

MIDDLE EAST

The war between Israel and Iran comes into full swing. U.S. backs Netanyahu

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Over 200 Israeli Air Force fighter jets struck more than 100 targets across Iran on the night of June 12-13, but the raids, which targeted military targets, Iranian nuclear research sites, and, above all, key figures in the Revolutionary Guard Corps (Pasdaran)

and the Iranian armed forces, continued throughout the day and could continue in the coming days, according to various sources.

The operation saw attacks that hit dozens of military targets and nuclear sites with raids guided by accurate intelligence, showing once again the network of infiltrators and informants operating in the Islamic Republic for the benefit of Israel.

Israeli intelligence had reportedly infiltrated Iranian territory some time ago with vehicles camouflaged with advanced technology and commando units that used drones and precision weapons alongside Iranian air defense systems. The operation, the result of “bold and disruptive planning,” neutralized Iranian radars and surface-to-air batteries, clearing the way for aircraft engaged in the raids.

It is difficult to find confirmation, but the improvement in Iran's air defense capabilities, secured through cooperation with Russia, was a thorn in the side of Israel, which saw its ability to reach Iran by (illegally) flying over Syrian and Iraqi airspace undermined.

Commando teams reportedly placed launch systems for precision-guided munitions in open areas near anti-aircraft batteries in central Iran. The weapons, which remained on standby until the start of the operation, were activated simultaneously to strike predefined targets with “remarkable precision.”

According to Israeli security sources quoted by the Jewish media, this was «a surgical operation conducted with innovative thinking, bold planning, and the use of advanced technology, special forces, and field agents capable of completely evading Iranian intelligence».

An operation that closely resembles the recent Ukrainian raid against Russian strategic air bases carried out with drones concealed in a container equipped with a launch system on board civilian trucks, making the hypothesis of cooperation plausible between Kiev and Tel Aviv, which is now even more credible after Israel's ambassador to Ukraine confirmed the transfer to Kiev of Patriot air defense batteries that Israel had received from the US in the early 1990s.

According to Channel 12, Mossad smuggled sophisticated attack technology mounted on ordinary-looking civilian vehicles into Iran. At the appointed time, these systems launched their destructive payloads against the most sensitive radar installations and command centers (especially those defending the Natanz nuclear site), allowing Israeli aircraft to operate with ease.

It is unclear whether Israeli drones (loitering munitions) also struck Iranian ballistic missiles that could be used in retaliation against Israel. Many of these weapons are stored in bunkers, dozens of meters underground. In any case, the nature of Iran's response and the type of weapons that will be used will indirectly reveal the success or failure of the Israeli raids against the Pasdaran's ballistic missiles.

According to Channel 12 sources, the Natanz nuclear site, where uranium enrichment centrifuges are located, has been heavily damaged, although the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has not detected any increase in radiation at the nuclear site, which, moreover, houses much of its infrastructure in bunkers located tens of meters underground. Yesterday afternoon, loud explosions at the Fordow and Isfahan research sites suggest that Israel is conducting heavy attacks against all bases of Iran's atomic program.

According to Israeli military sources cited by *Times of Israel*, Iran has enough enriched uranium to build 15 nuclear bombs in a few days, and therefore action had to be taken against this "imminent threat." Israel has been a nuclear power for decades and, although it has never admitted to possessing atomic weapons, it is believed to have an arsenal of at least 200 nuclear warheads of varying yields that can be launched from aircraft, ballistic missiles, including long-range missiles, and submarines.

Tehran denies that its nuclear program is aimed at building an atomic weapon, but for several years it has not allowed international inspections of its facilities. The IAEA has accused Iran of failing to comply with its nuclear non-proliferation obligations, and Israel considers this statement by the UN agency to be full justification for the attack.

"We have no choice, if we don't attack, we will die 100 percent. So even if it is not the perfect solution, we must act because it is necessary to reverse the trajectory of Iran's military buildup, both in terms of its ballistic weapons and its nuclear weapons," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday, but it is difficult to believe that Iran would risk suicide by challenging Tel Aviv's impressive nuclear arsenal, part of which is housed on submarines.

