



Iranian-made Shahed 238 drone (black livery) is seen next to Shahed 136 (white livery).
● IRGC

Kheibar, Ghadr, and Sejil ballistic missiles

Among the 110 ballistic missiles fired at Israel, Iran seems to have used the medium-range ballistic missiles Kheibar Shekan and Sejil, according to several observers. The Kheibar, also referred to as Khorramshahr-4, is a medium-range ballistic missile developed by Iran. It belongs to the fourth generation of the Khorramshahr missile family and is produced by the Ministry of Defense of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The missile was officially revealed on June 4, 2023, with Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, the Iranian Defense Minister, in attendance. Capable of reaching distances up to 2,000 km, the Khorramshahr ballistic missile can be equipped with a warhead weighing up to 1,500 kg. The Ghadr-110, a medium-range ballistic missile, might also have been spotted in the Israeli skies. With a range of 2,000 km and a payload of 650 to 1,000 kg, it is an improvement of the Shahab 3 derived from the North Korean Nodong-1 missile. Iran also has other similar ballistic missiles, which might have been used in Israel: the Sejil, the Imad (still in development), and the Haj Qassem, named in honor of General Qassem Soleimani, killed in a US drone attack in January 2020.

The Sejil missile is a domestically produced Iranian medium-range ballistic missile that utilizes a two-stage, solid-propellant design. Its development likely commenced in the late 1990s, building upon the technologies and designs of earlier Iranian missiles, notably the Zelzal short-range ballistic missile. The Sejil's initial test flight took place in 2008, achieving a distance of 800 km. A subsequent test in May 2009 focused on enhancing its guidance and navigation systems. Since then, four additional tests have been conducted, with the most recent reaching roughly 1,900 km into the Indian Ocean.

The missile measures 18 meters in length and 1.25 meters in diameter, with a launch weight of 23,600 kg. It is capable of carrying a 700 kg payload over a distance of up to 2,000 km. Currently, it is equipped with high-explosive warheads, with the potential for nuclear capabilities in the future. The estimates of its range and payload capacity are based on the missile's construction from aeronautical-grade steel.

A ballistic missile is a rocket-propelled weapon designed to deliver explosives over a long distance with high precision. Upon launch,

it follows a ballistic trajectory, involving an initial powered phase where the rocket engines propel the missile into an upward trajectory, followed by an unpowered phase that occurs as gravity pulls it back towards the Earth. This trajectory can carry the missile through the upper atmosphere or even into space before re-entering the atmosphere and descending toward its target. Ballistic missiles vary greatly in range and size, from short-range missiles that travel a few hundred kilometers to intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of traveling over 10,000 km.

Cruise missiles

Iran also fired several cruise missiles on April 13, 2024, for the aerial attacks against Israel. None have been formally identified. Iran has been actively developing its cruise missile capabilities as part of its broader military strategy. The development of Iranian cruise missiles is an integral aspect of the country's defense posture, designed to enhance its long-range strike capabilities and provide a strategic deterrent.

The origins of Iran's cruise missile program date back to the acquisition of Soviet Kh-55 cruise missiles in the early 2000s. Since then, Iran has embarked on an ambitious plan to reverse-engineer and enhance these designs to suit its specific strategic needs. Iranian engineers have focused on increasing the range, accuracy, and payload capacity of their cruise missiles.

Significant advancements were showcased with the unveiling of various models over the years, including the Soumar and the Hoveyeh cruise missiles. These missiles are reported to have ranges of approximately 700 km and 1,350 km, respectively, illustrating significant strides in propulsion and guidance technology.

A cruise missile is a type of guided missile equipped with a jet engine, allowing it to fly at a consistently low altitude, closely following the earth's terrain, making it difficult to detect and intercept. It is designed to deliver a large warhead with high precision over long distances. Cruise missiles can be launched from various platforms including ships, submarines, aircraft, and ground facilities. They typically have a maximum range that can vary widely, but some advanced models can travel up to 2,500 kilometers or more, depending on their design specifics such as fuel capacity and engine efficiency.



The Kheibar is an Iranian-made medium-range ballistic missile.
● WIKIMEDIA

Israel, the untamed hunter's dog in the wilderness



By Owei Lakemfa
Former secretary-general of OATUU

OPINION

Israel, on Monday, April 1, attacked the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, killing 16 persons, including two Iranian Generals, Mohammed Reza Zahedi and Mohammed Hadi Haji Rahimi. There were no apologies. No sense of remorse. Rather, the Israeli Army spokesman Daniel Hagari declared: "The ones attacked were engaged in terrorism against Israel." The attempt by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to discuss the attacks was blocked by the United States, Britain, and France. For Israel, the attacks were routine. After all, it had carried out over a dozen previous attacks against Iran, including within the country, and the Iranians had not responded.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (front-R) greets Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Berlin.
● DPA

It, therefore, came as a shock when on April 13, Iran, according to Israel, fired 185 armed drones, 110 ballistic missiles, and 36 cruise missiles into its territory. Like a beaten child with bruises but pretending not to be hurt, Israel claimed the attacks were of no effect because, with its American, French, and British allies, it shot down 99 percent of the Iranian missiles.

