

# Missile program meant for defense, not up for negotiation: *FM spox*

## International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Monday that the Islamic Republic's defensive capabilities are solely developed to deter attacks against the country and are not up for negotiation. Baqaei made the statement at his weekly press conference while addressing a question on renewed media campaigns in Israeli and pro-Israeli US outlets suggesting the possibility of a new act of military aggression against Iran under the pretext of its missile program.

The media campaigns hinted that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would seek to persuade US President Donald Trump to launch an attack on Iran just as the one in June.

"The defensive capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran are designed to deter aggressors from even contemplating an attack on Iran and are in no way subject to dialogue or bargaining," Baqaei said.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman added that Iran has developed its missile program to defend its integrity.

Baqaei censured the "blatant hypocrisy and double standards" vis-à-vis Iran's missile program, which is meant to portray it as a "threat," adding that, at the same time, lethal weapons and even weapons of mass destruction are being funneled into the Is-

raeli-occupied territories to be used in the regime's genocidal war in the Gaza Strip. The spokesman underlined that Iran's Armed Forces are well-equipped to defend the country when necessary.

"Therefore, regardless of these malicious media campaigns, the Iranian nation, the Armed Forces, and all branches of the government will continue their path with a focus on their duties," he pointed out.

The Israeli regime launched an unprovoked war against Iran on June 13, assassinating a number of top military commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary civilians.

More than a week later, the United States also entered the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a grave violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces targeted strategic sites across the occupied territories as well as the al-Udeid air base in Qatar, the largest American military base in West Asia.

On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the Israeli regime and the US, managed to impose a halt to the illegal assault.

## 'No protocol for inspection of damaged nuclear facilities'

On cooperation with the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Baqaei said there is no established protocol for inspections of damaged nuclear facilities, as such a situation has no precedent.

The spokesman said Iran at one point entered into talks with the agency to address the issue, resulting in a mutually signed understanding.

However, he added that Western parties once again obstructed the process by exploiting the 2015 nuclear agreement's dispute resolution mechanism in New York.

The repetition of the issue, he said, strengthened suspicions that the IAEA director general was seeking political leverage from a matter that "is not truly an issue."

## Tehran refutes claims of involvement in Ukraine war

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson also debunked a statement by the European Council that has accused Iran of complicity in the Ukraine war, stressing that Tehran has neither interfered in the conflict nor changed its long-standing position in favor of dialogue.

Reacting to the European Council's statement, Baqaei said at a press conference in Tehran on Monday that the allegation that Iran, Belarus, and North Korea have provided military assistance to Russia in



the Ukraine war was nothing more than a repeated claim.

"This allegation is repetitive. In similar previous statements, the names of several countries, including China and Iran, were mentioned as parties that help Russia in this conflict," Baqaei said.

The spokesman reiterated that since the very beginning of the Ukraine conflict, Iran has declared that the problems should be resolved through dialogue and that Tehran neither intervened in the war

before nor is intervening now.

Baqaei emphasized that Iran-Russia relations are no way meant hostility toward other countries.

The European countries should look at their own behavior and consider why Europe's security has been put at risk as a result of NATO's hostile actions, he added, stressing that they must be held accountable for their conduct and stop the process of leveling accusations against others.

## Army chief says Iran closely monitoring enemy's movements

### National Desk

The chief commander of Iran's Army announced on Monday that the military forces are closely monitoring the enemy's entire movements and will deliver a "decisive" response to any hostile action.

During an inspection of Army units in western Iran, Major General Amir Hatami assessed the operational readiness and combat capabilities along the country's borders, saying the Army is consistently trying to enhance its preparedness to confront asymmetric and irregular threats.

Hatami underlined that troop morale remains high and that equipment and facilities have been upgraded based on lessons learned from the recent 12-day war. Praising the initiative, creativity, and new innovations observed among Army units in the region, he said the force has mobilized all necessary resources to confront



Chief Commander of Iran's Army, Major General Amir Hatami (2nd-L), visits Army units deployed in the country's west on December 22, 2025.

potential adversaries and that exercises are being conducted in line with military principles, particularly passive defense, to ensure realistic battlefield preparedness. "We closely monitor all enemy movements and will respond decisively to any acts of mischief," Hatami said. Stressing that territorial threats remain real, the Army chief said the forces' core mission is safeguarding Iran's territorial integrity and national independence. Iranian forces targeted and destroyed the enemy's advanced Heron drone immediately after it entered the country's western border

during the 12-day war in June, he said, warning of the same level of decisiveness in case of any new assault.

