

# Chinese missiles smuggled through Iran into Iraq: US

AFP, Baghdad

The US military yesterday said its troops had found Chinese-made missiles which they believe were smuggled into Iraq by groups in Iran in order to arm groups fighting US-led forces.

"We have seen ordnance and weapons that come from other places, but we assess that they have come through Iran," US military spokesman Admiral Mark Fox told reporters.

"There are missiles that are actually manufactured in China that we assess come through Iran as well."

Fox also alleged Iranian agents continue to smuggle Iranian made armour-piercing bombs -- explosively-fused penetrators (EFPs) -- to Iraqi extremist groups across the country's long border.

"We do feel that there are networks of EFPs that are coming from Iran," he said, adding the troops had detained two suspects believed to be linked to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards covert Qods Force.

"We have detained two suspects near the Iran-Iraq border just this weekend that we suspect to be part of the IRGC-Qods Force network," he said.

The US military has repeatedly accused Iranian linked groups of training Iraqi extremists in the use of EFPs.

Since May 2004, when the EFPs emerged on the Iraqi battlefield, more than 200 US soldiers have been killed by these bombs which fire a fist-sized chunk of molten metal that can cut through even a heavily armoured vehicle.

Tehran denies being behind any

weapons smuggling, but Fox insisted that weapons seized by Iraqi and US forces are clearly of Iranian manufacture.

"They are distinctive ... in particular mortars, mortar pins, some of the parts that you see from the mortar attacks that are distinctly and uniquely Iranian," he said.

"Also, the technologies associated with some of the improvised explosive devices, some of the triggering mechanisms and also some of the techniques and also the technology associated with manufacture of EFPs are distinctly and uniquely Iranian."

The military maintains that many of the extremist groups trained by alleged Iranian agents are Shiite militants who have broken away from the Mahdi Army, the Iraqi militia loyal to anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

Fox nevertheless said that the broader organisation -- which is a powerful political and religious movement as well as a militia -- is not itself a terrorist outfit.

"As I described earlier there are secret cells, rogue elements of Jaish al-Mahdi that we consider to be extremists, to be terrorists or that are not answerable to any higher authority and are in fact as I said rogue," Fox said.

"We have not necessarily felt that the entire large organisation of JAM is like that," he said, using the common US abbreviation for the Mahdi Army.

"We understand that there are factions or splinters or pieces of JAM that are still decent and hard-working and members of society that are not like that."

Nearly 10 lakh people inside Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) embankment find themselves faced with floods during the monsoon every year. This year, they became marooned in water even before the rains set in.

The sufferings of the city dwellers were compounded by another round of price hike brought on by the rain.

Visiting a number of kitchen markets yesterday this correspondent found that a number of vegetables and other essentials were selling at higher prices. At Karwan Bazar, the price of green chilli that was Tk 40-50 a kg in the morning shot up to Tk 70-80 per kg in the evening.

"Incessant rain in last three days affected the vegetable prices as supply in markets remained poor," said Abdul Latif Mia, president of wholesalers association at Karwan Bazar. If the rain continues the prices of vegetables and other essentials will rise further.

## Downpour deluges

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The worst affected were Mirpur, Kalyanpur, Bashabo, Goran, Azimpur, Dhanmondi, Minto Road, Press Club, Motijheel, Fakirpul, Secretariat area, Maghbazar, Shantinagar, Kakkail, Mowchak, Bangladesh Rifles headquarters at Pilkhana, DND area, and the old parts of the city.

Vehicles moved at a snail's pace and sometimes they stood still on the major thoroughfares like Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Mirpur Road and Tongi Division Road.

An office goer told The Daily Star that it took him more than three hours to travel from Mirpur to Motijheel, a commute that usually takes 45-50 minutes.

Sarwar Hossain, a resident of Mohammadpur area, said, "It happens every time after a heavy downpour. It's all because of a very poor drainage system."

Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) sources said the drainage system can deal with only 10 millimetres (mm) of rain an hour, and waterlogging is inevitable in case of higher rainfall. The storm water drainage system in the city can cover 150 square kilometres (sq km), whereas it needs to cover at least 260 sq km, added the sources.

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## Ivory Coast

FROM PAGE 1

infestation of poisonous snakes. In such a hostile environment, the Bangladesh troops are carrying out UN duties for the last two and a half years.

Currently, 40 army personnel are posted in this camp. Despite high risks, the troops were not given prefabricated residential facilities. They sleep in tents, and bring drinking water from a town called Doukro, which is 120km away, once a week.

Water supply is perpetually inadequate here. For use in other work, they have the option to bring water from an area called Priro, 27km away.

To contact relatives in Bangladesh the troops have to go to Doukro camp, located 120km away. They make this visit in turns. Therefore one cannot avail the opportunity to call their dear ones more than once a month.

There are a few more camps of Bangladeshi troops in such remote locations.

In addition to such hostile settings, the troops are facing the challenge to restore peace in this country. This village came under rebel attack a few years back during a civil war.

The school has two teachers. One of them -- Kouassi Yao Nouho -- said, "It was very necessary to create this school because children of this village did not have any scope of education before setting up of this school over a year ago."

He added that before this, there was no initiative to set up a school there.

The teachers said the children are taught as per a standard primary education curriculum for class I-VI.

After class VI, they will attend a school test to enrol at a secondary school. If they pass the test, they will have to go to some schools far away.

The Bangladesh army have provided furniture, books and writing books and other materials for the school from Bangladesh and Ivory Coast.

No financial help of the Ivory Coast government has so far reached this school.

"It's not possible for villagers to continue this school after the departure of the Bangladeshi contingent. So we've requested them to inform the government and ask aid for this school after their departure," said San Kamenao.

B a n b a t - 4 C o n t i n g e n t Commander Lt Col Md Jahangir Talukder also noted that he was aware of such a request from the locality.

A Bangladeshi army delegation along with some journalists led by Brigadier General Rafiqul Islam made a visit to this school on July 13.

The delegates were accorded a warm reception by both the villagers and the students. Standing in rows

at the entry, the students chanted Ivory Coast's national anthem and then assembled in front of the school to chant the national anthem of Bangladesh.

The flags of the UN, Ivory Coast and Bangladesh were hoisted in front of the school.

Presently 95 children of the Konssaddougo village study at this school. The locals and the Bangladeshi troops are trying to get children enrolled from other villages around.

These children previously used to work at different farms without access to education. But they are now being motivated to enrol.

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