However, Israel imposed a media ban on the attacks when it was revealed that two of its bases, including the Nevatim military base, were hit.

What Israel did not say was that the Iranians might have deliberately used very slow missiles that announced their take-off, some five hours before, thereby giving Israel and its allies adequate time to shoot them down. Secondly, that Iran has far more sophisticated missiles, like the hypersonic ones it unveiled in 2023, which travel at Mach-5 or five times the speed of sound. These modern missiles travel at a kilometre per second, with a complex trajectory and unpredictable manoeuvrability.

These missiles can hit Israel in less than 17 minutes from Iranian territory. As such, it appears that Iran's strikes were like a mere warning; a way of assuring its allies that it can strike Israel.

Perhaps this reality is why the United States told Israel, point blank, not to respond. Rather, it tried to massage Israel's ego. US President Joe Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the Iranian attacks were a victory for Israel because there was "no significant damage within Israel itself". This, he said, demonstrated Israel's superior military capability.

The attacks, in themselves, cost Israel five times more than it did Iran. The latter used a cheap arsenal. The drones cost \$50,000 each; the cruise missiles, \$250,000; and the ballistic missiles an average of \$5 million. So, the maximum cost to Iran was about \$217 million. In contrast, Israel employed the Arrow and David Sling missiles, which cost \$3.5 million and \$1 million each. The defence overnight cost Israel \$1.1 billion.

The realisation that Iran did not use its modern missiles might also have been the reason Israel did not re-

spond immediately. Rather, it went wailing at the UN Security Council. Its UN envoy, Gilad Erdan, said the UNSC must sanction Iran for alleged terrorism.

Iran's counter-claim that it retaliated against the Israeli attack based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, could not be faulted. That Article states: "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security."

The joint response of Prime Ministers Giorgia Meloni of Italy, Fumio Kishida of Japan, Justin Trudeau of Canada, and Rishi Sunak of the UK as well as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Presidents Emmanuel Macron of France and Joe Biden of the US was a classic case of duplicity in diplomacy. They had not condemned Israel's attacks on Iran but found their voices when Iran retaliated.

The leaders, who met virtually under the G7 canopy, said they "unequivocally condemn, in the strongest terms, Iran's direct and unprecedented attack against Israel". They expressed solidarity with Israel and rededicated themselves to its security. They gave the impression that Israel, like a spoilt brat, can go about attacking other countries, but that their victims have no right to self-defence. Their message is that only Israel deserves security, while countries like Syria and Iran, which are victims of its reckless attacks, have no right to defend themselves.

The hypocrisy in such statements was brought into sharp relief when the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary David Cameron told Sky News presenter, Kay Burley, that Iran, by retaliating against the attacks on it by Israel, was "reckless and dangerous". But when Burley asked him how the UK would react were any of its consulates to be attacked by another country, Cameron replied that it would take "very strong action".

In contrast to the G7, Cuba struck a more reflective pose: First, it said that the silence of the UNSC "served as an incentive for the Iranian response".

Secondly, that de-escalating the ongoing violence, requires an immediate and permanent cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. Thirdly, that peace and stability in the Middle East are impossible, "unless a comprehensive, just, and permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is reached".

But, why would Israel violate the territorial space of Syria and attack the diplomatic mission of Iran, conscious of the fact that it was technically attacking two countries? It could be a continuation of its policy of spreading terror in the region. Secondly, it might be an attempt to divert attention from its ongoing genocide in Gaza. Thirdly, it could be an attempt to suck in the US and its allies into its war in the region and widen the conflicts. Fourthly, it might be a move to draw out Iran which, after its peace deals with Saudi Arabia, is enjoying unprecedented support across the Muslim world.

Conscious of Russia's presence in Syria and Moscow's commitment to supporting Damascus, Israel's attacks can also be an attempt to provoke a Russian response and exacerbate the conflicts in the region. This way, the conflict in the region can be linked with that in Ukraine. If this were to be the case, then Israel would be playing the same proxy role as Ukraine, which is essentially a cannon fodder.

In taking on various countries simultaneously, Israel reminds me of the African saying that if a dog has human backing, it can kill a monkey. The powerful countries using Israel as a hunter's dog also have a duty to put it on a leash so it does not constitute a danger to society.

On the other hand, the Israeli dog may have been long gone into the wilderness and can no longer hear the hunter's whistle. It is like "The Second Coming," William Butler Yeats's famous poem: "Turning and turning in the widening gyre; The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; The centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world; ... And what rough beast, its hour come round at last; Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

The article first appeared on Vanguard News.