

Unless the U.S. joins the fray, Israel and Iran are destined for major conflict. It's one thing for Israel to provide a first line of defense against Iran, but it's unfair, unwise and unnecessary for Israel to carry out the battle singlehandedly. The U.S. and Europe have every interest in stopping Iran's march to the Mediterranean and every interest in protecting their ally Israel.

Moreover, the U.S. has the military might to stop Iran instantly in its tracks, preventing serious destabilization of the Middle East and the rest of the world. A few sharp-elbowed U.S. attacks on select Iranian assets in Syria would do the trick.

This week's FLAME *Hotline*-featured article analyzes how tensions between Israel and Iran are likely to explode into a regional conflagration and what role the U.S. should play. Authors Tony Badran and Jonathan Schanzer of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies also explain how the complex American-Russian relationship affects U.S. options.

I hope you'll forward this concise, but insightful email to friends, family and fellow congregants to help them understand why the U.S. must stand up to Iran (and Russia) and continue to support Israel in the world's most dangerous neighborhood.

I hope you'll also quickly review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME's latest *hasbarah* campaign to directly urge the President and U.S. Congress to back up their rhetoric on Iran with definitive action. I hope you agree with and will support this message.

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson
President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial hasbarah messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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FLAME'S WEEKLY HOTLINE E- NEWSLETTER



FLAME's Hotline e-newsletter keeps you up to date on the most important pro-Israel advocacy issues and features our choice of the week's most informative and thought-provoking article on Israel and the Middle East. If you only subscribe to one pro-Israel news service, make it the FLAME Hotline.

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P.S. As you know, Iran has become the largest state sponsor of global terrorism and the most dangerous enemy of the U.S. What's worse, the Islamic Republic continues to spread its jihadist tentacles throughout the Middle East, and now has armed forces on Israel's borders in Syria and Lebanon. No wonder FLAME has created a new editorial message—"[We Must Stop Iran Now](#)"—which is about to start running in mainstream magazines and newspapers, including college newspapers, with a combined readership of some 10 million people. In addition, it is being sent to every member of the U.S. Congress and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now, more than ever, we need your support to ensure that the American people, the U.S. Congress and President Trump stay focused on—and take actions against—Iran's threat to our country, Israel and the entire world.

As of today, more than 15,000 Israel supporters receive the FLAME Hotline [at no charge](#) every week. If you're not yet a subscriber, won't you join us in receiving these timely updates, so you can more effectively [tell the truth about Israel](#)? Just go to [free subscription](#).

The Iran-Israel War Flares Up

The fight is over a Qods Force presence on the Syria-Israel border. How will the U.S. respond?

By Tony Badran and Jonathan Schanzer, *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 11, 2018

The conflict between Israel and Iran may be heating up after a half-decade simmer. On Friday night Iran dispatched a drone from Syria that penetrated Israeli airspace in the Golan Heights. Israel destroyed it with an Apache helicopter. Then on Saturday Israel sent eight F-16s across the border to strike the airfield in the Homs governorate, called the T-4 base, where the drone originated, as well as a handful of other Iranian targets. Although the mission was a success, one F-16 was shot down by Syrian anti-aircraft fire—though the pilot made it back to Israel, where he and his navigator ejected successfully.

This was the most significant clash to date between Israel and the so-called Axis of Resistance—Iran, Syria's Assad regime and Hezbollah—since Iran began deploying soldiers and proxies to Syria six years ago. Israel insists its response was limited and its intent is to contain this conflagration. Its critics worry that the skirmish could explode into one of the worst wars the Middle East has ever seen.

The Iranians have been exploiting the chaos of the Syrian civil war to build up military assets there that target Israel, all the while sending advanced weaponry to Lebanon by way of Damascus, also under the fog of war. The Israelis have been vigilant; they have destroyed some of this hardware in Syria with one-off strikes. In December they struck an Iranian base southwest of Damascus, some 30 miles from the Golan Heights. But they had never entered Syria with the kind of overwhelming force seen on Saturday morning.

What prompted this level of response is still unclear. Israeli military officials won't say whether the Iranian unmanned aerial vehicle was armed. It would be a surprise, though, if Israel's reprisal was prompted by an unarmed UAV. Indeed, this was not the first drone incursion into the Golan Heights. Last year, Israel's missile defenses intercepted several Iranian-built drones, operated by Hezbollah, attempting to enter Israeli airspace from Syria.

The Israel Defense Forces had warned that the T-4 base was crawling with fighters from Iran's Qods Force, an arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had paid multiple visits to Moscow hoping to convince President Vladimir Putin to curb the threatening activities of Iran and its proxies. Mr. Putin has established a formidable presence in Syria since 2015, when his forces entered the country ostensibly to combat Islamic State.

The Israelis took a significant risk Saturday of rankling the Russians, especially since they reportedly did not warn Moscow of the attack in advance. Russian personnel sometimes embed with Syrian air-defense units and are sometimes present at the T-4 base. Thus the strike might have been intended as a message to the Russians as much as to the Iranian axis.

Whether Russia had advance knowledge of the Iranian drone operation isn't clear. Nor do we know whether Russia was involved in unleashing the Syrian surface-to-air missiles that downed the Israeli F-16. What we do know is that after many Israeli airstrikes in Syria over many months, this was the first time Syrian antiaircraft weapons managed to hit a target. That points toward Russian involvement.

Even so, the Israelis were not deterred from launching, within hours, a second wave of airstrikes against additional Iranian and Syrian targets, including air-defense sites, many of which likely had been monitored for months. According to Israeli sources, the second wave was the largest aerial attack against Syria since the Lebanon war of 1982, when the Israeli Air Force hammered Syria's Soviet-built surface-to-air missile batteries in the Bekaa Valley.

Now all eyes are on Israel as it mulls its next moves. For Jerusalem, the status quo is unsustainable. The Iranians are clearly willing to absorb tactical strikes so long as they are able to consolidate their strategic position, which will prepare them for a future conflict with the Jewish state. So while Israel's political leaders are eager to avoid conflict, the military brass may soon determine that postponing it would be the riskier course.

The Israelis also are working the phones with the Trump administration, which has affirmed Israel's right to defend itself. That declaration will carry significance as Israel considers its options. Washington continues to tweak its new policy of targeting Iran with multiple instruments of American power. But this policy is encumbered somewhat by the White House's agreement with Russia to maintain a "de-escalation zone" in southwest Syria—an agreement that clearly benefits Iran and the status quo.

The Pentagon and State Department have already condemned Iran and thrown their support behind Israel. The question now is whether the Trump administration will go further. In a speech last month unveiling the administration's strategy for Syria, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson affirmed that the U.S. seeks not only to ensure its allies' security but to deny Iran its "dreams of a northern arch" from Tehran to Beirut. A good way to achieve both objectives would be to back Israel's responses to Iran's aggression—now and in the future.

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