

Israeli has 3-6 months to hit Iran's nuclear sites if Moscow sells Tehran S-300 systems

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DEBKAfile Exclusive Report

Russian military experts calculate that the window for an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities will shrink to 3-6 months if Moscow sells Iran (and Syria) the sophisticated S-300 system for guarding those sites against air, missile or cruise missile attack. DEBKAfile's Moscow sources report that Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert failed in the key missions of his Moscow trip to persuade Russian leaders to discuss Tehran's nuclear weapons program and to refrain from selling this advanced weapon to Iran and Syria.

President Dmitry Medvedev's bureau issued a noncommittal statement Tuesday, Oct. 7, saying that his talks with Olmert were "an exchange of opinion on threats, including terrorism and nonproliferation." The word "nuclear" was avoided.

Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, who the prime minister met Monday, trotted out the standard Russia claim that Moscow had no definite information that Iran is developing a nuclear weapon and is against tougher sanctions.

Prime minister Vladimir Putin was unable to see him.

Moscow's mainstream media came out Tuesday with a rerun of the statement made on Sept. 17 by Anatoly Isaikin, director of the Russian arms exports agency Rosoboronexport, that his firm is in advanced negotiations with Tehran for the sale of the S-300 missiles. However, on Monday, the same firm disowned knowledge of these missiles having been shipped to Iran, although negotiations for their sale were not mentioned.

Konstantin Makiyenko, from the center for strategic and technological analysis think tank in the Russian capital, said these utterances put Israel on notice to stop selling arms to Georgia and training its army.

Moscow does not conceal its intention of selling S-300 missiles to Syria. A Russian military expert commented: "Our warships if based in Syrian ports will need to be encircled by missile batteries capable of guarding them against air and missile attack."

According to Russian experts, the system is capable of pinpointing 100 targets and simultaneously intercepting 12 at a distance of 120 km.

Our Russian sources made a point of stressing that Moscow is not subject to embargoes on its foreign arms sales or any international restrictions on supplying defensive weapons to other nations.

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