An anonymous source told US television ABC News that the United States provided "excellent" intelligence to Israel, but did not actively participate militarily in Israel's attacks on several nuclear sites in Iran. The source added that Washington «will defend Israel if necessary, especially in the event of ballistic missile attacks» by Tehran, announcing that Israeli operations «will continue and will be very intense in the coming days».

Beyond the military impact, the real goal pursued by Netanyahu with the attack on Iran was clearly to derail the ongoing negotiations between the United States and Iran on Tehran's nuclear program. It was a sort of pre-emptive strike to prevent Israel from having to deal with an unwelcome agreement between the US and Iran, which has already announced that it will not participate in the sixth round of direct negotiations with the US scheduled for tomorrow in Oman.

The government of the sultanate, like those of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, strongly condemned the Israeli raids, while in Iran an Iranian official said yesterday that "anyone who thinks the attack was not coordinated with the United States is a total idiot."

US President Donald Trump told Fox News that he still hoped for talks with Iran, while confirming that his administration was aware of Tel Aviv's decision to attack Iran without being militarily involved in the raids.

In the afternoon, he praised the Israeli raid with words that could put an end to any dialogue with Tehran. «Iran cannot have a nuclear bomb, and we hope to return to the negotiating table. We'll see. There are several people in command who will not be returning», Trump said, referring to Iranian military leaders killed in the Israeli raids. This statement leaves room for speculation that the White House endorsed the raid aimed at targeting the most hardline members of the Iranian armed forces.

Moreover, in recent days, the United States had repatriated diplomatic and civilian personnel from embassies and military bases in the Middle East, confirming that they were aware of Israeli plans to attack.

This position is shared by the European Union. «We have been quite clear in our position: Iran must never develop or acquire nuclear weapons. This is crystal clear. As far as nuclear power and the JCPOA (the 2015 Vienna nuclear agreement, ed.) are concerned, we have not abandoned this dossier, and High Representative Kaja Kallas was very clear on this yesterday at the meeting in Weimar». This was stated by European Commission spokesperson Anouar El Anouni. It is curious (but not surprising) that the EU is aligning itself with Israel and the US, given that the immediate effect of the Israeli raids has already caused gas and oil prices to soar.

As they had already done in this conflict with the leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah, Israeli forces successfully targeted «the three most senior commanders of the Iranian regime»: the chief of staff of the armed forces, General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, General Hossein Salami, and the director of Khatam al Anbiya, a construction company linked to the Pasdaran and also active in the construction of bunkers and fortifications, Major General Gholem ali Rashid.

The difference is that while the leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah were at the head of militias, the Iranian military leaders represent a recognized state that sits at the United Nations: a true act of war, therefore, not an “anti-terrorism” operation. Other officers and at least six scientists involved in the nuclear research program were also killed.

US support, direct or otherwise, paves the way for an escalation that will most likely lead Iran to acquire the ‘bomb’ at all costs, as North Korea did when it became untouchable after acquiring a nuclear arsenal.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader, immediately appointed a new chief of staff for the country's armed forces and a new commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Khamenei ordered the armed forces to avenge the attack, and the General Staff warned that "now that the terrorist regime occupying Al-Quds has crossed every red line... (there are) no limits to the response to this crime."

In the evening, the Revolutionary Guards said in a statement that Iranian forces "carried out their crushing and precise response against dozens of targets, military

centers, and air bases" in Israel as part of Operation True Promise 3. Iran launched a massive missile attack against Israel, with at least 150 ballistic missiles, according to the IDF, forcing the population to take shelter.

Explosions were reported in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Iranian state television confirmed in the evening what it called "the start of Iranian missile attacks" against Israel in retaliation for attacks on its territory. A statement followed shortly after the televised address by Iran's Supreme Leader, who assured: "The nation is with us, with the armed forces, and, God willing, the Islamic Republic will defeat the Zionist regime."

Israeli Magen David Adom rescuers reported that there were at least 14 people slightly injured in Tel Aviv and the surrounding area, adding that seven different impact areas had been reported after the launch of missiles from Iran. This was reported by the Times of Israel and picked up by ANSA. According to the US agency Axios, citing Israeli sources, the United States is helping Israel repel the missile attack.