

## Iran navy produces armed copy of Bladerunner 51 speedboat

Iran says it will mass produce armed replicas of the Bladerunner 51, the British-built speedboat hailed among the fastest in the world, for its navy in the Gulf.

By Alastair Jamieson

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A senior commander said Iran would arm the copy vessel with missiles and torpedoes as it continues to **build its military presence** in the Strait of Hormuz.

General Ali Fadavi of the Revolutionary Guards's navy, told AFP: "The Bladerunner is a British ship that holds the world speed record. We got a copy [on which] we made some changes so it can launch missiles and torpedoes.



The Bladerunner 51, weighing 16 tonnes and 15.5 metres (45 feet) long is manufactured at the ICE Marine shipyard in Britain and can reach a maximum speed of 65 knots

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"The Revolutionary Guards will be equipped with many" of them within a year, he said at a ceremony marking the delivery of 12 other speed boats equipped with missiles and torpedoes to the Guards.

The **Bladerunner 51**, weighing 16 tonnes and 15.5 metres (45 feet) long is manufactured at the ICE Marine shipyard in Britain and can reach a maximum speed of 65 knots.

The boat, powered by two 1,000-horsepower engines, reportedly conducted in 2005 a tour of the British Isles in a little more than 27 hours at an average speed of 63 knots.

In late 2005, it smashed the Round Britain World Record in 27hrs and 10mins at an average speed of 63.5mph, proving its astounding offshore capabilities.

General Fadavi did not fully explain how Iran managed to get a copy of the boat, only saying it had come "via South Africa."

He said a US ship had tried to intercept the boat before it entered Iranian waters 18 months ago, but added Iranian forces

protected it and ensured its arrival.

Fadavi further warned that "in case of a conflict we will be everywhere and nowhere to face the enemies," recalling that Iran controls the strategic Strait of Hormuz through which 40 percent of world's seaborne oil supplies pass.

In recent weeks Iranian military officials have stepped up their warnings against any attack on the Islamic republic.

The United States and Israel have not ruled out a military strike against Iran to stop its controversial nuclear programme.

Iranian leaders have also repeatedly warned Tehran would retaliate against any attempt by Western countries to inspect its vessels, as set out in the latest sanctions the UN Security Council adopted on June 9.

Iran last weekend took delivery of four new mini-submarines of the home-produced Ghadir class. Weighing 120 tonnes, the "stealth" submarines are aimed at operations in shallow waters, notably in the Gulf.

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