

Central Intelligence Agency



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Chinese Arms Sales and the Iran-Iraq Conflict [redacted]

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Beijing is Iran's largest supplier of weapons, having agreed in late 1985 to provide Tehran some \$1 billion in antiship missiles, surface-to-air missiles, artillery pieces, as well as small arms and ammunition. We estimate that last year Beijing delivered over \$400 million worth of equipment to Iran:

- Chinese merchant ships have delivered to the Iranian port of Bandar-e 'Abbas three [redacted] surface-to-air missile systems.
- Tehran has taken delivery of five antiship missile batteries as part of deals worth at least \$600 million. [redacted] launch sites for at least a dozen batteries of the antiship missiles are under construction near the Strait of Hormuz.

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Diplomatic efforts by the United States and moderate Arab countries have failed to dissuade Beijing. Chinese arms dealers continue to negotiate new sales to Tehran and Beijing may soon add fighter aircraft, short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) and tanks to its Iranian exports:

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Chinese equipment helps Iran fill shortages in ammunition and artillery and will probably be used to support more offensives, such as the one that began at Al Basrah in January, where firepower played an important role in Iran's battlefield success:

- The Iranians are apparently using some of their Chinese-supplied antiship missiles--with their large explosive warhead--to bombard ground targets in the northern Persian Gulf.
- The recently acquired Chinese air defense weapons are too few and obsolete to increase substantially the threat to Iraqi aircraft, but will provide Tehran a limited capability that it now lacks to defend against high-altitude Iraqi air attack. The Chinese-supplied antiship missiles considerably increase the Iranian threat to merchant shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

Meanwhile, Chinese deliveries of arms to Iraq through the Saudi Arabian port of Qadimah--at least \$200 million in 1986--continue unabated:

-  Iraq received over 600 armored vehicles and artillery pieces in the past 13 months, including the delivery of over 100 tanks to Qadimah in January.
- Baghdad also took delivery of three of four Chinese medium-range B-6D (TU-16) bombers, which can carry two 100-km-range antiship missiles. This is the first Chinese export of these aircraft, and their acquisition by Iraq will increase its ability to strike targets such as the Iranian oil shuttle operations in the southern Gulf.

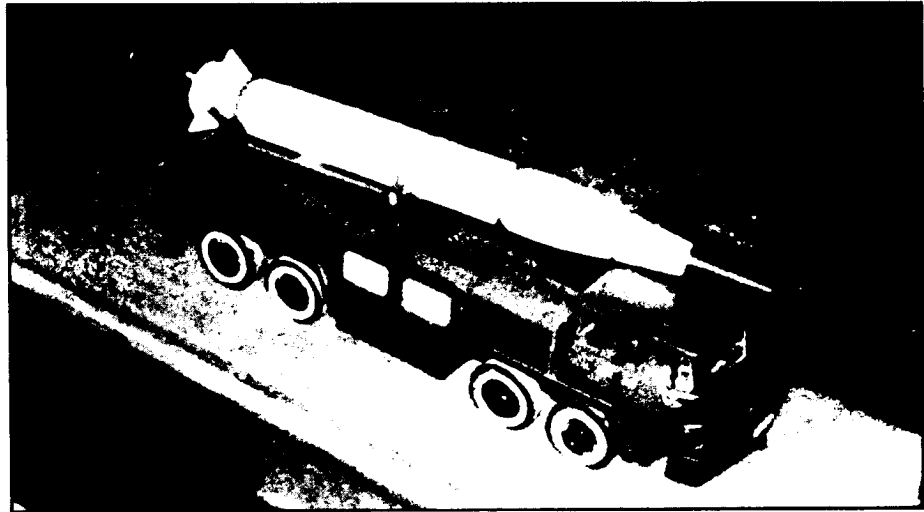
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China's New M-9 SRBM



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