

Did Israel Attack Syria?

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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In a recent [report from investigative journalist Richard Silverstein at the Tikun Olam blog](#), confidential sources within the Israeli military establishment revealed to him that the alleged bombing of a weapons depot in the Syrian town of Latakia, – which sits beside the Russian controlled seaport at Tartous – was an Israeli operation, targeting advanced Russian-supplied defensive missile systems (S-300 or Yakhont), an operation that included the direct assistance of opposition militants inside Syria.

Silverstein's Israeli source specifically states that members of the FSA coordinated with the IDF and engaged in a diversionary rocket attack at the time of the Israeli airstrike. The previous Israeli attack in Damascus; when rebels were on hand to film the event, bears similar hallmarks to the attack in Latakia, yet, contrary to the previous strike, there has been no footage to date of the explosion, and Syrian journalists I have contacted have confirmed that there are no Syrian media reports on recent large-scale explosions in Latakia. The anti-Assad activist the "Syrian Observatory for Human Rights" has reported briefly on the incident and claimed Syrian soldiers were killed, and the blast could be heard kilometres from the alleged strike-zone.

[In this Reuters report](#), titled "Syrian Naval Base Blast Points to Israel", Qassem Saadeddine, spokesman for the Free Syrian Army's "Supreme Military Council", states: (my emphasis)

"rebel forces' intelligence network had identified newly supplied Yakhont missiles being stored there. It was not the FSA that targeted this,... It is not an attack that was carried out by rebels."

Saadeddine goes on to state that the attack on the base "was either by air raid or long-range missiles fired from boats in the Mediterranean." Why would a "FSA" spokesman disavow attacks on Syrian military installations? It seems anathema to what the various incarnations of "spokesmen" have been trying to achieve for two years; namely, fabricating attacks on military installations to bolster morale within the ranks of the rebels, and deplete the morale of the Syrian Army. These accounts seem to tally with Silverstein's Israeli source – yet the specific weapons that were the target seem to differ.

It is hard to believe that Israel would take such a risk for the Yakhonts alone, unless they have developed a superior stand-off missile system that radically reduces the risks involved; which may have been the reason in using "rebels" to gleefully advertise the "success" of Israel's earlier airstrikes on Damascus. The S-300 system is a clear advantage for Syria, enabling superior mobile air-defense; the [Yakhonts are built to target war-ships](#) and while they offer deterrent for Syria's Mediterranean coast, they are no use to Assad if a No-Fly Zone is enforced.

Furthermore, it must be noted that it has become widespread knowledge that Israel is, at the very least, liaising directly with “opposition” forces inside Syria. Silverstein also confirmed this to be the case, and in particular referenced the Golan Heights; this cooperation has also been reported in some avenues of mainstream media, although the reportage is usually set to a “humanitarian” tone.

In a [Times of Israel report from the 1st July](#) titled: “We Have No Beef With Israel, Syrian Islamist Group Says”, a spokesman for the rebel group “the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade” – a Salafist “rebel” group based in the Golan Heights/Quneitra/Daraa region with close links to [Jabhat al Nusra](#), and the group responsible for several [kidnappings of UN peacekeepers](#) – goes as far as to thank Israel for its assistance along the border saying: “The medical help that the refugees got from Israel is a very good thing,”, and attempted to reassure Israelis that their fight is directed at the Assad regime and not them; not even in “ten years time”. The report goes on to state: (my emphasis)

To date, Israel has admitted over two dozen Syrians into its hospitals for treatment, and the IDF has set up a field hospital on the border for treating relatively minor cases. During June 6 clashes between Syrian rebels and Assad forces at the Quneitra border crossing, the IDF treated 20 Syrian rebel combatants for injuries suffered during the gunfight, according to a [recently published UN secretary-general’s report](#).

Moreover, Israel has also made overtures to the Druze community in and around the Quneitra/Golan Heights region, in attempts to shore-up its borders. This highlights the moral expediency and great lengths the Israeli military will go to uphold the status quo and its military dominance. The Israeli government has no concern for Syria or its people, it will happily pour fuel on the fire and enable warring factions to shed further needless blood to achieve its desired strategic objectives. As [Jonathon Cook noted recently](#), the “optimal scenario” for the Israel military would be for the Syrian war to totally divide the state, resulting in a de-facto “balkanization”. It makes perfect sense that to achieve this, Israel are in the same position as the United States, they are looking to “level the playing field”.

Red Lines and Ambiguity.

When Reuters questioned Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon regarding the explosions in Latakia, his reply was reminiscent of official ambiguous statements regarding previous Israeli strikes in Syria. (and other various Muslim nations around the world): (my emphasis)

“We have set red lines in regards to our own interests, and we keep them. There is an attack here, an explosion there, various versions – in any event, in the Middle East it is usually we who are blamed for most.”

Following recent statements from Russian diplomats vowing to honour advanced weapons contracts, along with claims from Assad that the shipments had begun to arrive in response to the [previous Israeli airstrike upon Syria](#), – which targeted elite Syrian military divisions stationed in the Qassioun Mountains in Damascus – it appears Israel may have acted upon the threat of attacking Russian weapons that “tip the balance” in the region. In reality, the result of Syria acquiring such advanced systems will diminish Israel’s ability to violate its neighbours sovereign airspace at will, and in turn, commit acts of war unhindered.

The media silence surrounding this alleged attack is disconcerting on several levels. Firstly, if indeed Russian supplied advanced weapons (either the Yakhont Surface to Sea, or the S-300 Surface to Air systems) – that will undoubtedly be accompanied by Russian military personnel – have been attacked, why is Russia silent on the issue? Have Russia given the Israeli's guarantees that retaliation will not be forthcoming? Aside from this theory, there is the distinct possibility that an emboldened Israeli military now feels it can strike targets within Syrian territory with impunity; particularly considering the half-hearted response from Russia (and the "International Community") to Israel's last act of war upon Syria.

Furthermore, if Israel has indeed carried out this strike and knowingly hit targets that Russian troops may be alongside, are Russia even willing or able to retaliate? Lets not forget, a war with Israel is almost a guaranteed war with the United States. Of course, to these powers this is a game of chess, and Israel like to play in the dark. Could Russia and Israel both be engaging in covert strikes against each other? Mysteriously, an [Israeli F-16 "crashed during routine training" over the Mediterranean on Sunday](#), a mere two days after the alleged strike in Latakia; it is no secret Russia has been building a huge Naval presence in the Med.

In summary, if it is true that Israel has targeted Russian advanced systems, and all the implications that follow, Russia and Syria could be remaining silent for three reasons: firstly, out of embarrassment and an unwillingness to appear weak through lack of ability to retaliate; secondly, one of the parties is complicit; thirdly, they plan to retaliate in kind, ie: a covert operation. The only other explanation is that the strike in Latakia simply did not occur.

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