

'Iran caught red-handed 10 times trying to send arms to terrorists'

UN report details regime's clandestine missile tests in February

• *Washington imposes new sanctions on Tehran for rights abuses*

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Iran has been caught red-handed in 10 different attempts in recent years to transfer weaponry to terrorists throughout the Middle East, including a recent case,

in April, when a shipment of advanced missiles was caught en-route to Taliban forces in Afghanistan, according to a United Nations report obtained Thursday by *The Jerusalem Post*.

The report was submitted three weeks ago to the Secu-

rity Council by a UN group of experts that monitors compliance with UN sanctions imposed on Iran. The report was leaked to the Internet and obtained by a number of leading Israeli

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defense analysts.

The report documents all 10 cases of arms smuggling, including the case of the *Victoria* cargo ship, which was stopped by the Israel Navy earlier this year carrying arms for Hamas. In the most recent case cited, British forces in Afghanistan found a weapons shipment of advanced Iranian-made anti-ship missiles and 122 mm. rockets en route to Taliban forces in Afghanistan.

In March, Turkish authorities stopped an Iranian cargo plane bound for Syria. At the time, Turkey tried to downplay the news, but the UN report reveals that authorities discovered dozens of AK-47 assault rifles and close to 2,000 mortar shells. The report confirms that the arms originated

in Iran and were supplied by the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The report further reveals that Iran test fired two of its most advanced long-range missiles – the Shihab 3 and the Sajil – in February. The tests were not reported at the time by the Iranians, or by the United States or Israel, both of which track such missile launches.

Tal Inbar, head of the Space Research Center at the Fisher Institute for Air and Space Strategic Studies, analyzed the UN report and said the missile tests were significant since Iran was making efforts to hide its ballistic missile program, something that raises suspicions about the nature of the program and its connection to the Islamic Republic's illicit nuclear drive.

"For a number of years, they have been trying to display shorter-range rockets like the Qiyam and the Fateh 110," Inbar said. "In the most recent military parade, they did not even did not even show the Shihab."

The report, which also discusses the regular exchange of ballistic mis-

sile technology between Iran and North Korea, said financial sanctions appeared to be having an effect on Tehran, as demonstrated by "the range of measures taken by Iran to circumvent them."

"These measures are expensive and time-consuming to set up and administer. They include arrangements to enable sanctioned Iranian banks to maintain access to the international financial sector through normal business conducted by non-sanctioned Iranian banks," the report said. "Nevertheless, despite financial restrictions, Iran appears able to continue to pay for procurement from abroad for its prohibited nuclear and ballistic missile programs."

Meanwhile Thursday, the United States slapped additional sanctions on Iran for human rights abuses, targeting Tehran's national police, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Basij militia.

"The United States stands with all Iranians who wish for a government that respects their human rights, their dignity and their freedom, and we call on the Iranian government to end its systematic human rights abuses and political hypocrisy," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in announcing the sanctions.

"Today's sanctions reflect our commitment to hold accountable those governments and officials that violate human rights and deprive their citizens of the opportunities and future they deserve," she said.

Clinton labeled the three sanctioned entities "complicit in the ongoing brutal repression" of those who want to speak out against the government.

The sanctions, which are separate from other US sanctions targeting Iran's nuclear activities, would freeze any of the security organizations' assets in the US and deny visas.

Ismail Ahmadi Moghadam, chief of the national police, was personally singled out in the sanctions.

The move came at the same time that Leon Panetta, current head of the CIA and nominated to be the next secretary of defense, testified about the ongoing threat posed by

Iran at his confirmation hearing.

Responding to questioning from Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Connecticut), Panetta said that Iran continues to develop increased capabilities to deliver nuclear or other weapons through intercontinental ballistic missiles – although he declined to state in the open forum whether he believed Tehran was pursuing a nuclear weapon.

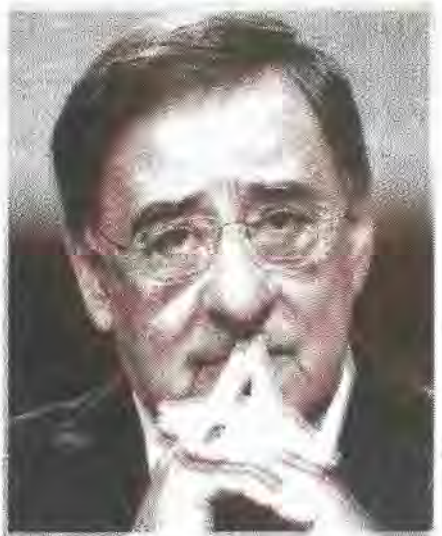
Asked about America's preparations for the possibility of military strikes against nuclear facilities – in keeping with US President Barack Obama's declaration that all options should be kept open – Panetta said: "In line with the president's statement that we should keep all options on the table, that would obviously require appropriate planning."

Panetta also assessed that though the killing of Osama bin Laden, which occurred under his watch at the CIA, had damaged al-Qaida's capabilities, "they still remain dangerous."

He later listed Hamas and Hezbollah among the terror groups that threatened America's national security beyond al-Qaida.

"We have to continue to maintain a strong relationship with Israel," particularly in light of the turmoil sweeping the region, he added.

Panetta, who is slated to replace Defense Secretary Robert Gates, is expected to be confirmed without difficulty.



LEON PANETTA (Reuters)