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Russia Preparing to Give Iran Advanced Satellite System – Report

By AFP

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This handout photo provided by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) via Sepah News shows the launch of a rocket carrying an Iranian military satellite, April 2020. **Sepah News via ZUMA Wire / TASS**

Russia is set to deliver an advanced satellite system to Iran that will vastly improve its spying capabilities, according to a U.S. media report.

Moscow is preparing to give Iran a Kanopus-V satellite with a high-resolution camera, the Washington Post reported Thursday.

It will allow the Islamic republic to monitor facilities of its adversaries across the Middle East, the paper said, citing current and former U.S. and Middle Eastern officials.

The report comes just days before Russian President Vladimir Putin meets his American counterpart Joe Biden for June 16 talks in Switzerland on the U.S. leader's first foreign tour.

It could add to a long list of grievances in Washington ahead of the talks, from election

interference to hacking operations linked to the Russian government.

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The officials said the launch of the satellite could happen within months, and is the result of multiple trips to Russia by leaders of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards.

The satellite would be launched in Russia and contain Russian-made hardware, according to details shared by the officials.

While not of the capability of American satellites, Iran could "task" the new satellite with spying on specific locations.

There are fears that it would share such imagery with its proxies in Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon, one official said, among other concerns about Iran's ballistic missile and drone development.

Russian trainers have helped ground crews who would operate the satellite from a new site near the northern Iranian city of Karaj, The Post reported.

The deal could allow Tehran greater monitoring of the Persian Gulf, Israeli bases and America's troop presence in Iraq.

Details of the sale also come at a delicate time when world powers are meeting to bring the US back to the Iran nuclear deal and Tehran back into compliance with it.

The 2015 landmark accord has been hanging by a thread since the U.S. left it in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions, leading to Tehran to step up its nuclear activities long curtailed by the deal.

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