

Iran Placing Medium-Range Missiles in Venezuela; Can Reach the U.S.

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<http://www.hudson-ny.org/1714/iran-missiles-in-venezuela>

Iran is planning to place medium-range missiles on Venezuelan soil, based on western information sources[1], according to an article in the German daily, *Die Welt*, of November 25, 2010. According to the article, an agreement between the two countries was signed during the last visit of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to Tehran on October 19, 2010. The previously undisclosed contract provides for the establishment of a jointly operated military base in Venezuela, and the joint development of ground-to-ground missiles.

At a moment when NATO members found an agreement, in the recent Lisbon summit (19-20 November 2010), to develop a Missile Defence capability to protect NATO's populations and territories in Europe against ballistic missile attacks from the East (namely, Iran), Iran's counter-move consists in establishing a strategic base in the South American continent - in the United States's soft underbelly.

According to *Die Welt*, Venezuela has agreed to allow Iran to establish a military base manned by Iranian missile officers, soldiers of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Venezuelan missile officers. In addition, Iran has given permission for the missiles to be used in case of an "emergency". In return, the agreement states that Venezuela can use these facilities for "national needs" – radically increasing the threat to neighbors like Colombia. The German daily claims that according to the agreement, Iranian Shahab 3 (range 1300-1500 km), Scud-B (285-330 km) and Scud-C (300, 500 and 700 km) will be deployed in the proposed base. It says that Iran also pledged to help Venezuela in rocket technology expertise, including intensive training of officers

Venezuela has also become the country through which Iran intends to bypass UN sanctions. Following a new round of UN sanctions against the Islamic Republic, for example, Russia decided not to sell five battalions of S-300PMU-1 air defence systems to Iran. These weapons, along with a number of other weapons, were part of a deal, signed in 2007, worth \$800 million. Now that these weapons cannot be delivered to Iran, Russia is looking for new customers; according to the Russian press agency Novosti[2], it found one: Venezuela.

Novosti reports the words of Igor Korotchenko, head of a Moscow-based think tank on international arms trade, saying that if the S-300 deal with Venezuela goes through, Caracas should pay cash for the missiles, rather than take another loan from Russia. "The S-300 is a very good product and Venezuela should pay the full amount in cash, as the country's budget has enough funds to cover the deal," Korotchenko said. Moscow has already provided Caracas with several loans to buy Russian-made weaponry, including a recent \$2.2-mln loan on the purchase of 92 T-72M1M tanks, the Smerch multiple-launch rocket systems and other military equipment.

If Iran, therefore, cannot get the S-300 missiles directly from Russia, it can still have them through its proxy, Venezuela, and deploy them against its staunchest enemy, the U.S..

But that is not all. According to Reuters, Iran has developed a version of the Russian S-300 missile and will test-fire it soon, as declared by the official news agency IRNA, two months after Moscow cancelled the delivery to comply with United Nations sanctions[3]. Iran, in fact, has its own capabilities for constructing missiles that could carry atomic warheads. According to a study

recently released by the [International Institute of Strategic Studies](#) in London, Iran is presently aiming to perfect the already existing solid-fuel, medium-range missile that can carry a nuke to hit regional targets, such as Israel[4]. If a missile base can be opened in Venezuela, many US cities will be able to be reached from there even with short-medium range missiles.

The situation that is unfolding in Venezuela has some resemblance to the Cuba crisis of 1962. At that time, Cuba was acting on behalf of the USSR; now Venezuela is acting on behalf of Iran. At present, the geopolitical situation is very different: the world is no longer ruled by two superpowers; new nations, often with questionable leaders and the ambition of acquiring global status, are appearing on the international scene. Their danger to the free world will be greater if the process of nuclear proliferation is not stopped. Among the nations that aspire to become world powers, Iran has certainly the best capabilities of posing a challenge to the West.

Back in the 1962, thanks to the stern stance adopted by the then Kennedy administration, the crisis was defused

Nowadays, however, we do not see the same firmness from the present administration. On the contrary, we see a lax attitude, both in language and in deeds, that results in extending hands when our adversaries have no intention of shaking hands with us. Iran is soon going to have a nuclear weapon, and there are no signs that UN sanctions will in any way deter the Ayatollah's regime from completing its nuclear program. We know that Iran already has missiles that can carry an atomic warhead over Israel and over the Arabian Peninsula. Now we learn that Iran is planning to build a missile base close to the US borders. How longer do we have to wait before the Obama administration begins to understand threats?

[1] <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article11219574/Iran-plant-Bau-einer-Raketenstellung-in-Venezuela.html>

[2] http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20101015/160963585.html

[3] <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3982738,00.html>

[4] <http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-in-the-press/november-2010/iran-fortifies-its-arsenal-with-the-aid-of-north-korea/>

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