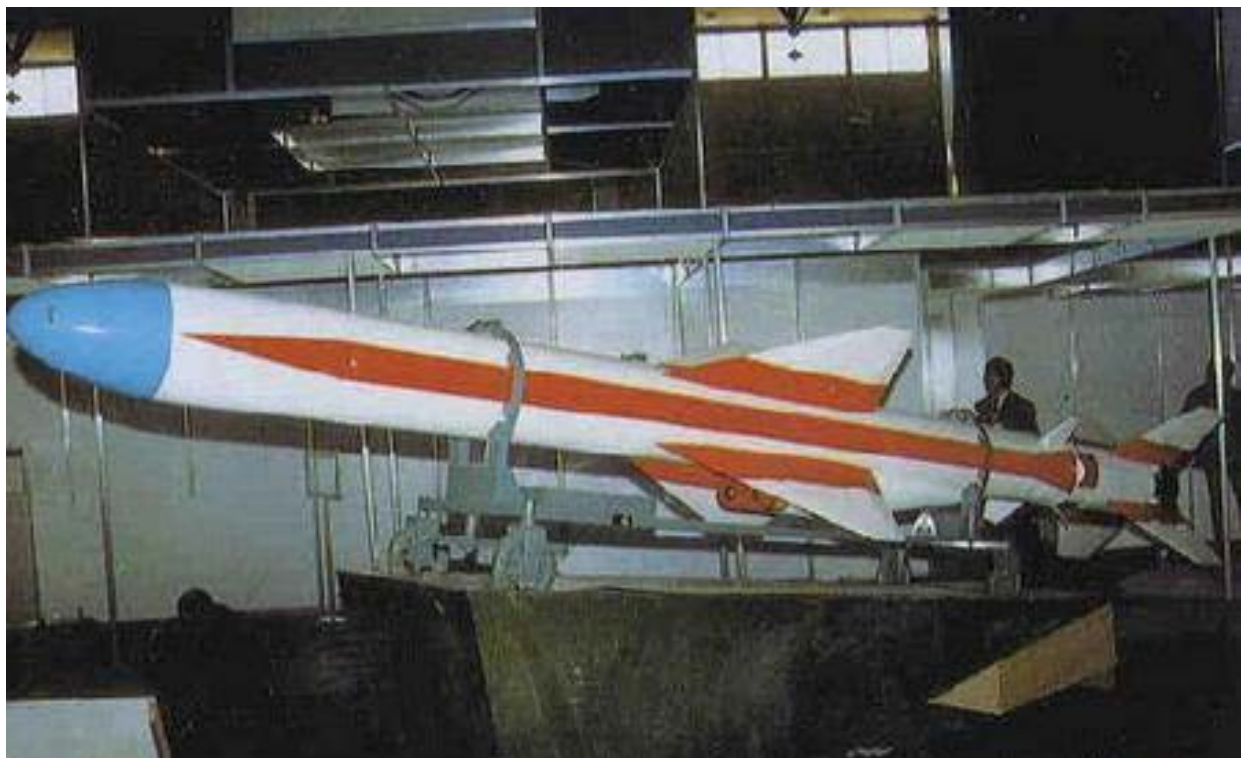


## Iran's C-802 Joint Venture with China

**OE Watch Commentary:** In a wide-ranging interview with *Mashregh News*, Abbas Mohtaj, an Iran-Iraq War-era Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officer and commander of Iran's naval forces between 1997-2005, discussed the Islamic Revolution, his career experiences, and the Iran-Iraq War. The accompanying passage from the interview is significant because it sheds light on Beijing's military relationship with Tehran and China's role in helping Iran develop its indigenous military industries.

Mohtaj talks openly about China providing missiles to Iran's Ministry of Defense for reverse-engineering. This is important because many international sanctions on Iran prohibited Iranian export of weaponry, but not import. Mohtaj's interview implies China was aware of Iran's intention to reverse-engineer weaponry as well. Many analyses from the time suggest Iran's neutrality during the period, but Beijing's enabling of Iran's military industries and ultimately the Islamic Republic's arsenal suggest China was anything but neutral.



*The Iranian "Nur" Cruise Missile, reverse-engineered from the Chinese C-802.*

Source: Iran Khabar, <http://www.irankhabar.ir/fa/doc/news/97752>

The implications of the Sino-Iranian relationship go deeper. During the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, Hezbollah fired a C-802 missile, crippling an Israeli corvette. The deliberate Chinese provision of technology, therefore, appears to have enabled Iran to proliferate the same weaponry to its proxy groups. Mohtaj's acknowledgment may therefore have reverberation on Israeli technology partnerships with China, since it reveals China's willingness to allow Iran to reverse-engineer and proliferate the technology it provides.

Mohtaj says China's provision of anti-ship missiles came only after the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War, thereby absolving China of any indirect responsibility for the use of Iranian missiles against international shipping during the 1987-1988 "tanker wars." Nevertheless, China's quiet military relations do have implications as Iran again threatens shipping in international waters and as Iranian officials go on the market for upgraded weapons systems. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“The Chinese even wanted to produce C-802s with us.”*

**Source:** “Moshak-e C802 Peruzheh-e Moshtarek Iran va Chin Bud (The C-802 Was a Joint Project of Iran and China),” *Mashregh News*, 11 June 2019. <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/965897/>

### *“The C-802 Was a Joint Iran-China Project”*

***In the 1980s, we bought a submarine from the Russians. Couldn't we have bought a destroyer from them too?***

*The purchase was not done while I was there, and I was not involved with the transaction.... The submarine was just as important for us as a destroyer because we did not have a submarine. Before the revolution, we had tried to obtain a submarine from Germany but that did not result in anything.*

***The anti-ship cruise missiles like Silkworm and C-802 were bought during your period?***

*Yes. We gave a number of this first series of missiles that we brought to the Ministry of Defense, to reverse engineer them and create them ourselves. The purchase agreement for the C-801 and C-802 missiles was completed in 72 and I traveled to China to sign the agreement before the missiles were produced. We had harpoon missiles and we had good missile expertise. In fact, the Chinese even wanted to produce C-802s with us.*

*The C-802 was produced in Iran under the name “Nur [Light] Missile.” It is one of the most famous anti-ship cruise missiles in Iran. Both the regular military and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps want it.*

***So that project was a joint project?***

*Yes, I guess you can say that it was a joint project. Our missile experts went to China to teach them and exchange knowledge.*

***What was our military relationship with China?***

*China did not sell us weapons during the war. After the war, they sold us a number of missiles and arms.*