

Russia preparing to give Iran advanced satellite system: report

Author:

AFP

ID:

1623406904050602500

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WASHINGTON: Russia is set to deliver an advanced satellite system to Iran that will vastly improve its spying capabilities, according to a US media report.

Moscow is preparing to give Iran a Kanopus-V satellite with a high-resolution camera, the Washington Post reported Thursday.

It will allow the Islamic republic to monitor facilities of its adversaries across the Middle East, the paper said, citing current and former US and Middle Eastern officials.

The report comes just days before Russian President Vladimir Putin meets his American counterpart Joe Biden for June 16 talks in Switzerland on the US leader's first foreign tour.

It could add to a long list of grievances in Washington ahead of the talks, from election interference to hacking operations linked to the Russian government.

The officials said the launch of the satellite could happen within months, and is the result of multiple trips to Russia by leaders of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards.

The satellite would be launched in Russia and contain Russian-made hardware, according to details shared by the officials.

While not of the capability of American satellites, Iran could "task" the new satellite with spying on specific locations.

There are fears that it would share such imagery with its proxies in Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon, one official said, among other concerns about Iran's ballistic missile and drone development.

Russian trainers have helped ground crews who would operate the satellite from a new site near the northern Iranian city of Karaj, The Post reported.

The deal could allow Tehran greater monitoring of the Arabian Gulf, Israeli bases and America's troop presence in Iraq.

Details of the sale also come at a delicate time when world powers are meeting to bring the US back to the Iran nuclear deal and Tehran back into compliance with it.

The 2015 landmark accord has been hanging by a thread since the US left it in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions, leading to Tehran to step up its nuclear activities long curtailed by the deal.



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Kremlin says date and location of Putin-Biden summit not yet decided

[Outgoing Mossad chief signals Israel behind Iran nuclear attacks](#)

Author:

AP

ID:

1623387265759756200

Fri, 2021-06-11 04:25

DUBAI: The outgoing chief of Israel's Mossad intelligence service has offered the closest acknowledgment yet his country was behind recent attacks targeting Iran's nuclear program and a military scientist.

The comments by Yossi Cohen, speaking to Israel's Channel 12 investigative program "Uvda" in a segment aired Thursday night, offered an extraordinary debriefing by the head of the typically secretive agency in what appears to be the final days of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rule.

It also gave a clear warning to other scientists in Iran's nuclear program that they too could become targets for assassination even as diplomats in Vienna try to negotiate terms to try to salvage its atomic accord with world powers.

"If the scientist is willing to change career and will not hurt us anymore, than yes, sometimes we offer them" a way out, Cohen said.

Among the major attacks to target Iran, none have struck deeper than two explosions over the last year at its Natanz nuclear facility. There, centrifuges enrich uranium from an underground hall designed to protect them from airstrikes.

In July 2020, a mysterious explosion tore apart Natanz's advanced centrifuge assembly, which Iran later blamed on Israel. Then in April of this year, another blast tore apart one of its underground enrichment halls.

Discussing Natanz, the interviewer asked Cohen where he'd take them if they could travel there, he said "to the cellar" where "the centrifuges used to spin."

"It doesn't look like it used to look," he added.

Cohen did not directly claim the attacks, but his specificity offered the closest acknowledgement yet of an Israeli hand in the attacks. The interviewer, journalist Ilan Dayan, also seemingly offered a detailed description in a voiceover of how Israel snuck the explosives into Natanz's underground halls.

"The man who was responsible for these explosions, it becomes clear, made sure to supply to the Iranians the marble foundation on which the centrifuges are placed," Dayan said. "As they install this foundation within the Natanz facility, they have no idea that it already includes an enormous amount of explosives."

They also discussed the November killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, an Iranian scientist who began Tehran's military nuclear program decades ago. US intelligence agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency believe Iran abandoned that organized effort at seeking a nuclear weapon in 2003. Iran long has maintained its program is peaceful.

While Cohen on camera doesn't claim the killing, Dayan in the segment described Cohen as having "personally signed off on the entire campaign." Dayan also described how a remotely operated machine gun fixed to a pickup truck killed Fakhrizadeh and later self-destructed.

Cohen described an Israeli effort to dissuade Iranian scientists from taking part in the program, which had seen some abandoned their work after being warned, even indirectly, by Israel. Asked by the interviewer if the scientists understood the implications if they didn't stop, Cohen said: "They see their friends."

They also talked about Israel's operation seizing archival documents from Iran's military nuclear program. Cohen said 20 agents, none Israelis, seized material from 32 safes, then scanned and transmitted the documents before successfully sneaking them out.

