

## IAF: Hezbollah anti-aircraft missiles could threaten Israeli planes

Contributed by Amos Harel and Barak Ravid, Haaretz  
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If Hezbollah installs advanced anti-aircraft batteries in Lebanon, the Israel Air Force will have to alter its overflights of Lebanon significantly, a senior IAF officer told Haaretz Tuesday.

However, he added that the IAF has successfully coped with similar threats elsewhere, and could do so in Lebanon as well.

Senior government and army officials have recently held feverish discussions on this scenario. Some of those involved have termed the installation of anti-aircraft batteries a "red line" to which Israel would have to respond with a "violent signal."

There have been conflicting reports in the Arabic media as to whether Hezbollah has already smuggled in such missiles, or is merely seeking to do so. Senior General Staff officers opined recently that while Hezbollah clearly wants such missiles eventually, they doubt it is interested in heating up its conflict with Israel just now.

Meanwhile, the diplomatic-security cabinet will meet Wednesday to discuss the situation in Lebanon, and especially Hezbollah's rampant arms-smuggling via Syria. The Foreign Ministry plans to recommend that Israel seek to increase international pressure on Syria to halt this smuggling.

Israel views this matter as urgent, especially in light of the reports that Hezbollah is trying to smuggle in sophisticated anti-aircraft batteries. This will be the cabinet's second discussion on the matter in recent weeks.

In addition to upping the pressure on Syria, Israel would also like the international community to increase pressure on Russia, since some of the sophisticated weaponry Hezbollah is procuring is Russian-made.

Another key focus of today's discussion will be the new government guidelines the Lebanese cabinet adopted last week, which formally authorize Hezbollah to attack Israel whenever it pleases.

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