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Oct 10, 2023 · 19 tweets · [P_Kallioniemi/status/1711724819551498444](https://twitter.com/P_Kallioniemi/status/1711724819551498444)

In today's #vatniksoup, I'm going to talk about Russia's involvement in the Middle East politics. Countries like Iran have been assisting Russia in their genocidal war in Ukraine, and the Kremlin has also meddled with various extremist groups in the region.

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Historically, Russia/USSR has been involved in numerous wars in the Middle East, invading Afghanistan for almost 10 years and recently helping Syria's authoritarian leader al-Assad to stay in power. In Syria, Russia was best-known for their brutal tactics against civilians.

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Russia and Syria conducted dozens of illegal 'double tap' strikes, report says



By Claire Parker

July 21, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. EDT



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But Russia has also been flirting with the militant groups in the region, including both Hamas and Hezbollah. Hamas is a Palestinian political and terrorist organization that governs one of the Palestinian territories, the Gaza Strip. On 7 Oct 2023, ...

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...Hamas launched a terrorist operation against Israel, killing civilians and taking them as hostages. One of their targets was a music festival, where they massacred more than 260 people.

World Africa Americas Asia Australia China Europe India Middle East United Kingdom

Israel festival revelers shot at point-blank range, video shows

By Paul P. Murphy, Teele Rebane, Hilary Whiteman, Brad Lendon, Amanda Jackson and David Williams, CNN
7 minute read · Updated 3:46 AM EDT, Tue October 10, 2023

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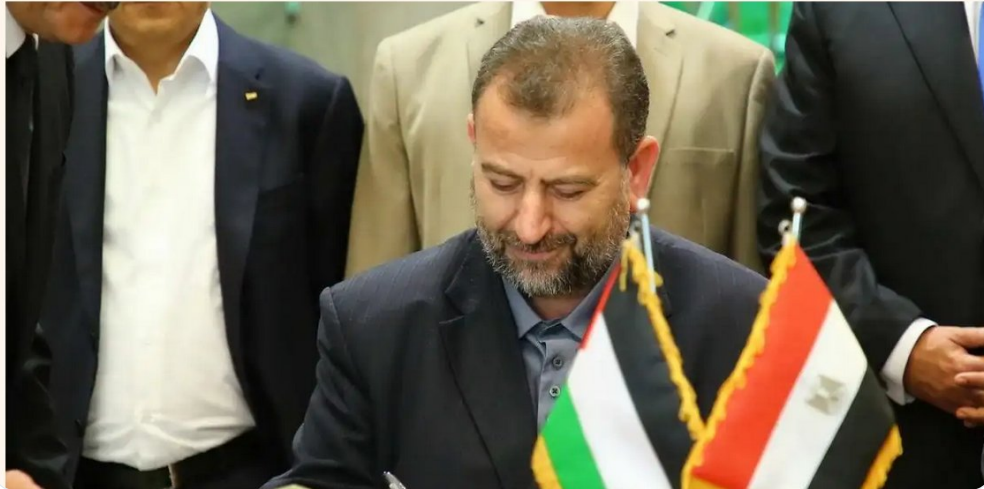
Russia has met Hamas leaders of several occasions, and Hamas sent high-level delegation to meet Russian officials early this year. After the attack, Russia "cited concern", but didn't condemn Hamas' terrorist attack. Russia does not consider Hamas a terrorist organization.

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Hamas sent high-level delegation to Moscow at Russia's invitation



March 16, 2023 at 4:04 pm



Russia cites 'concern' but does not condemn Hamas attack on Israel



By [Francesca Ebel](#)

October 9, 2023 at 4:38 p.m. EDT



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, right, shakes hands with Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit during a meeting in Moscow on Monday. (Sergei Ilnitsky/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock)

Hezbollah is a Lebanese political party and militant group that allegedly gets most of their funding from Iran. The organization has waged war against Israel and IDF on various occasions, including in the 2006 Lebanon War.



Along with countries like Algeria, China, Cuba, Iran, Venezuela and North Korea, Russia has refused to call Hezbollah a terrorist organization, and calls them a "legitimate socio-political force" instead.

