



March 5, 2014

Israeli Navy Foils Iranian Attempt to Smuggle Advanced Weapons, Especially Long-Range Rockets, to the Gaza Strip (Initial report based on information from the IDF Spokesman)



Long-range M-302 rockets found aboard the ship (IDF Spokesman, March 5, 2014).

Overview

1. In the early morning hours of **March 5, 2014**, Israeli commando and naval fighters stopped a commercial vessel. It was stopped in the Red Sea near the Eritrea-Sudan naval border, **about 1,500 kilometers**, or about 810 nautical miles, **from the Israeli coast**. The ship was carrying advanced weapons, including long-rang rockets. The commandos took over the ship which, along with its crew, is currently en route to the southern Israeli port of Eilat.
2. The ship, **Klos-C**, flew the flag of Panama. It carried, among other weapons, **M-302 rockets from Syria camouflaged as sacks of cement**. M-302s are long-range surface-to-surface missiles manufactured in Syria, and **their advanced models have ranges of 200 kilometers** (about 125 miles). The ship was en route to Port Sudan, where it was supposed to unload the weapons, whose intended recipients were **the**

terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip. According to the IDF Spokesman, **Iran was behind the smuggling attempt, and Iran directed, coordinated and orchestrated the entire operation** (IDF Spokesman, March 5, 2014).

3. The current incident clearly shows that **Iran continues to pursue its strategy of terrorism and subversion in the Middle East and elsewhere. It pursues that strategy while presenting a smiling face to appease the West.** Iran seeks to **upgrade the military capabilities of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip,** especially their **arsenals of long-range rockets.** Iran continues to arm the terrorist organizations despite its cool relations with Hamas. The two are distant because of Hamas' stance against the Syrian regime, which led to its being expelled from Syria.

4. For background information about Iran's support of the Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, see the January 20, 2013 ITIC study, "Iranian support for the Palestinian terrorist organizations: Iran supports the military buildup of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip and seeks to rebuild their military capabilities after Operation Pillar of Defense, especially their rocket-launching networks."¹

The Sequence of Events

5. According to the IDF Spokesman, several months ago the Israeli intelligence services discovered that Syrian-manufactured **M-302 long-range rockets were being transferred from Damascus' international airport to Iran under the direction of Iranian Qods Force operatives.** The **Qods Force** is an elite unit in the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards (IIRG) and incites terrorism and subversion in the Middle East and around the globe. The Qods Force is also responsible, among other things, for providing support to the Palestinian terrorist organizations. The transfer of rockets from Damascus to Iran was suspicious because usually weapons are transferred in the other direction, that is, from Iran to Syria.

¹ [The English translation is available on the ITIC website.](#)



Loading the weapons in Syria (red outline) (IDF Spokesman, March 5, 2014)

6. The shipment reached Tehran, where it was transferred to the Iranian port of **Bandar Abbas**. In Bandar Abbas the containers of weapons were loaded aboard the civilian commercial vessel *Kios-C*, along with containers of cement used for camouflage. Bandar Abbas was also the port where **weapons were loaded aboard the *Francop*, which was taken over by the Israeli navy in November 2009** (See below). From Bandar Abbas the ship sailed to the port of Umm Qasr in Iraq where 50 additional containers of cement were loaded. **From there it sailed to Port Sudan to unload the weapons, which were then supposed to be sent overland through Egypt to the Gaza Strip.**



From Damascus to Tehran to Port Sudan, the route of the ship carrying weapons for the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, March 5, 2014)

Click for the IDF Spokesman video of the Klos-C's route

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMrsl34upC>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYd2b_wxKY

Weapons Found Aboard the Ship



M-302 rockets found aboard the Klos-C (IDF Spokesman, March 5, 2014)

7. So far, the ship has not been thoroughly examined. During the initial examination, M-302 rockets were found aboard the *Klos-C*, **meant for delivery to the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip**. There are M-302s in the arsenals of both the Syria army and Hezbollah. The M-302 is a surface-to-surface rocket manufactured in Syria, **whose advanced models have ranges of up to 200 kilometers, or about 125 miles**. They were first manufactured in the 1990s and since then have been upgraded a number of times. **The two models used by Hezbollah** during the Second Lebanon War which were used to attack Haifa and Afula were:

- a) The **M-302A** – The basic model, with a range of between 90 and 100 kilometers, or between about 56 and 62 miles, and carrying a warhead weighing 170 kilograms (about 375 pounds).
- b) The **M-302B** – With a range of about 100 kilometers, it carries a warhead weighing about 175 kilograms (about 385 pounds).



