



## Air Strike

18

NOV

8:24 UTC

### **Israel & Syria Alert: IAF conducts airstrikes in Syria on November 17-18 in response to discovery of IEDs on Israeli side of Golan Heights; potential for retaliatory attacks, broad escalation unlikely**

#### **Please be advised:**

- On November 18, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced that Israeli Air Force (IAF) fighter jets targeted eight military positions belonging to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)-Quds Force (QF) and the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in and around Damascus during the overnight hours of November 17-18.
- The strikes targeted a "headquarters" of Iranian forces near the Damascus International Airport, a classified military site, a base of the SAA's 7th Division, from where alleged "terrorist attacks" are "promoted", and mobile surface-to-air missile batteries.
- The statement indicated that the attack was in response to the placement of IEDs on the Israeli side of the Golan Heights by a "Syrian squad operating under Iranian guidance" and that it is "proof of Iran's long-standing entrenchment in Syria."
- The IDF stated that Israel holds the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad-led government responsible for any action emanating from its territory and that it will continue to "act as necessary to eradicate Iranian establishment in Syria", which poses a risk to the stability of security in the region.
- Syria's official news agency reported on the materialization of IAF airstrikes in the "southern region" and the killing of three Syrian security personnel as a result.
- According to an unconfirmed report, the airstrikes led to a total of ten casualties, of which five were Iranian, three were Syrian, and two were either Lebanese or Iraqi nationals.
- The IDF Northern Command and IAF have reportedly been placed on alert.

## IAF TARGETS SYRIA FOLLOWING DISCOVERY OF IEDS ON ISRAELI SIDE OF GOLAN HEIGHTS



### Assessment & Forecast:

1. The discovery of IEDs on the Israeli side of the Golan Heights is notable given the rarity of such incidents near the Israel-Syrian border areas. However, this is not entirely unprecedented, as evidenced by the [August 2-3](#) incident, wherein the IDF thwarted an attempt by four militants to “plant explosives” near the security fence between Syria and Israel. Despite the infrequency of such incidents, the current development highlights the continued willingness of Syria-based Iranian elements to conduct cross-border attacks into Israel. Nevertheless, the IDF’s successful foiling of the IED attacks highlights its continued heightened vigilance towards the potential threat of militant activities by Syria-based Iranian elements along the Israel-Syria border.
2. The IDF statement on the IAF strikes is also significant, as Israel rarely publicly acknowledges aerial operations against Iranian-linked targets in Syria. Generally, Israel maintains a policy of ambiguity regarding its activities in Syria. This is likely an effort to not provide Syria or Iran a pretext for retaliation. However, it has in the past acknowledged conducting airstrikes in response to specific attacks or as a preemptive attempt to prevent potential attacks, as in the current case. A similar cross-border operation by Israel was reported on October 13, when the IDF targeted SAA posts in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Syria and Israel. Overall, it highlights long-standing Israeli concerns regarding the entrenchment of Iran-backed and SAA personnel in the immediate vicinity of the Syria-Israel border, including within the DMZ, and its efforts to mitigate the threat it poses to Israel’s national security.
3. Additionally, the timing and targeted nature of the IAF airstrikes indicates Israel’s efforts to showcase its ability to swiftly respond to any and all provocations without significantly escalating the situation. This serves to hinder Iran from potentially establishing a second front in Syria, in addition to southern Lebanon, from which its backed forces could attack Israel in a future armed conflict. **FORECAST:** Therefore, while tensions are likely to remain high between Israel and Iran-backed actors operating in Syria, a broad military escalation remains unlikely at the current juncture. That said, the potential for localized retaliatory assaults by Syria-based Iranian elements cannot be completely ruled out. The fact that the IDF Northern Command and IAF have reportedly

been placed on high alert highlights Israel's current heightened military preparedness in anticipation of such attacks, which may, in turn, lead to limited hostilities between the two sides. Israel will likely maintain this bolstered vigilance and deploy additional troops to secure the border regions, particularly near the Golan Heights over the coming hours and days.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Israel**

1. Travel to Israel may continue at this time while adhering to security precautions regarding militant attacks, while avoiding the immediate vicinity of the Syrian, Lebanese, and Egyptian borders, due to the persistent risk for cross-border violence. This is especially the case at the current time due to heightened tensions along Israel's northern borders.
2. Those traveling or residing in the area surrounding the Golan Heights should continue adhering to all safety precautions regarding early warning sirens for incoming rockets.
3. When a Color Red siren is sounded: If a designated shelter exists, immediately go there. If not, go to a room with as few external walls, windows and openings as possible, close all openings, sit on the floor below the window line and near an internal wall.
4. In an open area, lay down on the ground and cover your head with your hands. When driving, safely pull over and follow the above instructions.
5. Remain in position for at least ten minutes unless instructed otherwise and stay away from any unidentified objects.

### **Syria**

1. Avoid nonessential travel to Damascus at this time while maintaining heightened vigilance and adhering to standard security precautions regarding the threat of militant attacks. In addition, it is advised to avoid all travel to the vicinity of military installations due to the potential for Israeli Air Force (IAF) airstrikes.
2. Avoid all travel to the border area with Israel given the persistent risk of Israeli Air Force (IAF) and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) strikes targeting positions in the region.