



Iran's Simorgh Satellite Ready for Launch

OE Watch Commentary: Iranian authorities are signaling that they will soon be undertaking a number of satellite launches. Manuchehr Manteqi, managing director of the Iran Aviation Industries Organization, has commented that his organization is only awaiting a permit from the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) before launching the long-delayed Sharif-Sat. In this accompanying excerpt from the *Mizan News Agency*, Hossein Bolandi, director of the satellite program at the Tehran-based University of Science and Technology, reported that the “Simorgh” (Phoenix) satellite is also ready for launch. Previously, the Simorgh referred only to a satellite launch vehicle which had its first successful launch in July 2017 (after a failed attempt the previous year). Bolandi’s comments, however, draw a sharp distinction with regard to the Simorgh satellite, which is meant to bolster Iran’s telecommunication systems.

In early October 2017 Mohsen Bahrami, head of Iranian Space Agency, listed five satellites ready for launch: Doosti, Amir Kabir, Nahid 1, Zafar and Pars 1. That Bahrami mentioned neither the Simorgh nor the Sharif-Sat suggests a number of possibilities. First, it is unclear whether the Simorgh and the Sharif-Sat are truly new or are simply a rebranding of previous projects. Alternately, it is possible that those discussing the readiness of the Simorgh and Sharif-Sat are exaggerating; that Iranian satellite work is speeding up or that satellite work is dispersed and uncoordinated across Iranian entities. This latter possibility, however, seems the least plausible given the tight control the IRGC and the SNSC hold over Iran’s space program. No matter what, the increasing discussion of satellite development and readiness for launch provide an excuse for, if not directly signals, greater investment in launch vehicles, the technology for which has dual use potential in Iran’s ballistic missile program.

Bolandi’s statement concerning the job potential of Iran’s space program have all the hallmarks of advocacy for a greater budget in a time of declining resources. While his comments regarding Iran becoming a “space power” may be exaggerated, they do reflect a desire for prestige and a nationalist pride which ordinary Iranians will embrace, even if they do not support the clerical regime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“We have become one of the world’s space powers.”



Simorgh SLV (2012).

Source: Vahid alpha at English Wikipedia [CC BY 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Simorgh_SLV.png.

Source: “Mahvareh Simorgh Amaeh Purtab beh Faza Ast (Simorgh Satellite is Ready for Launch into Space),” *Mizan Online*, 1 July 2018. <http://www.mizanonline.com/fa/news/432211/>

According to an economic correspondent for the Mizan News Agency, Hossein Bolandi...said, “The space debate in the country dates back to the mid-1980s, when it was introduced due to the leadership of the Supreme Leader. The director of the satellite project at the University of Science and Technology said that Amir Kabir’s satellite is now ready, and added, “The Simorgh satellite, with a weight of 440-550 pounds, is also ready to be orbited 310 miles above earth.”

He said, “With its internal capabilities, all the telecommunications needs of the space division can be achieved.” Bolandi expressed that 17,000 jobs by 2025 could be on the horizon and noted, “We have made great progress in the space industry in less than 20 years, and have become one of the world’s space powers.”