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'IDF eyes attack on Iran within hours of green light'

By Haaretz Service

The London Times online edition reported on Saturday that the Israel Defense Force was making preparations to be able to launch a massive aerial assault on Iran's nuclear facilities within days of being given the go-ahead by Israel's government.

"Israel wants to know that if its forces were given the green light they could strike at Iran in a matter of days, even hours. They are making preparations on every level for this eventuality. The message to Iran is that the threat is not just words," one senior Israeli defense official told The Times.

The report comes just as the United States voices willingness to launch a dialogue with Iran, to discuss, among other things, the Islamic Republic's controversial nuclear program.

The London Times report appears to be an Israeli message to Iran conveying its capability and readiness to prevent Tehran from developing nuclear weapons.

The report includes a [nation-wide home front drill](#), scheduled for June, among what it calls Israel's intensive preparations for the possibility of an attack, aiming to prepare Israel's civilians for the possible consequences of an attack on Iran.

"We would not make the threat [against Iran] without the force to back it. There has been a recent move, a number of on-the-ground preparations, that indicate Israel's willingness to act," another official from Israel's intelligence community told the Times.

He added that it was unlikely that Israel would carry out the attack without receiving at least tacit approval from America, which has struck a more reconciliatory tone in dealing with Iran under its new administration.

Last Saturday, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that Iran now controls the entire cycle for producing nuclear fuel with the opening of a new facility to produce uranium pellets.

Ahmadinejad has announced several times in the past that

Iran has the knowledge necessary to enrich uranium ore into fuel pellets, but with the opening of the new facility, the Islamic republic says it now has the capability.

Tehran maintains that its nuclear ambitions are limited to peaceful ends, but the international community fears that the Islamic republic aims to build nuclear weapons.

Ahmadinejad: Iran's military might stabilizes region

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Saturday a strong Iranian military would help preserve stability in the Middle East, as Iran marked its armed forces' day with a parade that appeared more muted than in the past.

Ahmadinejad gave a relatively low-key speech and there was little sign of the anti-Western banners and slogans normally seen at the annual event.

U.S. President Barack Obama has offered a new beginning of diplomatic engagement with Iran if Tehran "unclenches its fist".

But while Washington favors negotiations to curb Iran's disputed nuclear activities, the advent of a rightist government in Israel has increased international concern that it could go it alone with preventive strikes against Iranian atom sites.

Iran rejects Western accusations that its nuclear program is aimed at making bombs. It has vowed to retaliate for any attack with missile strikes against Israel and U.S. Gulf assets.

"The power of the Iranian armed forces is at the service of the nations ... and will help to preserve the region's security and stability," Ahmadinejad said in a speech at the parade outside Tehran.

"The enemies' courage to pose a threat against the Iranian nation has been eliminated permanently," Ahmadinejad said.

State television said the surface-to-surface Zelzal missile was among military hardware displayed.

But Iran did not show off its longest-range missile, the Shahab-3, which it says can hit targets 2,000 km (1,250 miles) away, putting Israel or U.S. bases in the Gulf within

A major air show with jet fighters was cancelled due to low visibility caused by dust, media said.

Earlier this month, the United States, Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain said they would ask European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana to invite Iran to a meeting to

find a diplomatic solution to the nuclear row.

Iran favors dialogue and will soon give its response to the offer of talks, Ahmadinejad said in remarks published on Friday.

Tehran says it needs nuclear technology to generate electricity so that it can export more of its gas and oil.

Israel, widely believed to have the Middle East's only atomic arsenal, has described Iran's nuclear program as a threat to its existence. Although it says it wants a diplomatic solution, Washington has also not ruled out military action.

Military analysts say the United States could unleash vastly superior firepower against Iran, but that Tehran could hit back against Washington's forces in Iraq and by disrupting oil supplies vital to the world economy.

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