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Russia says Hezbollah not a terrorist group: Ifax

By Reuters Staff

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Lebanon's Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah addresses his supporters via a giant screen during a rally marking Hezbollah's Martyr's Day in Beirut's suburbs, Lebanon November 11, 2015. REUTERS/Aziz Taher

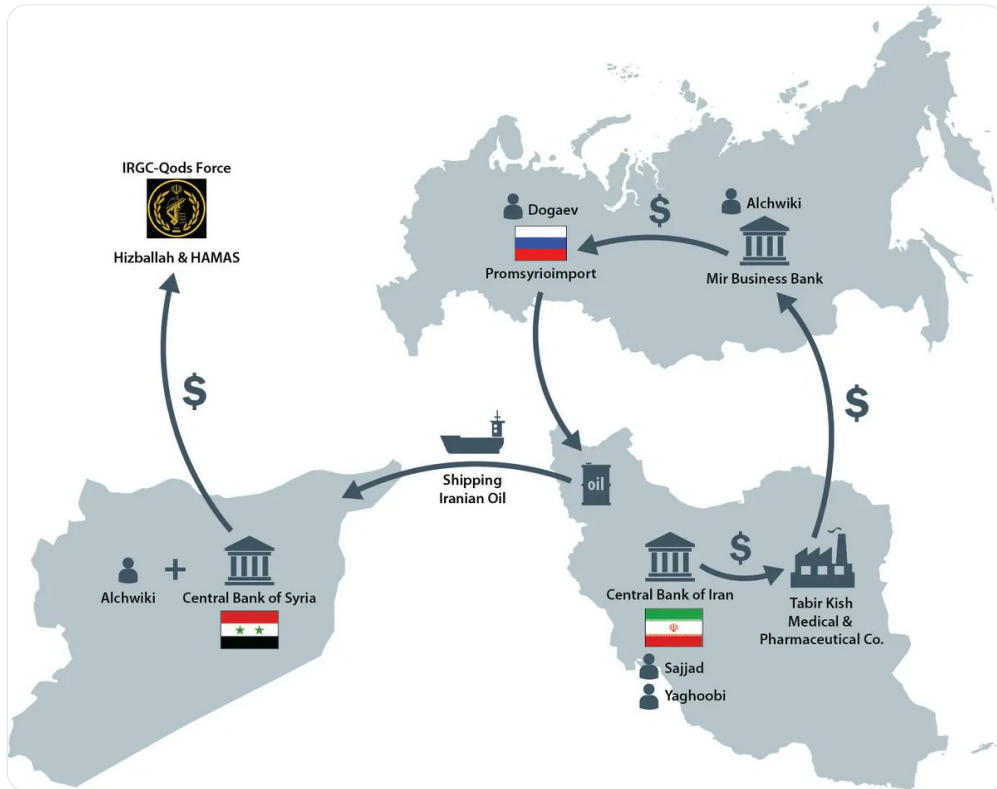
Russia and Hezbollah have even fought together with al-Assad's troops in Syria. In 2018, they also smuggled oil together in order to evade economic sanctions set against al-Assad's regime.

COMMENTARY

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Aurora Ortega and Dr Matthew Levitt
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Sanctions Evasion

Russia's alliance with Hezbollah was born out of the conflict in Syria, where Russian and Hezbollah forces fought side-by-side in alliance with the Assad regime. For years, this alliance appeared strictly limited to military activity in Syria, but in 2018, Hezbollah and Russia began to engage in unprecedented joint sanctions evasion activities. The stark change in activity between Hezbollah and Russia clearly demonstrated that their cooperation had moved beyond a military alliance and now carried an economic component. In November 2018, the US Department of the Treasury exposed a convoluted trade-based oil smuggling sanctions evasion scheme directed by Hezbollah and the Qods Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). This scheme allowed the Iranian regime to remit money to Russia's state-owned Promsyrimport on behalf of Syria, enabling Russia to evade US sanctions against the Assad regime. Simultaneously, the Syrian Central Bank remitted cash to Hezbollah, HAMAS and the IRGC-Qods Force on behalf of the Iranian regime. Central to this scheme were two key conduits: Hezbollah official Mohamed Qasir and Russia-based Syrian national Mohamed Alchwiki. In a letter to a senior official at the Central Bank of Iran, Qasir (aka Mr Fadi) and Alchwiki confirmed receipt of \$63 million as part of a scheme to benefit Hezbollah.

