

Iran unveils air defense systems

National Desk

Iran unveiled two new air defense systems on Saturday manufactured by the country's Defense Ministry's experts.

The Arman anti-ballistic missile defense system and the Azarakhsh low-altitude air defense system were showcased during a ceremony in the capital Tehran on Saturday, attended by Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani.

Ashtiani said the Arman missile system has a medium range and a high altitude that can identify targets at 180 kilometers and engage and destroy them at 120 kilometers.

The system could take on "six targets simultaneously" while the Azarakhsh defense system can be mounted on multiple vehicle types and "uses radar, electro-optical system and thermal seekers to detect and track its target," according to IRNA.

The Azarakhsh missile system can identify and destroy targets... up to a range of 50 kilometers, with four ready-to-fire missiles.

The Azarakhsh defense system is

said to be responsible for providing close-in, low altitude, surface-to-air weapons fires in defense of forward combat areas, maneuver forces, vital areas, installations and/or units engaged in special or independent operations.

Iranian military experts and engineers have in recent years made remarkable breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed

forces self-sufficient.

Iranian officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will never be subject to negotiation.

With the entry of new systems into the country's defense network, the air defense capability of the Islamic Republic of Iran will increase significantly.

In June, Iran presented its first domestically-made hypersonic ballistic missile, named Fattah, with a range of 1,400 kilometers.



The Arman anti-ballistic missile defense system is showcased during a ceremony to unveil new missile defense systems by Iran's Defense Ministry in Tehran, Iran, on February 17, 2024.

Israel behind gas pipeline explosions inside Iran: Report



International Desk

Israel reportedly carried out attacks on two major natural gas pipelines inside Iran this week, disrupting the flow of gas to several provinces with millions of people.

Citing two Western officials, The New York Times reported on Friday that Israel also caused a separate blast on Thursday inside a chemical factory on the outskirts of Tehran that rattled a neighborhood and sent plumes of smoke and fire into the air. But local officials said the factory explosion stemmed from an accident in the factory's fuel tank.

"The enemy's plan was to completely disrupt the flow of gas in winter to several main cities and provinces in our country," Iran's Oil Minister, Javad Owji, told Iranian media on Friday.

Owji, who had previously referred to the blasts as "sabotage and terrorist attacks," said that the goal of the attack was to damage Iran's energy infrastructure and stir domestic discontent.

National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) manager Saeed Aghli said, "This act of terrorism and sabotage was carried out in two locations at around 1 a.m."

The saboteurs hit pipelines in the cities of Borujen in the southwestern province of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, and Safashahr in the southern province of Fars, Aghli said.

It disrupted gas supplies in at least three provinces - North Khorasan in the northeast, Lorestan in the west, and Zanjan in the northwest.

One Western official called it a major symbolic strike that was fairly easy for Iran to repair and caused relatively little harm to civilians, according to The New York Times.

Israel has long targeted military and nuclear sites inside Iran, and assassinated Iranian nuclear scientists and commanders, both inside and outside of the country. Israel has also waged cyberattacks to disable servers belonging to the Oil Ministry, causing turmoil at gas stations nationwide.

But blowing up part of the country's energy infrastructure, relied on by industries, factories and millions of civilians, marked an escalation in the covert war and appeared to open a new frontier.

UN chief: Gaza situation 'appalling' sign of deadlock in global relations

Hamas leader insists on complete cease-fire

International Desk

The UN chief said the situation in Gaza is an appalling indictment of the deadlock in global relations, warning about the expansion of war in the Palestinian territory into the region.

"The situation in Gaza is an appalling indictment of the deadlock in global relations. The level of death and destruction is shocking in itself, and the war is also spilling over borders across the region and affecting global trades," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in his address to the 60th Munich Security Conference on Friday.

Guterres said the humanitarian aid operation is no longer on life support in Gaza but is barely functioning.

"Humanitarians are working under unimaginable conditions, including live fire, multiple physical obstacles — and these are all

restrictions — as well as the breakdown of public order."

Military action in Rafah

Guterres also referred to Israel's planned military offensive on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, saying that the military action on the densely populated city should never take place.

"Rafah is at the core of the entire humanitarian aid operation. An all-out offensive on the city will be devastating for the 1.5 million Palestinian civilians there, who are already on the edge of survival."

The UN chief reiterated his call for the immediate and unconditional release of all captives held by the Hamas resistance group and a humanitarian cease-fire in the besieged Palestinian territory.

Efforts are underway by regional mediators to establish a new cease-fire in Gaza to end the terrible

carnage in the besieged territory.

No temporary truce

US President Joe Biden has called for a temporary truce, but Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh on Saturday reiterated the group's demand of a complete cease-fire in Gaza.

High-level negotiations to pause Israel's war on Gaza were held this week in Cairo but their outcome is still unclear.

In a statement issued on Saturday, Qatar-based Haniyeh reiterated the group's several demands, including an end to fighting in Gaza.

"The resistance will not agree to anything less than cease-fire, withdrawing of the occupying army from the strip, lifting the oppressive blockade, and providing safe shelter for the displaced people," he said.

Haniyeh insisted that those displaced from the north be returned to their

areas in the territory. He also called for the release of Hamas prisoners sentenced to long jail terms in Israel.

On Friday, Biden called for a temporary truce in Gaza to get captives held by Hamas out of the Palestinian territory under a potential deal swapping them for prisoners held in Israel.

More Palestinians killed

The regime continued its brutal strikes on Palestinians on Saturday, killing more Palestinians trapped in the coastal territory.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said on Saturday that more than 100 people were killed in 24 hours alone.

At least 28,858 people have been killed, most of them women and children, since Israel began its attacks on Gaza in October. Israel also said it had taken into custody 100 people at one of Gaza's main hospitals after troops raided the facility, with fears mounting Saturday for patients and staff trapped



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres delivers his speech during the opening of the 60th Munich Security Conference at the Bayerischer Hof Hotel in Munich, southern Germany, on February 16, 2024.

THOMAS KIENZLE/AFP

inside. At least 120 patients and five medical teams are stuck without water, food and electricity in Nasser Hospital in Gaza's main southern city of Khan Younis, according to the Health Ministry. Israel has for weeks concentrated its military operations in Khan Younis. This week, intense fighting has raged around Nasser Hospital - one of the Palestinian territory's last remaining major medical

facilities that remains even partly operational. The power was cut and the generators had stopped after the raid, leading to the deaths of six patients due to a lack of oxygen, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The raid has been criticized by medics and the United Nations. A witness, who declined to be named for safety reasons, told AFP the Israeli forces had shot "at anyone who moved inside the hospital".

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



A world of...

On the other hand, Muslim and Arab nations have largely remained on the fence. Those having diplomatic relations with Israel kept them intact and none of them even brought back home their envoys. Some of them even refuse to speak out against the Israeli atrocities. And certain nations filled up the Israeli war machine by keeping their bilateral trade with the regime up and running.

For instance, Azerbaijan significantly boosted its oil exports to Israel in January by shipping over 523,000 tons of crude oil. And on Friday, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met with his Israeli counterpart Isaac Herzog in Munich as if nothing were happening in Gaza. The only Muslim state that rolled up its sleeves to face off Israel on the battlefield was Yemen, where the ruling Ansarullah movement has been

targeting Israeli-bound ships as well as US and British vessels in the Red Sea with missiles and drones to mount pressure on Tel Aviv and its main supporters to give in to a permanent cease-fire. The latest Israeli bloodshed, which has so far killed nearly 29,000 people, will go down in history, so will Muslim nations' inaction and indifference that helped fuel the flames of war.