



Iran Navy Soon to Field Abu Mahdi Cruise Missile

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) continues to honor both Qods Force Chief Qassem Soleimani and Kataib Hezbollah Secretary-General Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, both of whom were killed in a 3 January 2020 drone strike on the outskirts of Baghdad International Airport. In the latest iteration, as per a recent piece from *Islamic Azad University News Agency*, Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy, announced that the Navy would soon take possession of the Abu Mahdi Cruise Missile, which would more than triple the range of Iranian anti-ship cruise missiles to 650 miles. General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, spoke about the progress the IRGC had made in developing anti-ship missiles, saying that the highest range missile was just 30 miles prior to the Islamic Revolution. He added that the developments in Iran's anti-ship missiles had caused consternation outside the West. "We will bring them to their knees and we, as the representatives of the Iranian nation in the Persian Gulf, will be a guardian," he said.



The Abu Mahdi cruise missile on display, 20 August 2020.

Source: Tasnim News, <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1399/05/31/13990531122026606209987310.jpg>

How Iran will deploy the Abu Mahdi remains unclear. Its range would be overkill given the maximum width of the Persian Gulf is only 210 miles. Likewise, it is unclear whether Iranian proxies would have need for such a new missile at strategic choke points such as the Bab-el-Mandeb. That said, as the Iranian Navy develops its ports on the Gulf of Oman/Northern Indian Ocean coasts, as the article suggests, a longer-range missile would, in theory, enable the Iranian Navy to better threaten shipping far beyond its coasts. This in turn would change the operational environment because it would enable Iran to close the gap between Iran's own missile range and the range at which adversarial carrier-borne aircraft could strike at Iran. That Iran has, until this point, been effectively defenseless against platforms operating in the northern Indian Ocean has been both Iran's major Achilles' heel and an enabler to those countries seeking to deter Iran from afar. The possession of the Abu Mahdi by Hezbollah could also significantly challenge shipping in the Eastern Mediterranean and be an insurance and strategic concern not only for Israel, Greece, and Cyprus, but also for Egypt as well.

As always, however, the usual disclaimer is necessary that a gap exists between the capabilities claimed by Iran and the capabilities that its missiles demonstrate in reality. Certainly, part of the reason why Iranian outlets like *Islamic Azad University News Agency* would promote the announcement of the Abu Mahdi would be to promote the mythology surrounding Muhandis and signal to those within Iran's security apparatus that Iran remains committed to avenging Soleimani and Muhandis. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The missile complex is like the long arm that guarantees the security and authority of the country.”

Source: “Mushak-e Kurz ‘Abu Mahdi’ dar Ekhtiar-e Niru-ye Darya-ye Artesh Qarar Khahad Gereft (The Abu Mahdi Cruise Missile Will be Delivered to the Navy)”, *Islamic Azad University News Agency*, 23 August 2020. <https://ana.press/fa/news/15/510088>

...Earlier this morning at an induction ceremony for the new commanders of the southern fleet, the 1st naval zone, and missile forces in Bandar Abbas, Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, said, “Our path to happiness is in following the line of the Hosseini school, and we adhere to this path from this province.” He stated that part of the promotion to command in this country is about willingness to accept the important mission of realizing the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, and he added, “Command, in addition to the surrounding facilities, brings with it hardship and losses, and assuming this responsibility must at the beginning of this commission be accompanied by certain features and characteristics....”

Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, with reference to the three major naval zones in the south of the country, including the first region of the Imamate, the second region of the Velayet, and the third of the Prophecy, and the planning for their growth and development, said, in the future, the largest naval fleet in the third region will be in Chahbahar and its bases will be centralized.

The commander of the Navy continued, “Between the end of this year and March 2021, we will expect rapid growth in the second and third [naval] regions, and these bases and regions from Khorramshahr in the westernmost point of the Persian Gulf to Pasabandar in the easternmost point of the Sea of Oman need comprehensive and wise management in order to cooperate and create the conditions of combined coordination....”

Admiral Khanzadi further referred to the plan of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces in developing the missile capability of our country's armed forces and said, “The missile complex is like the long arm that guarantees the security and authority of the country.... In the past, our missiles were bought abroad but thanks to God and with the great efforts of the children of this country, we have been able to use capable and powerful missiles with a range of 200 miles and sea cruise missiles, and today I promise that the longest-range cruise missile in Iran named after Martyr Abu Mahdi Al-Mohandes will be given to the Navy and it will have a range of 650 miles, and this will be a game-changer. We will also acquire supersonic missiles in the future, and this is a priority for us,” he added.