Hezbollah has allegedly joined Hamas in their fight against Israel, and on 9 Oct 2023, they published a "promotional" video declaring war against the IDF.

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Naturally, Iran is close to all these countries and organizations. According to US official, Iran pays Hezbollah around 700 million USD annually. Hezbollah has also been connected to cigarette and drug smuggling operations.

10/18



Iran pays Hezbollah \$700 million a year, US official says

► Praise for co-operation between the UAE and US in breaking up IRGC funding networks





HEZBOLLAH'S GLOBAL NETWORKS AND LATIN AMERICAN COCAINE TRADE

El Centro

Tue, 04/25/2023 - 8:20pm

Hezbollah's Global Networks and Latin American Cocaine Trade

Mahmut Cengiz and Camilo Pardo-Herrera

Hezbollah is a globally-networked organization that has been involved in various political, criminal, and terrorist activities for nearly 40 years. The variety of its activities and functions makes it a complex case, creating debates on how the organization can be labeled, whether it is a surrogate organization of Iran in the conflict zones, a terrorist organization targeting predominantly Jews, a smuggling group dominating global cigarette smuggling networks, a money laundering group, or a drug trafficking organization involved in the worldwide cocaine trade.[1] Heavily influenced by the Iranian regime, the group has spread its influence in the Middle East, Latin America, and the United States. After detailing its origins, financial resources, and global activities, this article focuses explicitly on how Hezbollah is involved in cocaine trade from Latin America.[2]

Hamas had allegedly received weapons and training from Iran, and intelligence officials have confirmed that Hamas received help from Iran in manufacturing over 4000 rockets and drones launched to Israel since 7 Oct 2023.

Hamas received weapons and training from Iran, officials say

Iran 'broadly complicit' in supporting Palestinian militants, but no evidence seen of a direct role in slaughter, officials say

By Joby Warrick, Ellen Nakashima, Shane Harris and Souad Mekhennet
Updated October 9, 2023 at 11:21 p.m. EDT | Published October 9, 2023 at 8:26 p.m. EDT



Iranians carry pictures of slain Revolutionary Guard commander Qasem Soleimani as they attend a gathering in Tehran on Saturday to express

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Current and former intelligence officials confirmed that Iran had provided technical help to Hamas in manufacturing the more than 4,000 rockets and armed drones launched into Israel since Saturday. At least some Hamas militants also have undergone training in advanced military tactics, including at Lebanese camps staffed by technical advisers from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hezbollah, the officials said.

Iran-Russia relations go also way back, and the Soviet Union was the first state to recognize the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. In 1989, Iran made an arms deal with Soviet Union, and after the fall of USSR this collaboration continued.

Russian Arms and Technology Transfers to Iran: Policy Challenges for the United States

ARMS CONTROL TODAY

Michael Eisenstadt

In the past decade, Russia has become Iran's main source of advanced conventional arms, an alleged supplier of know-how and technology for its ballistic missile and chemical and biological warfare programs, and its sole source of civilian nuclear technology. Despite sustained U.S. efforts to halt these transfers, they continue, raising unsettling questions about Moscow's intentions, the depth of its commitment to arms control, and the future of U.S.-Russian relations. How the United States deals with this challenge could have far-reaching implications for the stability of the Middle East and the fate of the international non-proliferation regime.

Iran has been seeking to enhance its military capabilities for more than a decade now, in an attempt to increase self-reliance, strengthen deterrence, and achieve the status and influence that it believes is its due. Self-reliance in all areas of national life—but particularly in the military sphere—is a fundamental tenet of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution. Thus, Iran has built up its military-industrial base to reduce its reliance on foreign arms suppliers and increase its military potential. Iran also wants to be able to deter potential threats from Iraq, the United States, Israel, and, more recently, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Afghanistan. Finally, Tehran's efforts to modernize its armed forces and acquire weapons of mass destruction are driven by a desire to bridge the gap between its military weakness and its image of itself as a regional power and the standard bearer of revolutionary Islam. To these ends, Tehran has turned to Russia—the only country that can provide it with arms in the quantity and the quality that it desires.

