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Report: IAF preparing for Iran strike

By JPOST.COM STAFF

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The Israeli Air Force (IAF) has been training on long-range flights, including refueling in mid-flight, in preparation for potential strikes against Iranian nuclear targets.

The training program has been taking place for some time but has only been released for publication Friday, the *Ma'ariv* daily reported.

Intelligence assessments received by the defense establishment concur that once [Iran](#) passes the point of no return in its nuclear efforts, the entire Middle East will enter a frantic nuclear armament race. Egypt and Saudi Arabia are expected to take the lead should such a scenario become reality.

At the end of 2007 the US and Israel are expected to hold a joint assessment to ascertain the influence of economic sanctions against Iran.

A new package of upgraded sanctions prepared jointly by Israel and the US, includes exerting pressure on European governments to cancel US \$22 billion in loan guarantees given annually to European companies trading with Iran.

The new package also includes sanctions against banks working with Iran, non-renewal of oil infrastructure in Iran and a long series of economic actions that are meant to seriously hurt the Iranian economy.

Following the end-of-year assessment, Washington will decide how to move forward in the struggle against Iran's nuclear race.

Members of the international community - the US and Israel leading - are convinced that Iran's race to enrich [uranium](#) is aimed at producing nuclear weapons. The Islamic Republic, on its side, insists it is looking for energy sources that would be an alternative to fossil fuels.

Iran has so far remained defiant in face of the demands voiced by the international community that it make its [nuclear program](#) transparent to UN-mandated monitoring.



An IAF jet takes off for a flight over Lebanon.
 Photo: **Ariel Jerozolimski**



One of the IAF's 25 F-15Is.
 Photo: **Ariel Jerozolimski**

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