

Iran Long-Range Strike: Why Iran Long-Range Strike Highlights Diego Garcia Importance

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Iran Long-Range Strike Latest News

- Iran launched two intermediate-range ballistic missiles targeting the **US-UK military base at Diego Garcia** — located approximately 4,000 km from Iran's coastline in the Indian Ocean.
- This marks one of Tehran's longest-range strike attempts ever, sharply escalating the West Asia conflict beyond its regional boundaries and raising alarms in Washington and allied capitals worldwide.

Background: What Exactly Happened

- Iran fired two ballistic missiles at Diego Garcia. Neither hit its target:
 - One failed mid-flight;
 - The second was intercepted by a US Navy destroyer using an SM-3 missile interceptor — though whether the interception was fully successful remains unclear.

- Despite causing no physical damage, the attempt itself has triggered serious concern — it signals that Iran may now possess, or is willing to demonstrate, strike capabilities far beyond previously declared limits.

Why the Distance Matters

- Diego Garcia lies ~3,800–4,000 km from Iran.
- Iran had long claimed its missile programme had a maximum range of ~2,000 km.
- This strike attempt effectively doubles that claimed range, suggesting Iran has significantly advanced its missile capabilities.
- If confirmed, it would be the first operational indication that Iran can strike targets at such distances.
- A 4,000 km strike radius from Iran would theoretically place within reach:
 - Large parts of Europe, including cities like Paris and London
 - This fundamentally changes the threat perception for NATO countries that had so far viewed the West Asia conflict as a regionally contained crisis

The Missile Used: Khorramshahr-4

- The Khorramshahr-4 itself is a **liquid-fuelled missile** capable of carrying a warhead exceeding one tonne, with the option of deploying cluster munitions.
- Its design, derived in part from earlier North Korean and Soviet systems, combines relatively simple architecture with high payload capacity.
- The missile is also believed to feature manoeuvrable re-entry capabilities, making interception more difficult.
- **Assessed range** – Potentially exceeds 4,000 km (previously undemonstrated).

Diego Garcia and its Significance



Location of Diego Garcia

- Diego Garcia, located in the **central Indian Ocean** in the **Chagos Archipelago**, is a key US military base and one of only two major bomber bases in the Indo-Pacific, along with Guam.
- It is operated jointly by the United States and the United Kingdom.
- Diego Garcia sits approximately 3,000 km from both the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait at the mouth of the Red Sea and the Malacca Strait near the South China Sea.

Strategic Importance

- Serves as a critical logistics and operations hub for long-range military missions.
- Has historically supported US bombing campaigns in Afghanistan, Iraq, and recent Middle East operations.
- Its airfield can host:

- Heavy bombers
- Surveillance aircraft
- Pre-positioned military equipment
- Enables rapid military deployment across Asia, Africa, and the Gulf.
- Additionally, it plays an important role in US Space Force tracking systems, enhancing its strategic significance.

Ownership and Control of Diego Garcia

- **Historical Control and Lease to the US** – Diego Garcia is part of the Chagos Archipelago, originally controlled by the UK. In 1966, the UK leased the island to the US for a military base for 50 years. The lease was extended in 2016 for 20 more years, initially up to 2036.
- **International Legal Dispute** – In 2019, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the UK's separation of the Chagos Islands from Mauritius was illegal. It recommended that sovereignty should be returned to Mauritius.

Current Status

- In May 2025, the UK formally transferred sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius.
- However, Diego Garcia was leased back to the UK for 99 years at £101 million annually.
- The move was partly driven by strategic concerns, including preventing rival powers like China from gaining access.

Missile Defence: The SM-3 System

- The attempted interception was carried out using the SM-3 interceptor, deployed on US Navy warships.
- The SM-3 uses a “hit-to-kill” approach — it destroys incoming missiles through kinetic force (physical impact), not explosives.
- It is well-established against short and medium-range threats, but the uncertainty around this interception highlights the challenges posed by advanced manoeuvrable ballistic missiles.

Iran's Broader Escalation Strategy

- The Diego Garcia strike is not an isolated event — it fits into a wider pattern of Iranian escalation:
 - Stepped-up attacks on energy infrastructure across the Gulf, including drone strikes on Kuwait's Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery.
 - Warnings issued to countries hosting US forces.
 - Iranian officials signalling that targets could extend beyond traditional battlefields.
- This points to a strategy combining conventional missile strikes with the threat of asymmetric warfare.

Source: **IE** | **Tol**

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