

Israel on High Alert for Direct Iranian Attack



by [AARON KLEIN](#) 18 Apr 2018 **L138**

TEL AVIV — As Israelis prepare to celebrate the country's 70th anniversary starting at sundown tonight, the Israel Defense Forces are on high alert for the possibility of direct Iranian retaliation for a reported Israeli strike in Syria that targeted an Iran-operated airbase.

In an unusual [move](#), Iran's state-run media admitted that seven of its "soldiers" were killed in the April 9 strike.

Iranian officials have repeatedly vowed retaliation. On Tuesday, Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior advisor to Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, [warned](#) that Israel's "crimes will not remain unanswered." Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi further stated, "The Israeli regime's aggression against Syria is a breach of this country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity and runs counter to all international regulations and principles."

Neither Velayati nor Qassemi mentioned that Israel allegedly struck the T-4 airbase near Homs after it was brazenly used by Iran to send an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) into Israeli territory in February before it was quickly shot down by the Israeli military. The IDF [revealed](#) on Friday that its investigation concluded the Iranian drone sent from T-4 was carrying explosives and was seemingly deployed to attack an Israeli target.

On Wednesday, the *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) the T-4 base housed an advanced Iranian air defense system and drone hangar, underscoring Iran's military expansionism in Syria as Tehran helps to lead Bashar al-Assad's successful counterinsurgency against the rebels targeting his regime.

The *Jerusalem Post* [reported](#) that Israel believes that Iranian retaliation could come in the form of direct missile or drone attacks launched from Syria.

In a highly-cited *New York Times* [oped](#), Thomas Friedman opined that Iran's Al Quds Force chief Qassem Suleimani "could opt to strike back at Israel through proxies, either in the Middle East or against Israeli targets globally."

Last week, this reporter [analyzed](#) the different possibilities for Iranian retaliation:

Iran could activate Hezbollah to target Israel, but that would risk massive Israeli retaliation and the ensuing clash would hamper Hezbollah's continued ability to fight the anti-Assad rebels. In an all-out war, Hezbollah has tens of thousands of rockets that could devastate Israeli civilian population zones.

Besides Hezbollah, Iran has other Shiite proxies in Syria and Lebanon that could be put into action against the Israeli Golan Heights.

Tehran could use its terror proxies overseas to carry out an attack that would not directly bear Iranian fingerprints. It could also use Palestinian Islamic Jihad to draw Israel into a confrontation in the Gaza Strip or West Bank. And Iran can increase financing to Hamas and ride the current wave of violent riots at the Israel-Gaza border to further distract the Israeli military in the south.

As the extent of Iran's military involvement in Syria makes clear, Tehran also has the option of direct, precision-guided missile attacks against Israeli targets.

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