

IsraeliAF Overflies Syria to Test Newly Delivered Russian Pantsyr SAMs?

Contributed by Debkafile-IsraellInsider-Jpost-AP
 Friday, 07 September 2007
 Last Updated Friday, 07 September 2007

DEBKAfile Exclusive: The Israeli jets said to have penetrated Syrian airspace Wednesday night escaped by jamming Russian-made Pantsyr-S1 air defense missiles. Advanced Russian Air Defense Missile Cannot Protect Syrian and Iranian Skies.

DEBKAfile's military experts conclude from the way Damascus described the episode Wednesday, Sept. 6, that the Pantsyr-S1E missiles, purchased from Russia to repel air assailants, failed to down the Israeli jets accused of penetrating northern Syrian airspace from the Mediterranean the night before.

The new Pantsyr missiles therefore leave Syrian and Iranian airspace vulnerable to hostile intrusion.

The Israeli plane or planes were described by a Syrian military spokesman as "forced to leave by Syrian air defense fire after dropping ammunition over deserted areas without causing casualties." He warned "the Israeli enemy against repeating its aggressive action" and said his government reserved the right to respond in an appropriate manner.

Western intelligence circles stress that information on Russian missile consignments to Syria or Iran is vital to any US calculation of whether to attack Iran over its nuclear program. They assume that the "absolute jamming immunity" which the Russian manufactures promised for the improved Pantsyr missiles was immobilized by superior electronic capabilities exercised by the jets before they were "forced to leave."

Syria took delivery in mid-August of 10 batteries of sophisticated Russian Pantsyr-S1E Air Defense Missile fire control systems with advanced radar, those sources report. They have just been installed in Syria.

Understanding that the Pantsyr-S1E had failed in its mission to bring down trespassing aircraft, Moscow hastened Thursday, Sept 6, to officially deny selling these systems to Syria or Iran and called on Israel to respect international law. This was diplomatic-speak for a warning against attacking the Russian-made missiles batteries stations where Russian instructors are working alongside Syrian teams.

Western intelligence circles maintain that it is vital for the US and Israel to establish the location and gauge the effectiveness of Pantsyr-S1E air defenses in Syrian and Iranian hands, as well as discovering how many each received.

They estimate that at least three or four batteries of the first batch of ten were shipped to Iran to boost its air defense arsenal; another 50 are thought to be on the way, of which Syria will keep 36.

The purported Israeli air force flights over the Pantsyr-S1E site established that the new Russian missiles, activated for the first time in the Middle East, are effective and dangerous but can be disarmed. Western military sources attribute to those Israeli or other air force planes superior electronics for jamming the Russian missile systems, but stress nonetheless that they were extremely lucky to get away unharmed, or at worst, with damage minor enough for a safe return to base.

The courage, daring and operational skills of the air crews must have been exceptional. They would have needed to spend enough time in hostile Syrian air space to execute several passes at varying altitudes under fire in order to test the Pantsyr-S1E responses. Their success demonstrated to Damascus and Tehran that their expensive new Russian anti-air system leaves them vulnerable.

Washington like Jerusalem withheld comment in the immediate aftermath of the episode. After its original disclosure, Damascus too is holding silent. Western intelligence sources believe the Syrians in consultation with the Russians and Tehran are weighing action to gain further media mileage from the incident. They may decide to exhibit some of the "ammunition" dropped by the Israeli aircraft as proof of Israel's contempt for international law. A military response may come next.

Pantsir-S1 or Panzir ("Shell" in English) is a short-range, mobile air defense system, combining two 30mm anti-aircraft guns and 12 surface-to-air missiles which can fire on the move. It can simultaneously engage two separate targets at 12 targets per minute, ranging from fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, ballistic and cruise missiles, precision-guided munitions and unmanned air vehicles. It can also engage light-armored ground targets.

The Pantsyr S1 short-range air defense system is designed to provide point defense of key military and industrial facilities and air defense support for military units during air and ground operations.

The integrated missile and gun armament creates an uninterrupted engagement zone of 18 to 20 km in range and of up to 10 km in altitude. Immunity to jamming is promised via a common multimode and multi-spectral radar and optical control system. The combined missile and artillery capability makes the Russian system the most advanced air defense system in the world. Syria and Iran believe it provides the best possible protection against American or Israeli air and missile attack. Stationed in al Hamma, at the meeting point of the Syrian-Jordanian and Israeli borders, the missile's detection range of 30 km takes in all of Israel's northern air force bases.

DEBKAFile Exclusive Military Report, September 7, 2007, 1:16 PM (GMT+02:00)

 Damascus: Israeli jets buzzed Syria, caused boom; Israeli officials mum
 By Israel Insider staff September 6, 2007

Iranian Ambassador to Damascus Mohammad Hassan Akhtari joined his Syrian hosts on Thursday in condemning the alleged violation of the Syrian airspace by Israeli aircraft in the wee hours of the morning, reportedly near the Turkish-Syrian border.

Iranian government media reported that Akhtari telephoned senior Syrian officials and called the incident as an "intolerable attempt to create tension in the region" and claimed that "Israel would be responsible for any escalation in the region and it must act reasonably and not cause another war."

Syria claims IAF aircraft broke the sound barrier and supposedly "dropped ammunition" over open areas. The Syrian military said its air defenses 'confronted' the aircraft but failed to down or damage the alleged intruders. The IDF and Israeli officials declined all comment.

The Iranian news agency IRNA reported that Akhtari turned to Syrian security sources and told them that "Iran would be ready to offer any assistance needed under the existing circumstances." He called on the world's countries to demand explanations from Israel for its actions.

