



Iran: Preparing for Zafar III Satellite Launch

OE Watch Commentary: The excerpted news article suggests that the Islamic Republic is almost ready to launch the Zafar III satellite- described as a surveillance satellite with public benefits for Iran’s transportation, natural disaster and agriculture sectors. As the article notes, the article will launch in September, after three months of quality control.

The article makes much of the indigenous nature of the satellite, claiming that 90 percent of the parts were manufactured in Iran. This is likely true—Iran has invested greatly in its indigenous military industries and manufacturing as a strategy to mitigate vulnerability to sanctions. Unclear is the origin of the other ten percent or specific nature of foreign components.

The satellite was manufactured at Iran’s University of Science and Technology, suggesting the close links between Iranian universities and the military. Even if the satellite does not have a military purpose, for a university to access the funds and material needed to build a satellite would likely require the approval of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. In addition, the Iranian government would also have to coordinate with the university with regard to the satellite’s launch.



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Source: Doozandeh via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ComputerDepartment.JPG>, CC BY-SA 3.0

Such satellite launches, even if conducted under the guise of peaceful research, are likely to increase diplomatic tension between Iran and those countries concerned about its nuclear ambitions given the fact that the technology needed to launch a satellite into space is largely identical to that which could be used to deliver a nuclear missile. (For background, see: “Iran’s Simorgh Satellite Ready for Launch,” in the August 2018 issue of *OE Watch*.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Iran...has the intellectual capital to build satellites.”

Source: “Pertab Mahavareh ‘Zafar’ dar Shahrivar Mah (Launch of the Zafar Satellite in September),” *Mashregh News*, 22 May 2019. <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/961132>

Launch of Zafar Satellite

The president of the University of Science and Technology in Iran said: “The Zafar III satellite will be launched in September after three more months of quality control.” Jabar Ali Zakeri, the president of the Iran University of Science and Technology, said in conversation with a reporter from a science and academic group of Fars News that the Zafar is nearly finalized. He said: “This University’s third satellite, Zafar, is ready. It is completely designed and built by Iranian scientists. After quality control, the satellite will launch in September.”

Iran is a country that has the intellectual capital to build satellites. Zakeri added: “Ninety percent of the equipment for Zafar was manufactured in Iran and was produced domestically. In the last ten years, the Iran University of Science and Technology became one of the three universities that has made advancements in the fields of space and satellite technology.”

Zakeri emphasized that this satellite has public benefits. He continued on to say that: “Zafar’s dimensions are 70 [centimeters] by 70 and it sends its data and information to Earth. In this way, we could say that it has scientific functions, especially in agriculture, where it can find the most fertile areas to cultivate different crops.” In another part of his speech, Zakeri pointed out that the construction of the third satellite of the University is nearing its end, and noted the satellite’s functionality in the transportation, natural disaster and agriculture sectors.