Iran Increases Range of Smart Bombs

OE Watch Commentary: Iranian political and religious officials often bluster about their power and the strength of the Iranian military, but historically Iranian airpower has represented a relative weakness when compared to regional Arab rivals let alone Israel.

Whereas the Iranian military regularly showcases new unmanned aerial vehicles, its air force remains antiquated. The Islamic Republic remains the only country that continues to rely on F-14s, for example, years after every other country retired them. It also flies F-7s, an export version of a Chinese fighter that made its debut in 1965. The Soviets likewise first produced the Sukhoi-17, of which the Sukhoi-22 is a variant, a decade before Iran's Islamic Revolution. While the Iranian Air Force could operate evenly with Iraq during the neighbor's 1980-1988 war, Iranian officials learned they could not compete with more modern air forces when they

Yassin smart bombs, affixed to the underside of an Iranian Sukhoi-22 "Fitter" jet, July 2020.
Source: https://media.khabaronline.ir/d/2020/07/29/4/5433813.jpg

tried to confront U.S. Navy aircraft during Operation Praying Mantis in 1988 with disastrous results for Iranian pilots. At least motivated partly for these reasons, the Iranian air force has been experimenting with bombs and air-to-ground missiles which can accurately strike targets while remaining outside of the range of regional states' anti-aircraft systems.

The excerpted article from an Iranian news website *KhabarOnline* reports on military exercises in which the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps [IRGC] used an upgraded Yassin smart bomb to strike targets more than 60 miles away. This follows other reports that Iranian authorities were enhancing the precision of their missiles (see: "Iran Claims Enhanced Missile Precision," *OE Watch*, May 2017; "Equipping the IRGC with New Precision Missiles," *OE Watch*, December 2018). **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

> **"***Your own fighter will be able to destroy the target without being exposed to … the enemy's medium-range defense systems.***"**

Source: "Amaliyat-e Jangandeh-ha-ye Sepah Kharej az Ring-e Pedafandi" ("Operation of IRGC Fighters Outside the Defensive Ring"), *Khabar Online*, 29 July 2020. https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1415751

Operation of IRGC Fighters Outside the Defensive Ring

"...Published images of the operation by IRGC fighter jets show that the [Sukhoi-22] "Fitters" destroyed their targets using Yassin wing bombs, previously developed by the Ministry of Defense. In addition, the last test range of this bomb, which was previously announced as 37 miles, was increased to 62 miles in this exercise, which has made it possible to carry out offensive operations outside the defense rings.

The Yassin bomb was unveiled by the Ministry of Defense in July 2019 and, before its official unveiling, it was displayed as one of the weapons of this fighter in the ceremony inducting Sukhoi-22 fighters to the IRGC Air Force fleet in July 2018.

The Army Air Force also dropped the bomb on a ground target from a distance of 37 miles using the Army Air Force F-7 fighter, which successfully hit its target during the flight route, during the seventh "Devotees of the Vilayat" exercises.

The advantage of using this bomb, which is considered as a long-range aircraft weapon, is the ability to carry out operations outside the enemy's defensive rings. This means that your own fighter will be able to destroy the target without being exposed to the danger of being hit by the enemy's medium-range defense systems.

The operation of remote-controlled and guided bombs is based on the flight computer to which it is connected and the coordinates of the target point are entered by the operator. The flight computer of the bomb will automatically provide the pilot with the speed and altitude required to release the bomb from the fighter.

The folding flight control levels (wings and bulk) mounted on the top of the bomb will enable the bomb to accurately fly towards the target and correct its course."