"It was important to us that the world will see this, but this thing should also resonate with the Iranian leadership, to tell them, 'Dear friends: One, you have been infiltrated. Two, we are (watching you). Three, the era of ... lies is over,'" Cohen said.

Media in Israel operate under a decades-old policy that requires journalists to clear stories involving security matters through military censors. That Cohen's remarks apparently cleared the censors suggests Israel wanted to issue a new warning to Iran amid the Vienna nuclear negotiations.

Iran has repeatedly complained about Israel's attacks, with Iran's ambassador to the IAEA Kazem Gharibabadi warning as recently as Thursday that the incidents "not only will be responded decisively, but also certainly leave no option for Iran but to reconsider its transparency measures and cooperation policy."

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment over the comments by Cohen, who was replaced by former operative David Barnea. Cohen in the interview acknowledged he might one day seek the prime minister's office himself.





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Khojir and Natanz explosions wreck Iran's strategy of deception

[Palestinian-designed, self-build homes seen as key to Gaza's recovery](#)

Thu, 2021-06-10 21:03

DUBAI: For Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, "home" is a concept that rarely conjures images of safety and stability.

Israel and Hamas have fought four short but savage wars since the militant group seized control of this sliver of territory in 2007.

With each wave of violence comes a fresh cycle of destruction and reconstruction, a "recycling of pain," as Mohamed Abusal, an artist based in Gaza, told Arab News.

At the end of May, tens of thousands of Palestinians returned to their homes in Gaza to inspect the damage following 11 days of fighting – the gravest escalation in hostilities since the 2014 war.



Tens of thousands of Palestinians returned to their homes in Gaza to inspect the damage following 11 days of fighting and bombardment by Israeli forces.
(AFP/File Photos)

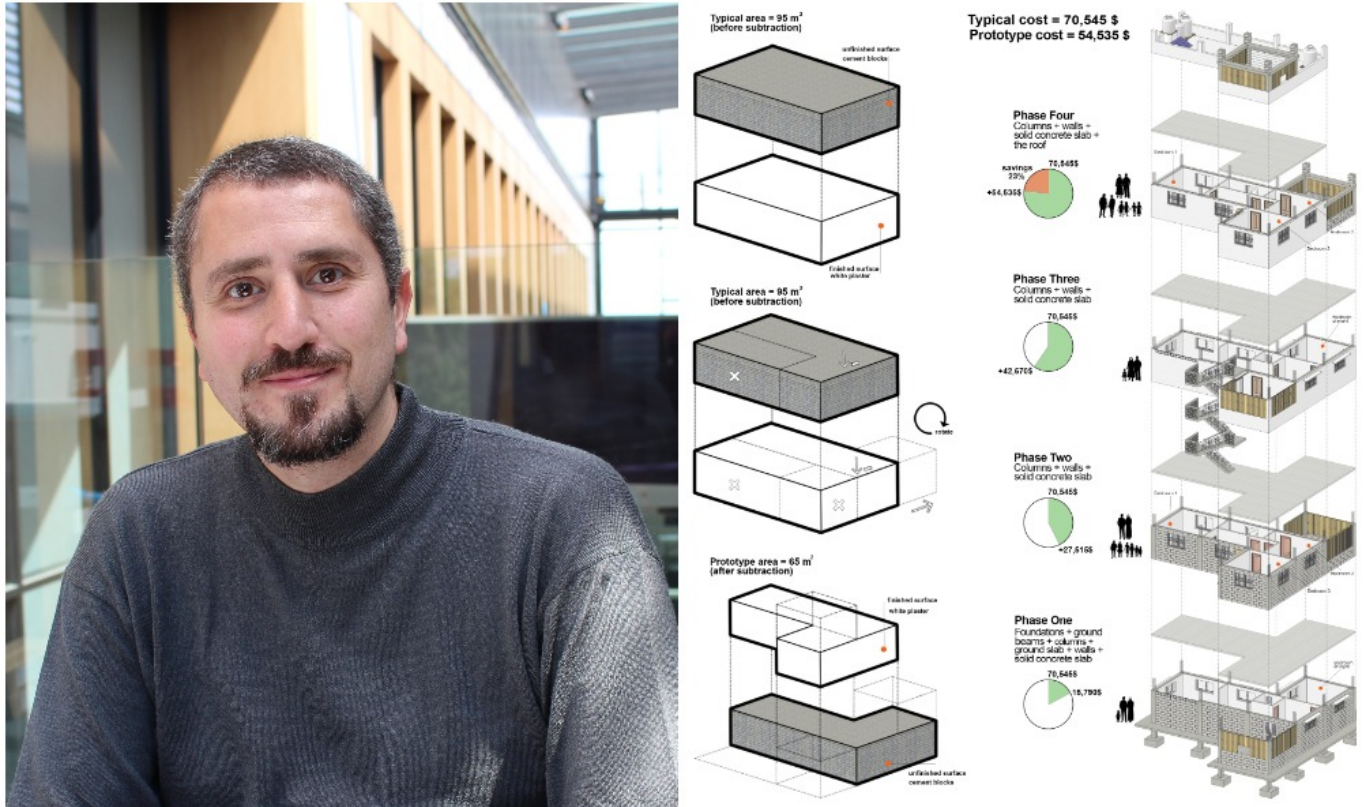
According to Palestinian officials, at least 2,000 housing units were destroyed and 15,000 damaged by the latest bout of violence, further degrading the already fragile humanitarian situation in Gaza, long squeezed by an Israeli and Egyptian blockade.