Syrian Vice President Faruq al-Shara said Thursday that "this military act of provocation by Israel proves that Israel, contrary to its claims, is not working for the creation of an atmosphere that will pave the road to peace, but is working to create tension in the region."

The Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported that the Russian Foreign Ministry expressed its hope that Israel would refrain from entering Syria's airspace again, to avoid upsetting the regional security situation.

Jordan's King Abdullah II, who met in Amman with US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs David Welch, did not refer to the Syrian incident, nor did Israeli PM Ehud Olmert, who gave a lengthy speech Thursday evening.

"I don't know what you are talking about," Olmert said in response to a question on the issue from Haaretz, hours after his office and the IDF refused to respond to Damascus' claims.

The prime minister was speaking at a party of his Kadima party to mark the Jewish New Year holiday next week.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Vice Premier Haim Ramon issued similar denials. "I don't know what happened there," Ramon said.

The IDF said it would not comment on the Syrian reports. "It is not our custom to respond to these kinds of reports," the IDF Spokesman's Office said in a statement.

Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora also ignored the incident on Thursday, and urged Syria to escalate its attempts to prevent arms smuggling into his country.

<http://web.israelinsider.com/Articles/Security/12011.htm>

 Majadle: Alleged IAF flyover won't spark war with Syria
 JPost.com Staff , THE JERUSALEM POST Sep. 6, 2007

In the first reaction from an Israeli official to Wednesday night's alleged IAF foray over Syria, Science, Culture and Sports Minister Ghaleb Majadle said Friday that IAF planes entered Syrian airspace on a daily basis, adding that he did not believe the latest alleged incident would spark off a war.

Majadle told the Nazareth-based A-Sinara newspaper that while he had no specific information about the latest alleged operation, it was likely that "the planes either entered Syrian airspace to take photographs or in error."

Earlier Friday, Syria accused Israel of jeopardizing the chances of success in the upcoming US-sponsored Middle East meeting.

Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations Bashar Ja'afari told Al-Jazeera that the alleged IAF operation came only a few hours after Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo had published a message of support for the meeting and had called for Syria to be invited.

Defense officials said late Thursday that Israel was "fully prepared" for the possibility of a conflict in the North, after Syria alleged it had fired on the pre-dawn IAF flight over the coastal city of Latakia.

Also, security officials estimated that Syria would plan to attack Israeli targets abroad in reaction to the alleged IAF foray, Army Radio reported.

The IDF officially refused to comment on the reports from Syria that its air defenses fired on a formation of IAF warplanes that entered Syrian airspace from the Mediterranean.

Yaakov Katz and Herb Keinon contributed to this report.

This article can also be read at

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1188392560421&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

 Analysis: Silent Jerusalem hopes clamor will die down
 Herb Keinon , THE JERUSALEM POST Sep. 6, 2007

A thick, black shroud covers what exactly took place in the skies somewhere over northern Syria late Wednesday night, and Israel is doing nothing to shed any light on the situation.

The IDF's vague and laconic response, that it is "not accustomed to responding to such reports," has just fueled speculation over what exactly Israeli planes were doing in the area, if indeed - as the Syrians claim - they were in the area at all.

The possibilities are endless. The planes could have been on a reconnaissance mission to see what Iranian and Russian arms are pouring into Syrian ports. They could have been probing Syria's new air defense system. No one knows, and no one will know, because Israel is not volunteering any information at all.

While from an operational standpoint, and from the standpoint of not wanting to reveal any intelligence information, this silence is understandable, it does leave the public-diplomacy field wide open to the Syrians. And Damascus is milking the event for all it is worth, using it to fly the flag of Arab solidarity and as a way to bring Damascus into the Arab consensus.

Syrian Information Minister Mohsen Bilal said that the incident showed that "Israel in fact does not want peace. It cannot survive without aggression, treachery and military messages."

The Syrian military spokesman went a step farther and warned "the Israeli enemy government against this flagrant aggressive act," saying Syria would "retain the right to respond in an appropriate way."

For the Syrians, standing very much on the outside of the fledgling diplomatic process and unlikely to be invited to the US-sponsored international meeting on the Middle East later this year, this incident - given extensive air time in the Arab media - proves what they have said all along: "Israel can't be trusted."

Its threat to "respond in an appropriate manner" gives it points in its escalating feud with Saudi Arabia over the situation in Lebanon - showing that it, and only it, can stand up to the Israelis.

Furthermore, at a time when the world is largely keeping Syria at arm's length, it is now presenting itself as a peace-loving country whose tranquility was shattered by those war-mongering Israelis. With many eyes currently on Syria because it is believed to be the major hub for the supply of weapons to both Lebanon and Iraq, this type of incident will

allow Damascus to shift the attention elsewhere.

And Israel, by keeping completely silent - although it is widely believed that Jerusalem sent calming messages to Damascus through other channels - is trying to avoid playing into Damascus's hands. Syria wants to raise an international outcry; it wants to generate a lot of media noise. By not confirming anything, Israel is doing what it can to try and limit the media clamor as much as possible.

If Israel would admit to any type of aerial activity over Syria by publicly saying it did not intend to trigger a wider conflagration with Damascus, it would open up a Pandora's Box that would be followed by steps such as a Syrian appeal to the UN Security Council for a condemnation of Israel. This type of admission would also reopen the question of Israeli aerial activity over Lebanon, something Israel by no means wants to underline.

To keep all this from happening, Jerusalem is keeping uncharacteristically mum, letting the Syrians enjoy a media festival today in the hopes that international interest will fade if only one hand is clapping.

This article can also be read at

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1188392558193&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

Full Research: Russian Pantsyr Missile Defence System

http://www.cedarsrevolution.net/jtphp/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=394&Itemid=2