The security relationship forged by Russia and Iran over the past decade is something of an historical anomaly—the two nations have traditionally viewed each other with suspicion. In the 19th century, imperial Russia dominated Persia, annexing territories that had historically belonged to the Persian empire, and with Great Britain conspired to divide the country into spheres of influence. Soviet policy, though generally cautious, was

In May 2007, Iran was invited to join the CSTO, a Russia-based organization to counter NATO, but they eventually decided against joining the treaty. In 2015, Putin lifted a ban on weapon sales to Iran and Russia delivered several S-300 missile systems to Iran and the...

13/18



April 13, 2015 13:08 GMT
UPDATED April 13, 2015
15:30 GMT
By RFE/RL

Putin Lifts Ban On Supplies Of S-300 Missiles To Iran

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S-300 surface-to-air missile systems are deployed in a military exercise by the Baltic Fleet of the Russian Navy in the Kaliningrad region in January.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree lifting the country's ban on deliveries of high precision S-300 missile systems to Iran, in a move that drew criticism from the United States and Israel.

Related

Russia, Iran Sign Military

...two countries agreed on another \$10 billion deal that included helicopters, planes and artillery systems.

In 2022, Russian delegation visited Iran to observe drones manufactured by Iran. Initially, Iran downplayed the drone transfers, saying that it would not...

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Russia Completes S-300 Delivery to Iran

ARMS CONTROL TODAY

December 2016

By April Brady

Russia completed delivery of the S-300 air defense missile system to Iran last month, concluding an \$800 million deal signed between the two states in 2007, state-run Russian press agency RIA Novosti reported. The S-300 mobile surface-to-air missile system can counter multiple aircraft at a range of 195 kilometers and ballistic missiles at a range of up to 50 kilometers.

In September 2010, following pressure from the United States and Israel, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev suspended the agreement in compliance with a stricter UN arms embargo passed in June of that year. (See *ACT*, October 2010.)

Iran protested the decision, filing a \$4 billion lawsuit against Russia's defense export agency and embarking on the manufacture of its own long-range, mobile air defense system, the Bavar-373, which President Hassan Rouhani unveiled in August.

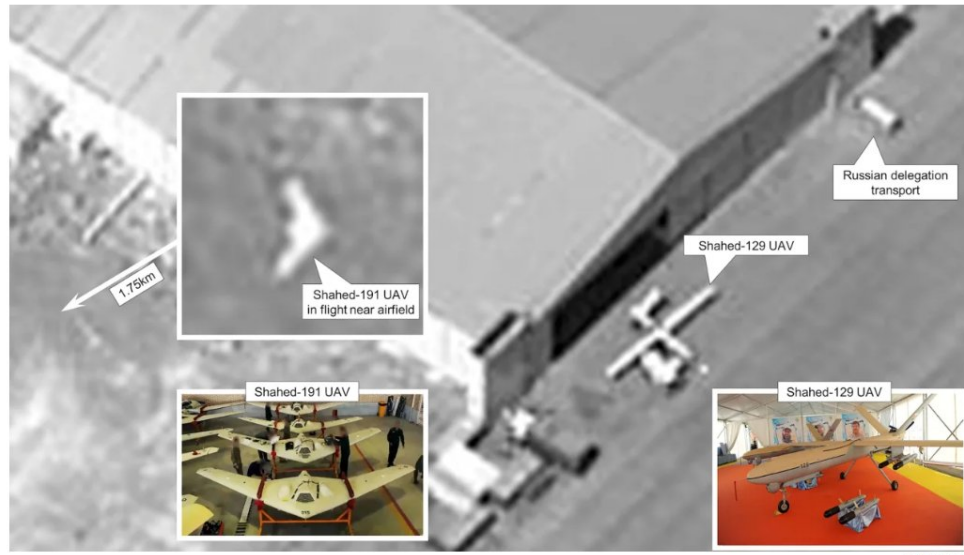
After Iran and the six-country group known as the P5+1 agreed on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to constrain and roll back Iran's nuclear program in July 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin lifted the ban on weapons sales to Iran and signed a new agreement with Tehran, sending the



An Iranian military truck carries parts of the S300 missile system during

Exclusive: Russians have visited Iran at least twice in last month to examine weapons-capable drones

By Natasha Bertrand, CNN
Published 10:02 PM EDT, Fri July 15, 2022



A Russian delegation has visited an airfield in central Iran at least twice in the last month to examine weapons-capable drones, according to national security adviser Jake Sullivan and satellite imagery obtained exclusively by CNN.

