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US steels Israel to counter 'Iran threat'

Sun, 17 Aug 2008 17:44:42 GMT

Washington has agreed to deploy early-warning radar defense systems to Negev desert to help Israel counter Iran's ballistic missiles.

The system, known as X-Band array radar, is the most powerful US radar system, capable of tracking medium and long-range missiles in space. It can also be used to target incoming missiles and shoot them out of the sky.



A Sea-Based X-Band Radar

Washington and Tel Aviv discussed the military deal in a July 29 meeting between US Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak.

The system is believed to be aimed at countering Iran's upgraded Shahab-3 missile equipped with a one-ton conventional warhead and capable of hitting targets within a 2,000-kilometer range. The system is also believed to be capable of facilitating an Israeli air strike on Iran's nuclear weapons facilities.

Following his Washington meeting, Barak said that Israel and the US 'see eye to eye on the need to keep all options on the table' regarding Iran's nuclear case.

The missile system will be linked to a US satellite-based alert network and will be manned by US military personnel.

The deployment which is scheduled to take place before US President George W. Bush leaves office in January, would provide the United States with a missile shield much closer to Iran and in the Middle East.

Israel, the sole possessor of a nuclear arsenal in the Middle East accuses the Islamic Republic of making efforts to build a nuclear bomb and threatens Iran with a military strike should the country continue uranium enrichment.

This is while the UN nuclear watchdog has confirmed the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran's nuclear program, conceding that the country's 3 percent uranium enrichment rate is consistent with the development of a nuclear power plant.

CS/HGH

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