Gaza had not yet recovered from the 2014 war when the fighting resumed on May 10. Older buildings now stand like crumbling tombstones alongside newly shattered edifices. It is a sight all too familiar to residents of the territory.

To help redefine Gaza's ravaged urban topography, Palestinian architect Salem Al-Qudwa has developed a series of designs for self-build homes, which are flexible, green and affordable.

The innovative design means the units can be built on sand or rubble and easily slotted together, allowing extended families to live under one roof – a potential lifeline for those widowed or orphaned by the recent fighting.

"These are homes that can empower the Gazan community," said Al-Qudwa, a fellow of the Conflict and Peace with Religion and Public Life program at Harvard Divinity School.



House Design Prototype for the Gaza Strip, designed by Palestinian architect Salem Al-Qudwa (L), which allow future vertical incremental expansion for families affected by the conflict. (Supplied)

“The Israelis destroyed multi-story buildings and threw their inhabitants into poverty. They have lost everything. This is the problem right now, this endless cycle of destruction and reconstruction, but, more importantly, destroying the physical as well as social fabric of Gazan society.”

Al-Qudwa was appalled to see a repeat of the havoc wreaked on Gaza in 2014.

“Those attacks pushed Gaza back by several decades, destroying the infrastructure of many parts of the city and also the social fabric, which is crucial in relation to housing,” he said. “Now the conflict in 2021 is pushing Gaza back 50 years.”

The 2014 war destroyed around 18,000 homes, leaving around 100,000 Gazans homeless. However, the temporary wooden structures built by international aid agencies involved in post-war reconstruction were not conducive to the needs of large families and did not provide adequate temperature controls.

Instead of consulting with locals on how to proceed with Gaza’s reconstruction, aid agencies turned to foreign architects, “coming to replace our social structure with a mud house, a sandbag or a wooden shelter,” Al-Qudwa said.

COST OF GAZA WAR

* 77,000 – Gazans internally displaced by May conflict.

*** 2,000 – Number of housing units destroyed.**

As governments and relief agencies once again pour money into Gaza's reconstruction effort, Al-Qudwa fears the same flimsy structures will be built, preventing residents from obtaining long-lasting homes that represent stability, permanence and hope for the future.

Al-Qudwa, who was born in 1976 to a Palestinian family in Benghazi, Libya, returned to Gaza at the age of 21 to study architectural engineering at the Islamic University of Gaza. He went on to obtain a Ph.D. from the Oxford School of Architecture at Oxford Brookes University in the UK.

In 2020 he moved to the US with his Palestinian-American family after being awarded a fellowship at Harvard Divinity School.

While working for Islamic Relief Worldwide, Al-Qudwa established the Rehabilitation of Poor and Damaged Houses Project, which designed homes ranging from modest single-room units to spacious houses with shared courtyards, for more than 160 low-income families.

"I helped them build a kitchen, a bathroom and a bedroom and for them it was as if they had a castle," he said.

Gaza's House Design Prototype Drawings 2019



House Design Prototype for the Gaza Strip allowing future vertical incremental expansion for families affected by the conflict. (Supplied)

The project was so transformative that it was shortlisted for the World Habitat Award and in 2018 was granted a commendation.

“The project undertaken with Islamic Relief allowed me to work towards characterizing reconstruction projects in terms of their feasibility,” Al-Qudwa said. It also taught him the value of taking into account what communities really want in the form of long-lasting, sustainable housing.

“It led me to ascertain the need for a simple architecture as well as a revaluation of traditional techniques for construction, in line with the participation of inhabitants in the process of designing and building their houses.”

Gaza’s minimalist architecture is a product of its dire circumstances. But Al-Qudwa views his homeland’s simplistic urban landscape, and even its shortage of building materials, as an opportunity for a more positive social transformation.

Part of the challenge in Gaza stems from the Israeli blockade in place since 2007, which limits access to certain building materials.



