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AP News

Iran says it will mass produce assault boats

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Iran's military has opened production lines for two new types of assault boats, state television reported Monday.

The announcement came a day after Iran said it had developed an unmanned bomber aircraft that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called the "ambassador of death" to Iran's enemies.

Both announcements drew a U.S. warning that Iran's weapons advancements were being met by increased military cooperation between Washington and its Arab allies in the region.

One of the vessels unveiled Monday, known as the Zolfaghar, is armed with missiles, state TV reported. The second is called the Seraj, or Light, and is a high-speed patrol boat with a fiberglass body.

Defense Minister Gen. Ahmad Vahidi said the new vessels "will add remarkable powers to Iran's navy."

Iran frequently announces advances in military technology, boasting of self-sufficiency in the face of international sanctions and efforts by the U.S. and other nations to isolate the country over its nuclear program.

U.S. State Department Spokesman P.J. Crowley warned the new weapons could reduce Iran's security as Washington partners with allies in the region to counter a potential Iranian threat.

"This is one of the reasons why we believe that if Iran continues on the path that it's on, that it actually might find itself less secure," he told reporters in Washington.

Iran launched an arms development program during its 1980-88 war with Iraq to compensate for a U.S. weapons embargo and now produces its own tanks, armored personnel carriers, missiles and even a fighter plane.

On Sunday, Ahmadinejad inaugurated the country's first domestically built unmanned bomber aircraft.

The 13-foot-long (4-meter-long) drone can carry up to four missiles and has a range of 620 miles (1,000 kilometers) — not far enough to reach archenemy Israel.

Last week, Tehran test-fired a new liquid fuel surface-to-surface missile, the Qiam-1, with advanced guidance systems.