...supply any weapons to Russia and encouraged both Russia and Ukraine to seek a peaceful resolution. In Sep 2022, Ukrainian military claimed that it encountered Iranian-built suicide drones that were operated by the Russians.

Jerusalem Post > World News

Iran tries to downplay potential drone transfers to Russia - analysis

The Kremlin said that the drones would not be discussed when Putin visits Iran next week • Iranian FM: we won't help either side in this war because it should be stopped

By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

JULY 16, 2022 01:30 **Updated:** JULY 16, 2022 13:00

Iranian armed forces members march during a ceremony of the National Army Day parade in Tehran, Iran April 18, 2022
(photo credit: WANA NEWS AGENCY/REUTERS)

Ukraine's military claims downing Iran drone used by Russia



1 of 2 | This undated photograph released by the Ukrainian military's Strategic Communications Directorate shows the wreckage of what Kyiv has described as an Iranian Shahed drone downed near Kupiansk, Ukraine. Ukraine's military claimed Tuesday, Sept. 13, 2022, for the first time that it encountered an Iranian-supplied suicide drone used by Russia on [Sept. 13](#). [Read More](#)

In Oct 2022, Iran agreed to provide additional missiles and drones to Russia. In 2023, various media outlets have reported that Iran has been assisting Russia in building a suicide drone factory within its borders.

World

Iran agrees to ship missiles, more drones to Russia

Reuters

October 19, 2022 1:44 AM GMT+3 · Updated a year ago



Summary

- Iran to sell more drones, missiles to Russia
- West heavily criticises Iran over drones
- Tehran under pressure from mass protests

Oct 18 (Reuters) - Iran has promised to provide Russia with surface to surface missiles, in addition to more drones, two senior Iranian officials and two Iranian diplomats told Reuters, a move that is likely to infuriate the United States and other Western powers.

A deal was agreed on Oct. 6 when Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber, two senior officials from Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards and an official from the Supreme National Security Council visited Moscow for talks with Russia about the delivery of the weapons.

"The Russians had asked for more drones and those Iranian ballistic missiles with improved accuracy, particularly the Fateh and Zolfaghar missiles family," said one of the Iranian diplomats, who was briefed about the trip.

A Western official briefed on the matter confirmed it, saying there was an agreement in place between Iran and Russia to provide surface-to-surface short range ballistic missiles, including the Zolfaghar.

One of the drones Iran agreed to supply is the Shahed-136, a delta-winged weapon used as a "kamikaze" air-to-surface attack aircraft. It carries a small warhead that explodes on impact.

Fateh-110 and Zolfaghar are Iranian short-range surface to surface ballistic missiles capable of striking targets at distances of between 300 km and 700 km (186 and 435 miles).

The Iranian diplomat rejected assertions by Western officials that such transfers breach a 2015 U.N. Security Council resolution.

Among military targets, these drones have been used heavily against civilian targets and have cause massive civilian casualties in Ukraine.

Suicide drones strike fear in Ukraine's capital, killing 4



Explosive-laden suicide drones struck Ukraine's capital as families were preparing to start their week early Monday. (Oct. 17)

Photos 9

BY SABRA AYRES, HANNA ARHIROVA, INNA VARENYTSIA

Published 12:17 AM GMT+3, October 18, 2022

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KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Waves of explosives-laden suicide drones struck Ukraine's capital Monday, setting buildings ablaze, tearing a hole in one of them and sending people

To conclude: In Middle East, Russia has been flirting with authoritarian regimes like Syria and Iran. In addition, they've had close relations with terrorist and militia groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, further destabilizing the region.

Russian FM discusses Middle Eastern affairs with Hezbollah



1 of 2 | In this photo released by Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, right, shakes hands with the head of Hezbollah parliamentary bloc Mohamad Raad during their meeting in Moscow, Russia, Monday, March 15, 2021. (Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service via AP) [Read More](#)

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#vatniksoup is a Twitter thread series (and a hashtag!) where I'll introduce pro-Russian actors and propagandists from around the world, be they so-called "independent journalists", politicians, mili...

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