Al-Qudwa views his homeland’s simplistic urban landscape, and even its shortage of building materials, as an opportunity for a more positive social transformation. (Supplied)

Before the occupation, limestone was a common material used in local architecture. It is now far too expensive to import from the West Bank, making concrete from Israel the most popular material of choice.

Al-Qudwa is putting together designs for three five-story homes made of concrete, each with proper insulation and built on strong foundations – in marked contrast with the emergency and transitional structures on offer from aid agencies.

Unlike the monotonous block structures usually wrought from concrete, Al-Qudwa uses the material creatively, enlivening his designs with nods to traditional Arabic motifs, incorporating lattice screens, brick patterns, and even shared courtyards.

Each structure features a row of columns, which allow for additional floors to be added at a later date. “These are ‘columns of hopes’ because with columns you have the idea that something will be added to the structure within a certain period of time,” Al-Qudwa said.

As he has shown through his designs, there are many ways to create low-cost homes that are attractive and also preserve a sense of community, even when resources are scarce.



As Palestinians pick up the pieces from the latest carnage, Al-Qudwa’s work offers a glimmer of hope for a future that is more permanent, both structurally and psychologically. (Supplied)

Moreover, his new prototypes use solar water-heating units, gray-water recycling, and rainwater harvesting systems – all design elements crucial in a region that has long suffered from power cuts and water scarcity.

Al-Qudwa’s sustainable designs run against the grain of other local reconstruction strategies, most notably Rawabi, meaning “The Hills” in Arabic, the first city planned for and by Palestinians in the West Bank near Birzeit and Ramallah.

Stretched across 6.3 square kilometers, the monotonous, block-style structures are arranged in rows, similar to those found in Israeli settlements thrown up in the West Bank.

As Palestinians pick up the pieces from the latest carnage, Al-Qudwa's work offers a glimmer of hope for a future that is more permanent, both structurally and psychologically.

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Gaza receives engineering equipment from Egypt to rebuild strip'She screams when someone comes near': Gaza children in trauma

8 killed, 27 wounded after Houthis launch missile, drone strikes on Marib

Thu, 2021-06-10 19:27

ALEXANDRIA: Eight people were killed and 27 wounded after ballistic missiles and explosive-rigged drones launched by Iran-backed Houthis struck several locations across Marib, officials told Arab News.

Thunderous explosions rocked the city in central Yemen late on Thursday.

Abdul Aziz Al-Shadadi, director of Marib's office of the Ministry of Health, said that ambulances were still treating people in the targeted areas.

"Explosions occurred at different residential areas in Marib," Al-Shadadi said.

Residents said that they heard large explosions caused by the missiles and the Yemeni army's air defense targeting drones.

The Yemeni army said in a statement that the Houthis targeted Marib with two ballistic missiles and two explosive drones.

The latest Houthi attack on the city comes shortly after hundreds of people attended the funeral procession for Lian, a five-year-old girl, and her father, who were among 21 civilians killed in a Houthi missile strike on Saturday.



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US condemns Houthis for truce failure, Marib offensiveHouthi blamed for deadly Marib gas station attack, killing 21, jeopardizing Yemen peace-making efforts

[US sanctions network charged with funding Yemen's Houthis](#)

Thu, 2021-06-10 19:17

WASHINGTON: The United States on Thursday announced sanctions on what it called members of a smuggling network that generates tens millions of dollars for Yemen's Houthis, pressuring the Iran-aligned movement to accept a ceasefire and peace talks.

US President Joe Biden's administration has sought to advance a UN effort to ease Yemen's dire humanitarian crisis and end the war pitting the Houthis against the government and the Arab coalition.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reiterated a call for the Houthis to accept a nationwide ceasefire and a resumption of talks on a political settlement to the seven-year-old conflict.

"The United States will continue to apply pressure to the Houthis, including through targeted sanctions, to advance those goals," he said in a statement. Twelve individuals and entities were slapped with terrorism-related sanctions blocking any US property they hold, and barring Americans from doing business with them. Foreign financial institutions that deal with them could be blacklisted.

The network works with Iran's Quds Force, the elite arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, to generate "tens of millions of dollars in revenue from the sale of commodities, like Iranian petroleum," a US Treasury statement said.

A "significant portion" of the funds are "directed through a complex network of intermediaries and exchange houses in multiple countries to the Houthis in Yemen," it continued.

Funds also underwrite "destabilizing regional activities" of the Quds Force and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, it said.

The network, it said, is headed by Said Ahmad Muhammad Al-Jamal, an Iran-based Yemeni who oversees the smuggling "of Iranian fuel, petroleum products, and other commodities to customers throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Asia."



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8 killed, 27 wounded after Houthis launch missile, drone strikes on Marib
World media's failure to cover Houthi terror in Yemen fuels more attacks: correspondent