Report: Iran and Russia violated UN weapons sanctions

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The German paper *Welt am Sonntag* reported on Sunday that the Islamic Republic of Iran and Russia used a smuggling route for the transport of offensive weapons allegedly in violation of UN resolution 2231 imposing restrictions on Iran's military activities.

The large broadsheet paper cited "Western intelligence services" for the claim that Iran delivered "offensive weapons systems" to Russia via a military airbase in Syria.

"In June, two airplanes from Iran flew directly to the Khmeimim air base - the most important Russian military base in Syria - in order to bring military equipment for transport to Russia," the paper said.

According to *Welt am Sonntag*, the heavy military goods were loaded onto trucks and delivered to the Syrian port of Tartus. The Russian ship Sparta III delivered the weapons a few days later to the Russian Black Sea port city of Novorossiysk.

The paper said the weapons were sent to Russia for "service maintenance." It is unclear what types of weapons the Iranian regimen sent to Russia. The Iran-Russia transport route was termed "a new smuggling route."

The exclusive report showed satellite images of an Iranian Boeing airplane at Khmeimim.

The US airplane giant Boeing is seeking to sell $3 billion in airplanes to an Iranian airline. The new revelations of Iran's allegedly illicit use of a Boeing airplane could jeopardize the deal that already faces fierce congressional opposition. Last year, representatives Jeb Hensarling and Peter Roskam wrote in a letter to Boeing: "American companies should not be complicit in weaponizing the Iranian Regime." The European airplane company Airbus is also holding negotiations with Iran to sell 48 helicopters to Tehran.

The role of Russia in the alleged smuggling operation is an eye-opening disclosure. Russia was part of the P5+1 group of world powers that sealed a nuclear deal with Iran in 2015. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear accord (JCPOA) imposed restrictions on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for significant sanctions relief. The United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 was passed in 2015 as part of the nuclear deal's architecture to restrict Iran's missile and arms-related activities.

*The Jerusalem Post* reported last month on Iran's [illicit nuclear and missile weapons procurement activities](http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/German-intel-says-Iran-seeks-nuclear-weapons-technology-499113) in Germany during 2016. According to the German state of Hamburg’s intelligence agency: “there is no evidence of a complete about-face in Iran’s atomic polices in 2016 [after the Islamic Republic signed the JCPOA accord with world powers in 2015, designed to curb Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief].Iran sought missile carrier technology necessary for its rocket program."

An intelligence report from the southwestern state of Baden-Württemberg stated, “Regardless of the number of national and international sanctions and embargoes, countries like Iran, Pakistan and North Korea are making efforts to optimize corresponding technology.”

According to the Baden-Württemberg report, Iran sought “products and scientific know-how for the field of developing weapons of mass destruction as well as missile technology.” The 181-page document cites Iran’s illicit cyber-ware, espionage, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction procurement activities 49 times.

A telling example of Iran’s evasion sanctions strategy involved the assistance of a Chinese front company. The intelligence agency wrote that a Chinese import-export company contacted a company in the southern German state that sells “complex metal producing machines.” The Baden-Württemberg report outlined that the technology would aid Iran’s development of ballistic missiles.

Germany’s Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control issued an end-use receipt for the Chinese purchase. Intelligence officials notified the manufacturer that the merchandise was slated to be illegally diverted to Iran. “This case shows that so-called indirect-deliveries across third countries is still Iran’s procurement strategy,” wrote the intelligence officials. Sophisticated engineering and technological companies are situated in Baden-Württemberg and it has long been a target for illicit Iranian procurement efforts.

A third state intelligence report from June said that in the 2016, “German companies located in Rhineland-Palatinate were contacted for illegal procurement attempts by [Pakistan, North Korea and Iran]. The procurement attempts involved goods that were subject to authorization and approval on account of legal export restrictions and UN embargoes. These goods, for example, could be used for a state’s nuclear and missile programs.”

The Trump administration will decide in October if the Iran nuclear deal should be certified for continuation. US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley is slated to travel to Vienna this month to meet with officials from the International Atomic Energy Agency - the UN nuclear watchdog organization - to discuss Iran's compliance with the 2015 nuclear pact.