

# Syria accuses Israel of launching missile strike against military airport in Damascus

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The Syrian government accused Israel of carrying out a missile attack which struck a military airport west of the capital city of Damascus shortly after midnight early Friday morning. As has been typical with such strikes, the Israeli government has neither confirmed nor denied responsibility for the attack.

SANA, the Syrian state news agency, reported that the several missiles which hit the al-Mezzeh airport were fired by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) from the area around the Sea of Galilee, more than hundred kilometers southwest of Damascus.

The attack caused a significant fire at the airbase, and ambulances were dispatched. There were reports that at least four soldiers were injured in the attack, which was targeted at storage sites for weapons and ammunition.

The Syrian army command released a statement in which it warned Israel of “repercussions” for the attack, but did not outline any specific measures.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry also lodged a complaint with the United Nations shortly after the attack, officially accusing Israel of this latest missile strike. The note denounced the assault as one in “a long series of Israeli attacks” since the beginning of the civil war in 2011 and blamed the United States, France, Britain, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar for seeking to “impose control and hegemony on Syria and the region.”

Al-Mezzeh is used by Syria’s elite Republican Guard, which is tasked mainly with defending the capital city. The airport had been used to fire rockets at rebel held areas in the suburbs surrounding Damascus.

The airport was previously hit by ground-to-ground missiles on December 7 of last year, resulting in a massive fire, an attack the Syrian government also blamed on the IDF. In another recent attack near Damascus, IDF fighter jets struck a Syrian army weapons depot and an arms convoy reportedly

belonging to Hezbollah in Sabboura, just west of the capital, on November 30.

A military source told SANA that it was suspected that Friday’s attack was carried out to boost the morale of terrorist groups which have been backed by the US and its allies in the six-year civil war aimed at overthrowing Syrian President Bashar al Assad.

A Russian and Turkish-negotiated cease fire which came into effect at the end of December has largely held. The US was sidelined from the talks after Western-backed rebels suffered a debacle with the government’s retaking of eastern Aleppo earlier in December.

Israel has been a largely silent partner in the US-spearheaded campaign to overthrow Assad. The IDF has carried out multiple attacks against target inside Syria over the last several years and has maintained a policy, for the most part of not publicly claiming responsibility.

The IDF has carried out dozens of attacks since 2013 on Syrian forces as well as the Hezbollah fighters who have been among the main fighting forces against the Islamist militias seeking to overthrow Assad, including Ahrar Al-Sham; Jeish al Fatah; Al Nusra Front, the Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria; and ISIS.

In addition it is estimated that Israel has launched around 100 airstrikes against Syrian army artillery positions, mostly along the Golan Heights border with Syria. Most of these attacks have officially been in response to errant artillery shells and rockets fired by Syrian army or rebel groups falling on the Israeli side of the border. The Syrian army has only responded on two occasions to the dozens of Israeli attack on its territory.

Israel has allowed competing Islamist factions opposed to Assad to set up base in the Golan Heights and is suspected of giving cover and support to those

terrorist groups deemed to be “moderate” by Western intelligence agencies.

Despite its focus on shoring up the position of fighters opposed to Assad, Israel has periodically carried out attacks on the Islamist groups which have been competing for control over Syrian territory adjacent to the Israeli border in the Golan Heights region.

The IDF claimed responsibility for an airstrike on November 27 targeting a compound reportedly belonging to the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army, formerly known as the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade. The group is reportedly affiliated with ISIS and a bitter opponent of Al Nusra Front, the leading fighting force in the effort to topple Assad.



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