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Israel, U.S. successfully test missile defense system in Alaska

Prime Minister Netanyahu calls the test of the Arrow 3 system - jointly manufactured by Boeing Co - a 'success beyond any imagination' and issues a thinly-veiled threat at Iran, saying 'Our enemies should know that we will overcome them'

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Israel and the United States say they have successfully tested a jointly developed missile defense system in Alaska.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at a weekly cabinet meeting Sunday that the Arrow 3 test was a success "beyond any imagination," and warned the country's enemies from the testing Israel's military capabilities.

Washington said last week that Iran appeared to have tested a medium-range ballistic missile that flew about 1,000 km (620 miles). Tehran said such tests were for defensive needs, not aimed at any country.

"Today Israel has the ability to act against ballistic missiles that could be launched against us from Iran or anywhere else," said the prime minister. "This is a great achievement for the security of Israel.

"All of our enemies should know that we will overcome them in both defense and offense."

The U.S. ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, attended Sunday's meeting of Netanyahu's cabinet, where he and the ministers watched a video of an Alaska missile interception.

The Ministry of Defense said that, as part of the Alaska tests, Arrow-3 was successfully synched up with the AN-TPY2 radar - also known as X-band - which provides the United States with extensive global coverage. Israel hosts an X-band battery.

The U.S. Missile Defense Agency said that Arrow 3's interception of a missile outside the atmosphere is a "major milestone" in its development.

"We are committed to assisting the government of Israel in upgrading its national missile defense capability to defend the state of Israel and deployed U.S. forces from emerging threats," Vice Admiral John Hill, director of the Pentagon's Missile Defence Agency, said in a statement.

Arrow 3, along with the Iron Dome, David's Sling, and the Arrow 2 systems, is part of the multi-layered shield Israel is developing to defend against rockets fired from Gaza and Lebanon, as well as Iran's long-range missiles.

Jointly manufactured by Boeing Co, Arrow-3 is billed as capable of destroying missiles in space, an altitude that would destroy any non-conventional warheads safely.

It passed the first full interception test over the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 and was deployed in Israel in 2017.

Iran says meeting with parties to nuclear deal "constructive"

Parties to the agreement - Britain, Germany and France plus Russia and China - met Iranian officials for talks called in response to an escalation in tensions between Iran and the West that included confrontations at sea and Tehran's breaches of the nuclear accord Reuters|Published: 07.28.19 , 20:41

An emergency meeting with parties to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal was constructive but there are unresolved issues and Tehran will continue to reduce its nuclear commitments if Europeans fail to salvage the pact, Iranian official Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday.

"The atmosphere was constructive. Discussions were good. I cannot say that we resolved everything, I can say there are lots of commitments," Araghchi, the senior Iranian nuclear negotiator, told reporters after the meeting in Vienna.

JCPOA signatories meeting in Vienna



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"As we have said, we will continue to reduce our commitments to the deal until Europeans secure Iran's interests under the deal," Araghchi said.

The parties have been trying to salvage the pact since the United States withdrew from it in May 2018 and re-imposed and toughened sanctions on Iran, crippling an already weak economy.

The Europeans say further breaches of the agreement by Iran would escalate confrontation at a time when Tehran and Washington are at risk of a miscalculation that could lead to war.

However, their efforts to protect trade with Iran against the U.S. sanctions have yielded nothing concrete so far. Earlier this month, Tehran followed through on its threat to increase its nuclear activities in breach of the agreement.

Iran has said it will withdraw from the pact unless the Europeans find ways to shield its economy from the U.S. sanctions.

"All our steps taken so far are reversible if other parties to the deal fulfil their commitments," an Iranian diplomat told Reuters ahead of the meeting.

In response to the sanctions, Iran said in May it would decrease its commitments under the nuclear pact. Under the deal, most international sanctions against Tehran were lifted in 2016, in exchange for limitations on its nuclear work.

So far, Iran has breached the limit of its enriched uranium stockpile as well as enriching uranium beyond a 3.67% purity limit set by its deal with major powers, defying a warning by Europeans to stick to the deal despite U.S. sanctions.

The U.N. nuclear watchdog, policing the deal, has confirmed the measures announced by Tehran.

Fu Cong, director general of the Department of Arms Control of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, who lead the Chinese delegation, said: "All sides have expressed their commitment to safeguard the JCPOA (nuclear deal) and to continue to implement the JCPOA in a balanced manner.

"All sides have expressed their strong opposition against the U.S. unilateral imposition of sanctions."

The meeting came after Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards seized a British-flagged oil tanker on July 19, two weeks after British forces captured an Iranian oil tanker near Gibraltar which it said was violating sanctions on Syria.

Aragchi said Britain's seizure of the Iranian tanker was a violation of the nuclear pact.

"The countries who are part of (the nuclear deal) shouldn't create obstacles for the export of Iranian oil," Araqchi said.

Britain has called for a European-led naval mission to ensure safe shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital international oil shipping route. An Iranian government spokesman said on Sunday such a mission would send a "hostile message".

Britain said on Sunday Royal Navy destroyer HMS Duncan had arrived in the Gulf to join a British frigate escorting British-flagged ships through the Strait.

The seizure of the British tanker in the world's most important waterway for the oil trade has deepened a crisis between Iran and the West. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Britain's seizure of the Iranian oil tanker was illegal and would be detrimental for Britain.

After meeting Iranian officials in Tehran, Oman's Foreign Minister Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah said all parties should maintain contact to avoid more incidents in the Strait.

Iran has threatened to disrupt oil shipments through the waterway if the United States tries to strangle its economy with sanctions on its vital oil exports.

Several oil tankers were attacked in waters near Iran's southern coast in May and June, for which the United States blamed Iran. Tehran denied any involvement.

Iran in June shot down a U.S. military surveillance drone in the Gulf, which Tehran said had violated its air space. Washington said the drone was in