Left: An M-302 rocket that landed in Afula on July 28, 2006. Right: Firing a battery of M-302 rockets, photographed on July 12, 2012 (IDF Spokesman, March 5, 2014)

8. There are other M-302 models, including the **M-302E, with a range of about 200 kilometers, or about 125 miles, and a warhead of about 125 kilograms, or about 275 pounds.**

Previous Smuggling of Weapons by Iran

9. In the years since Operation Cast Lead **Iran has played a central role in constructing, rebuilding and upgrading Hamas' military capabilities** (at least until the political dispute between Hamas and Iran over Hamas' stance against the Syrian regime). Iran also had a major role in constructing and rebuilding the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)**'s rocket launching network (the PIJ is the Palestinian terrorist organization closest to Iran). **Iran has provided state-of-the-art weapons, especially medium-range rockets, which Hamas and the PIJ fired during Operation Cast Lead.** Iran's IIRG's Qods Force also trains terrorist operatives, and Iran provides financial support and **technological know-how** for the independent development and manufacture of weapons by terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip.

10. Iran's massive military support for rebuilding and upgrading the Gaza Strip terrorist organizations' military capabilities after Operation Cast Lead **necessitates the smuggling of large quantities of standard weapons from Iran to the Gaza Strip.** That was the motive behind the latest smuggling attempt. If the rockets had been successfully delivered to the Palestinian terrorist organizations in Gaza Strip they

would have put additional millions of Israeli civilians into the range of terrorist rocket fire.

11. Previous attempts to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip via the sea were the following:

a) **March 2011:** Israeli naval commandos took control of the commercial vessel *Victoria*, which was en route from a port in Syria to the port of Alexandria in Egypt. There were **50 tons of weapons on board the ship**, including advanced **Iranian-manufactured C-704 anti-ship missiles** and 60mm and 120mm mortar shells. The weapons were **intended for the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip.**²

b) **November 4, 2009:** The Israeli navy took control of the *Francop*, which was en route to the Syrian port of Latakia. On board the ship 36 **containers holding 500 tons of weapons** were discovered; the weapons had originated in Iran. Among them were thousands of 107mm and 122mm rockets, a recoilless 106mm cannon, hand grenades and ammunition for light arms.

c) **January 2009:** The Cypriote ship *Monchegors*, en route to Syria, was called in by the authorities for examination at the port of Limassol in Cyprus. It was found to be carrying Iranian weapons. The shipment was confiscated and stored in Cyprus until it caught fire on July 11, 2011, causing a massive explosion.

² For further information about the capture of the *Victoria*, see the March 18, 2011 bulletin "[Most of the weapons found aboard the M/V Victoria en route to the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip were of Iranian manufacture, including mortar shells and anti-ship C-704 missiles.](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/17937)" (<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/17937>)

Appendix

ITIC Bulletins Dealing with Iranian Support for the Palestinian Terrorist Organizations

1. **January 20, 2013:** "Iranian support for the Palestinian terrorist organizations: Iran supports the military buildup of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip and seeks to rebuild their military capabilities after Operation Pillar of Defense, especially their rocket-launching networks.)

(http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20459/E_267_12_1055464410.pdf)

2. **August 7, 2012:** "The Quds Force, an elite unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, spearheads Iran's global terrorist campaign."

(<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20378>)

3. **March 18, 2011:** "Most of the weapons found aboard the M/V Victoria en route to the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip were of Iranian manufacture, including mortar shells and anti-ship C-704 missiles." (<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/17937>)

4. **November 7, 2009:** "The Israeli Navy captures a ship carrying a large shipment of weapons (including rockets, mortar shells and anti-tank weapons) from Iran." (<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/18190>)