

Iran: Mobile Rocket Systems and Underground Tunnels

OE Watch Commentary: The Iranian military regularly announces new indigenous abilities, many of which it exaggerates but all of which are based in the experience of being initially dependent upon foreign platforms and an unsympathetic international community following Iraq's 1980 invasion. The excerpted article from the *Fars News Agency*, an outlet close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), highlights a new mobile radar device that the Aerospace Force is reportedly designing. The need for such a device suggests either that Iran seeks to plug existing holes in its coverage or to rapidly recover should adversaries' military action take out existing radar facilities.

According to the article, General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of IRGC's Aerospace Force, also touted new underground "missile cities," large underground tunnels dug into rock capable of storing large missiles. The Iranian military has turned to such underground facilities for 35 years,

since it faced Iraqi missile barrages in the so-called 'war of the cities' during the Iran-Iraq War. (While there is no mention of North Korean participation in tunnel construction, it is interesting to note that Iran's proxy Hezbollah adopted a similar strategy to shield its weaponry from Israeli bombardment in southern Lebanon, often relying on North Korean engineers to construct underground facilities.)

Taken together, the two capabilities that Hajizadeh highlights suggest Iranian leaders are signaling that they can absorb a first strike and retaliate should hostilities in the Persian Gulf area of operations devolve into more direct military conflict. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Soldiers pose in front of a missile in an underground tunnel.
Source: Mashregh News, https://cdn.mashreghnews.ir/old/files/fa/news/1394/7/22/1276551_482.jpg

“One of the most important capabilities of our country is the missile sector which should not be exposed to [a] surprise attack by the enemy.”

- General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Aerospace Force

Source: “Dar Hal Terahi Samaneh Radari Motarek Hastim/Jagher Shabanehruzzi Tunel baraye Shahrhaye Mushaki (We are Designing a Mobile Rocket System/Digging Tunnels for Rocket Cities),” *Fars News Agency*, 30 September 2019. <https://www.farsnews.com/news/13980708001180>

Mobile Rocket Systems and Tunnels for Rocket Cities

General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Aerospace Force, said on the television program *Chehel Setun [Forty Columns]*: Only superpowers are capable of designing and producing smart precision-guided missiles. The number of countries producing such missiles is less than ten. Today, we are the first in the region with regard to missiles, and we are one of the top seven or eight countries in the world....

With regard to the importance of air defense, General Hajizadeh said, “We had almost nothing in the field of air defense about ten years ago and we sought to purchase equipment which was not being sold to us. Today, we are self-sufficient in every aspect of our defense.”

The commander of the aerospace force also said, “We are designing a radar system that is deployable, unlike other radars in the world that are fixed, [this] is deployable and remains engaged with the target it is tracking and destroys it....”

As for ‘missile cities’ and their features, Hajizadeh said: “One of the most important capabilities of our country is the missile sector which should not be exposed to surprise attack by the enemy.” The idea for these cities began in 1984, that is with the war of the cities, and actually before the first missile struck the country, the first tunnel was created.