Hatami further noted that in the course of the Iraqi-imposed war of the 1980s, Iran did not lose a single inch of its territory.

"Today as well, the mission of the Army is to safeguard the territorial integrity and independence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are all striving to fulfill this mission in the best possible manner," he stated.

Hatami also highlighted manpower as a key pillar of military power, saying protecting personnel is a top

priority and that soldiers' lives are invaluable, while emphasizing the Army's readiness for sacrifice if required and its determination to prevent harm to civilians.

Hatami's field visit comes as media reports, citing unnamed sources and witnesses, said Iran held missile drills in various cities on Monday, in what was the second such reported exercise in a month.

The Telegram channel of Iran's public broadcaster and semi-official Nournews published videos of what appeared to be missile launches, without specifying the whereabouts.

However, the outlets said launches took place from the capital Tehran and the cities of Isfahan and Mashhad. State media later on Monday cited "informed sources" as denying that missiles were tested and saying the circulated images were of "high-altitude aircraft."

## Iran to 'pound' Israel in case of another aggression by regime: *US analyst*

### International Desk

A prominent American theorist and analyst emphasized in an interview that in the 12-day Israeli war against Iran, Tehran inflicted "enormous damage" on Tel Aviv, and in the event of another potential attack, the Islamic Republic, having learned lessons from the aggression in June, would "pound" Israel. John Mearsheimer said in an interview with German podcaster Max Otte, published by Financial Wise YouTube channel on Monday, that Iran used its cutting-edge missile power in the Israeli war in June and managed to hit the regime "very hard."

"Iran hit Israel very hard in that exchange in June. There's not much we hear in German in Germany about this and that Israel got hit pretty hard. The fact is Israel suffered enormous damage. And furthermore, by the time the war ended, remember it was a 12-day war, only a 12-day war. By the time the war ended, Israel was running out of defensive missiles that could be used against the incoming Iranian ballistic and cruise missiles. Just very important to understand that. And furthermore, all the evidence is that the Iranians got increasingly sophisticated at using their ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones to penetrate the Israeli defenses," Mearsheimer said.

"So, I would say to those people who think that Israel won a great victory, Israel's in



the driver's seat, and Israel can do this again, and it'll be another great victory, you want to remember that the Iranians have lots of ballistic missiles. They learned a lot from the 12-day war, and they will pound Israel again," he added.

Mearsheimer said one of the reasons the US administration was so anxious to shut the war down after 12 days was that the Iranians were talking about shutting down the Persian Gulf.

"That sent shivers through the United States, right? The thought of the Persian Gulf being shut down. So, if we go to war, we, meaning the United States and Israel against Iran again, not only is damage likely to be done to Israel, serious damage that is, but also there's a great danger that the straits will be closed and that the Persian Gulf will be shut down and that will have a devastating effect on the international economy."

## Mar-a-Lago, the media ...

Netanyahu's focus now is on media narratives and warnings to Trump about Iran's missile program, seeking political support and portraying Iran as an immediate threat—even when operational reality does not confirm such urgency. The key distinction is that the current meeting revolves primarily around media pressure and narrative construction, rather than immediate military planning, illustrating how adversaries attempt to blur the line between fact and perceived threat.

Transparent communication and accurate presentation of facts to both domestic and international audiences are crucial to reducing misperceptions and preventing provocative actions by adversaries. Properly representing Iran's defensive exercises can clarify the gap

between reality and media narratives, preventing the escalation of tensions. Diplomacy and nuclear negotiations remain essential for balancing tensions. Tehran has repeatedly expressed readiness to engage in talks and return to international agreements. This approach combines deterrent power with strategic diplomacy, aligning Iran's defensive capabilities with national security priorities and the prevention of potential conflict.

Recent exercises, beyond their operational and training value, send a clear message to adversaries: Iran is capable of defending itself, and any aggressive action against national security will not go unanswered. Simultaneously, continued active diplomacy and dialogue provide the primary path for reducing tensions and avoiding war.

The combination of deterrence and diplomacy remains Iran's key tool for safeguarding national security, maintaining regional stability, and managing potential miscalculations by adversaries.

Ultimately, the priority today is safeguarding national interests and preventing conflict, rather than becoming entangled in disputes that adversaries exploit for propaganda and narrative manipulation. In a media war, distinguishing fact from exaggerated narratives is challenging, yet focusing on reality and national interests is crucial for ensuring security and stability. By combining deterrence with strategic diplomacy, Iran pursues a peaceful and stable course, countering both media and military provocations, and reinforcing domestic and regional security.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

CARTOON

