

Wartime tasks split: US to smash Iran's missiles, Israel tackle Syria, Hizballah

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An authoritative US military source told debkafile Sunday, Aug. 5 that the American armed forces are standing ready for war with Iran. Without going into the thorny question of who should lead the operation to dismantle Iran's nuclear program, the US or Israel, it is understood that one of the US Air Force's tasks will be to destroy Iran's Shehab-3 ballistic missile batteries which have Israel and Saudi Arabia within range.

This task is not as formidable as Iranian spokesmen would have the world believe. Tehran's entire stock of those missiles is no more than 30-40. That quantity is not nearly enough to take on the entire gamut of potential wartime foes, the United States Middle East bases, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and Turkey. They would quickly be picked off by American Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense Systems and Israeli Arrow guided interceptor rockets, which are synchronized through the advanced US X-Band radar systems installed in the Israeli Negev and southeast Turkey.

In any case, it is hard to believe that Iran would empty its entire ballistic missile arsenal in a single blazing assault at the start of war. "They are too canny to leave themselves without some Shehabs in reserve for crises even more acute than the outbreak of war," said the US military source.

He went on to explain that by wiping out the Shehabs, the US high command would leave the Israeli Air Force free to take on the thousands of rockets Syria, the Lebanese Hizballah and the Palestinian Hamas and Jihad Islami have stored ready for shooting in support of an Iranian missile offensive - not just against Israel, but Turkey and Jordan as well.

Saturday, the Iranian Defense Minister, Gen. Ahmad Vahidi, announced that his ministry's aerospace industries had successfully test-fired the fourth generation of high-precision Fateh-110 missiles with a range of over 300km.

He said that the new missiles can hit and destroy both land and sea targets, enemy concentration points, command centers, missile sites, ammunition dumps, radars and other targets with 100 percent precision. debkafile's military sources add that the Fateh-110 is the core weapon Syria and Hizballah have stocked for destroying strategic targets in Israel, Jordan and Turkey.

Sunday, Aug. 5, a senior Israeli defense official reported that Israel is upgrading its Arrow II ballistic missile shield, designed to intercept medium range rockets and fill the gaps left by Iron Dome. The announcement in Tehran was taken in Israel as a threat and an indication that the improved Fateh-110 had already been dispatched to its Damascus and Beirut destinations, so exacerbating the perils of Syria's Scud missiles and chemical weapons which its government has threatened to use against external enemies.

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