

Feltman: We are Headed towards a Very Unstable Direction If Scud Reports are True

Contributed by Naharnet
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U.S. Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman voiced his concern over recent reports that Syria may have provided Hizbullah with Scud missiles.

He told the daily An Nahar Saturday that these reports are very dangerous if they are true, and all steps should be taken to reverse or end this situation because it takes all sides involved into a very unstable direction.

He revealed that U.S. sources tipped them about this issue, saying that the United States is still examining available information in this matter.

Feltman added that his country had acquired sufficient evidence to actually address Syria about the reports.

Despite this, he said that the U.S. administration will maintain its policy of holding dialogue with Syria.

The U.S. official added however that sides within the United States opposing this approach have voiced their concern over the meeting between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Hizbullah Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in Damascus earlier this year, saying that the meeting is evidence against the policy of dialogue.

Feltman stated that if he were Lebanese, he would have been worried about that meeting.

Addressing Lebanon's non-permanent membership in the U.N. Security Council and the United States' aim to impose new sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, he said that Lebanon chose this responsibility and is aware of his duties in the Council.

He voiced his confidence that Lebanon takes its responsibility very seriously, and is committed to maintaining regional and international peace and security.

A U.S. diplomat, who chose to remain anonymous, told Agence France Presse on Friday that Syria is providing Hizbullah with a "wide array" of missiles, stopping short of accusing it of supplying it with Scuds.

Beirut, 24 Apr 10, 08:23

Barak: Advanced Hizbullah Arms Destabilize Regional Balance of Power

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak stated that Israel takes reports that Hizbullah is acquiring advance weapons, including Scud missiles, very seriously.

He said in a television interview on Friday that weapons that destabilize the balance of power in the region will endanger the whole region if such reports were true, adding, however, that Israel "would not launch a war in the North."

Barak is set to visit the United States on Sunday where he is scheduled to hold talks with a number of high-ranking State Department and intelligence officials.

Israel Radio reported that his talks will focus on Iran's nuclear program, Hizbullah's acquiring of arms, and Palestine.

Beirut, 24 Apr 10, 08:50

Suleiman: Israel Getting ahead of Itself through its Threats

President Michel Suleiman said that Israel knows that it is no longer an easy task for it to launch an offensive against

Lebanon.

Addressing Israel's threats against Lebanon, he said that the Jewish state is getting ahead of itself.

Suleiman made his statements on Friday before an audience of Lebanese expatriates during his ongoing visit to Brazil.

In addition, he said that Lebanese national unity is the fundamental strength in confronting Israeli threats, stressing the harmony between the army, people, and Resistance.

The president continued by highlighting the national dialogue taking place in Lebanon, saying that it is strictly working on devising a defense strategy for the country.

Suleiman called on the expatriates to make investments in Lebanon, reminding them that they have been granted the right to vote in Lebanese elections, highlighting the Interior Ministry's role in this regard.

During his visit, the president held talks on Thursday with his Brazilian counterpart, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Beirut, 24 Apr 10, 10:53

Murr Says Army Intelligence Hasn't Spotted Any Scuds

Defense Minister Elias Murr stressed Friday that the Lebanese Army's intelligence has no information about Scud missiles crossing into Lebanon as Israel claims.

"There's no info about this topic whatsoever," Murr said, answering a question during a chat with reporters after his meeting with Speaker Nabih Berri.

"We had no previous information and the army's intelligence hasn't revealed anything about this topic," he added.

Murr noted the presence of "satellites to provide the United Nations with imagery of arms smuggling into Lebanon in case of its occurrence," stressing that "the army will commit -- in case that turned out to be true – to implementing Resolution 1701 in all its stipulations."

Murr added that what Israel says "doesn't concern us. The Israeli enemy is spreading the propaganda that serves its interest and intimidating the country (Lebanon)."
Israeli President Shimon Peres on April 13 accused Syria of providing Hizbullah with Scud ballistic missiles, prompting Washington to warn that the trade "potentially puts Lebanon at significant risk."

Syria has strongly denied the accusations.

Beirut, 24 Apr 10, 22:48

U.S. Diplomat: Syria Providing 'Wider Array' of Missiles to Hizbullah

Syria is providing a "wider array" of missiles to Hizbullah, a U.S. diplomat said Friday, while stopping short of accusing Damascus of supplying Scuds to the Lebanese party.

"We are concerned with the broadening nature of cooperation between Syria and Hizbullah. They are providing a wider array of missiles to Hizbullah," a senior State Department official said on condition of anonymity.

"As to the narrower question of do we have evidence of Scuds crossing into Lebanon, that's something... to watch carefully."

Earlier, other U.S. officials have said there were no signs that Scud missiles were transferred to Hizbullah from Syria.

They said they do not think that Scuds "of any shape or size" have been moved to Lebanon, the officials said.

The officials said Damascus is not always known for making the "right political calculations." But in this case, surely they realize that transferring this kind of weapons system to Hizbullah … could lead to serious consequences."(AFP)

Beirut, 24 Apr 10, 21:38

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Beirut, 23 Apr 10, 07:18
