kingdom wish to bring to the attention of the Security Council recent actions undertaken by Iran that 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 multiple ballistic missile launches conducted by Iran on 16 and 17 January 2021, and a space launch vehicle test announced by Iran on 1 February 2021, are 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 members and non-members of the Missile Technology Control Regime, 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.



Ballistic missile launches

On 16 and 17 January 2021, Iranian State media reporting indicated that, as part of its large-scale military exercise “Great Prophet 15”, Iran had conducted at least 13 short-range ballistic missile and at least three medium-range ballistic missile launches, including into the Indian Ocean. Iranian media reported that Zolfaghar and Dezful short-range ballistic missiles and Shahab-3-derived Emad, Ghadr-F and Sejil medium-range ballistic missiles had been launched. The operation was conducted by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is a military entity known to control Iran’s strategic missile forces.

We assess that Iran’s firing of ballistic missiles as described above amounts to ballistic missile activity inconsistent with paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). The Zolfaghar and Dezful short-range ballistic missiles and Emad, Ghadr and Sejil medium-range ballistic missiles meet the Missile Technology Control Regime category-1 criteria above and, as such, are inherently capable of delivering nuclear weapons. As noted in our letter to the Secretary-General dated 25 March 2019 ([S/2019/270](#)), Iran has suggested that the Zolfaghar has a range of 700 km with a warhead of 579 kg and that the Defzul has a range of 1,000 km and twice the destructive power of the Zolfaghar.

The Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution [1929 \(2010\)](#) concluded in its final report, dated 4 June 2012 ([S/2012/395](#)), that the Shahab-3 is a nuclear-capable missile (paras. 36 and 76). The Emad and Ghadr classes are both modifications of the Shahab-3 to extend its range and accuracy. The Emad is equipped with manoeuvring re-entry vehicles. 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.

Launch of Zoljanah space launch vehicle

On 1 February 2021, Iran publicly announced that it had conducted a “suborbital flight test” of a new satellite launch vehicle, named Zoljanah. The date of the test was not made public. The Zoljanah satellite launch vehicle was revealed to be a three-stage system with two 1.5 metre diameter solid-propellant stages and a liquid-propellant third stage. According to Iran’s announcements, the Zoljanah can be launched from mobile launchers. Because they minimize pre-launch detection and increase second-strike capabilities, these are typically used for the flexible deployment of ground-launched ballistic missiles, but are rather unusual in the context of satellite launch vehicle tests in an allegedly peaceful space programme.

In its final report, dated 4 June 2012 ([S/2012/395](#), para. 87), the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution [1929 \(2010\)](#) noted the following:

The Panel reached a consensus that both ballistic missile and space launch programmes shared a great deal of similar materials and technology, including systems for propulsion, control and navigation. The Panel also noted that, although some examples existed of ballistic missiles programmes developed from space launch programmes, in general there were more examples of the reverse – space launch programmes developed on the basis of ballistic missile programmes.

The use of solid-propellant motors is a concern. The Zoljanah’s two solid-propellant motors are the largest publicly demonstrated by Iran to date. Solid-propellant motors offer reactivity and reduce preparation time. Used individually, the new solid-propellant motors are the basis for a medium-range ballistic missile system or, if used in a staged configuration, as seen in the Zoljanah, they can continue to create long-range missile systems that would have the capability to reach significantly beyond Iran’s self-proclaimed regional defensive needs.

Conclusion

France, Germany and the United Kingdom assert once again our firm conviction that the above-mentioned activities are inconsistent with paragraph 3 of annex B to resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). We are particularly concerned that these launches, which follow activities outlined in our letters of November and December 2018, February, March and November 2019, and June 2020, constitute an enduring trend of Iran's continuing to advance its ballistic missile capabilities despite the provisions in Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#).

We further request the Secretary-General to once again report fully and thoroughly in his next report on this resolution. We would be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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Permanent Representative of Germany

(Signed) Barbara **Woodward**
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