



By: TA | AP Brief

Russia is sending upgraded drones used in the Ukraine war to Iran



Russia is sending a shipment of drones to Iran including upgraded versions of the drone technology that Tehran originally supplied to Moscow after its invasion of Ukraine, U.S. and European officials told The Associated Press this week.

Iran has been firing drone barrages at Israel, its **Gulf neighbors** and U.S. bases across the Middle East for more than a month following the U.S. and Israeli attack on the country.

While Iran has its own stocks of Shahed drones, Russia has made improvements to the design during the war in Ukraine, including adding better navigation capabilities.

Russian and Iranian officials have had “very active” discussions this month regarding transferring drones from Russia to Iran, the European intelligence official told AP.

A U.S. defense official said it is unclear if the shipment is a one-time delivery or part of a series.

Neither official could say how significant the delivery is or how many drones were sent.

Another European official said a small number of drones would not have a major impact on the outcome of the war. All the officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

The U.S. defense official said Moscow’s motivation in giving Tehran more advanced drones is also unclear given that every munition sent to Tehran is one Russia is not able to launch at Ukraine.

White House spokeswoman Olivia Wales told AP that “nothing provided to Iran by any other country is affecting our operational success.”

She said the U.S. military has struck more than 10,000 targets and destroyed more than 140 Iranian naval vessels leading to Iran’s missile attacks and drone attacks decreasing by 90%. The Pentagon did not respond to a request for comment.

A drone shipment is on its way?

The European official said their intelligence suggests a drone shipment is on its way, but that they could not confirm exactly how the drones are being transported.

Two convoys of trucks carrying what Russia has described as humanitarian aid have traveled to Iran from Russia via Azerbaijan and it’s possible they could contain drones, the European official said.

The Russian Embassy in the Azerbaijani capital Baku said that seven trucks with 150 tons of food and other aid crossed to Astara in northern Iran on Friday while Russia’s Emergency Ministry said 313 tons of medicine also was delivered to Astara by rail, the Interfax news agency reported.

A second European official said their country hasn’t been able to confirm Russian drone transfers to Iran, but said if drones are being transported by truck, their numbers are likely small and could be a largely symbolic gesture to maintain Moscow’s relations with Tehran. Moscow is helping Iran with targeting, the official added.

Russian officials knew that Ali Larijani — a top Iranian security official — was dead before the rest of the world

The U.K.’s latest defense intelligence assessment says Russia almost certainly provided training and intelligence, including on types of drones and electronic warfare, with Iran ahead of the war in the Middle East.

Iran is also sharing information with Russia “quite generously,” the European intelligence official said, adding that Russian officials knew that **Ali Larijani** — a top Iranian security official — was dead before the rest of the world.

But Russia’s relationship with Iran has been rocky, the European official said, adding that Iranian officials felt “deeply disappointed” after

Russia did not help Iran during its 2025 conflict with Israel which led to Trump ordering an attack on three key **Iranian nuclear sites**.

Asked on Thursday about reports in the Financial Times that Russia was supplying drones to Iran, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described them as "false news stories."