

# The postponed Israeli attack on Iran

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**Israel will complete the genocidal war that it has been waging against Gaza for six and a half months, before inexorably directing its military efforts against Iran and its Lebanese auxiliary, Hezbollah.**

Last Friday, the Israeli government contented itself with a very limited attack on Iranian territory—so limited that what it consisted of was shrouded in mystery. While Tehran claimed that the attack only involved small drones launched from inside Iran and U.S. sources asserted that, in addition to drones launched to saturate the radars, the attack included one to three missiles launched from an aircraft that approached Iran's airspace, satellite images confirmed that the strike hit an air defence system dedicated to the protection of the uranium enrichment reactor in Natanz, the best protected reactor in Iran, buried under thick layers of concrete and sand, and believed to be the location where preparations are ongoing to supply Iran with nuclear weapons. In other words, Israel wanted to deliver to the Iranian regime the message that it can penetrate its air defences and strike that strategically important reactor.

The contrast was clear between the massive Iranian attack on the Zionist state with limited impact, and the Israeli "surgical strike" on Iran. Tehran had launched at least 320 drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles, of which Israel initially claimed that only four ballistic missiles struck its territory, constituting a 99 percent success rate of its defences. However, U.S. sources later reported that nine missiles had penetrated the Israeli air defences, not just four. This led an Israeli researcher interviewed by the Israeli newspaper Maariv (17 April 2024) to say that the actual interception rate is 84 percent, given that it should be measured with regard to ballistic missiles alone, the real source of danger, and because half of those missiles launched by Iran, whose total number is estimated by the same expert to be 110, fell in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan (thus, 9 missiles constitute 16 percent of the 55 missiles that entered the Israeli airspace according to the expert's estimate).

It is worth noting how the same expert ended his interview with the Israeli newspaper. Estimating that Iran used in its attack between 10 and 15 percent of its fleet of missiles capable of reaching Israeli territory, he asserted that these missiles lack accuracy and have a high failure rate, and concluded that they do not pose an existential threat to the Zionist state, unless they are equipped with nuclear warheads. This is what made us previously assert that "strategic logic incites Tehran to speed up its acquisition of nuclear weapons and make it known once done, as it is the most effective means of deterrence that it can acquire". Indeed, for the first time last Thursday, one day before the Israeli attack, Major General Ahmed Haq Talab, commander of the Nuclear Facilities Protection and Security Corps of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, declared that "If Israel attempts to use the threat of attacking nuclear facilities to put pressure on Iran, a revision of the nuclear doctrine and a departure from the previously announced considerations is likely." (Iran's Tasnim News Agency).

This is indeed the first time that Tehran states explicitly its willingness to acquire nuclear weapons, after years of stressing that its intentions in the nuclear domain are only peaceful and that it even considers nuclear weapons to be religiously illicit. Before the Major General, the head of the Atomic

Energy Organization of Iran, Mohammad Eslami, had said at the beginning of this year that “deterrence has been achieved with the help of God”, a statement that caught the observers’ attention because the expression “deterrence” is habitually used to describe the function of nuclear weapons. After reasserting the official position, Eslami added: “It is not about the lack of capability ... We should not underrate our current achievements, thinking that we are not there yet.” He was followed the next month by his predecessor at the head of the AEOI, Ali Akbar Salehi, who said that Iran possesses the components for nuclear weapons and would only need to assemble them if it wanted. Whereas U.S. sources acknowledge that Tehran now has enough enriched uranium to be able to produce within a few days weapons-grade fuel for at least three nuclear bombs, they add to this acknowledgment their belief that Iran needs a few months to manufacture bombs and about two years to manage to equip missiles with nuclear warheads.

However, it is likely that these estimates, which have been repeated by U.S. sources for quite some time now, are intended to reassure the Israeli allies and prevent them from pressuring Washington to take military action, or from taking action themselves, drawing Washington into a regional war at a time it did not choose. Israeli intelligence sources constantly dispute U.S. estimates. They are right in their fear, as Iran has developed long-range ballistic missiles of a type that only countries equipped with nuclear weapons possess, and it certainly has more technological know-how than Pakistan had when it equipped itself with nuclear weapons a quarter century ago, not to mention the present military cooperation between Iran and both nuclear-armed North Korea and Russia. It is sufficient for Iran to possess one or two nuclear missiles to have a full deterrent capability against the Zionist state, given the latter’s small area.

The message that Israel sent to Iran last Friday is therefore nothing but a threat of something much greater. The Netanyahu government chose to postpone the date of a large-scale strike aimed at disabling Iran’s nuclear capabilities, in accordance with Washington’s desire and for related economic and military considerations. That is because Israel needs U.S. aid to make up for the hardware it used in confronting the Iranian attack on the night of 13/14 April, and the United States itself needs to make up for what its local forces used in defence of its Israeli ally on that same night. These two replenishments are indeed two provisions of the supplemental appropriations that the U.S. House of Representatives approved last Saturday, the day after the limited Israeli strike. Moreover, according to U.S. and Israeli media, U.S. President Biden gave Netanyahu the green light for the offensive on Rafah in exchange for Israel refraining at present from launching a major strike against Iran. This indicates that the Zionist state will complete the genocidal war that it has been waging against Gaza for six and a half months, before inexorably directing its military efforts against Iran and its Lebanese auxiliary, Hezbollah.

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