

Israel Used Turkish Military Base in Latakia Attack: Unanswered Questions

By [Richard Silverstein](#)

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[Tikun Olam- תיקון עולם](#)

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This story keeps getting weirder and more interesting: RT (formerly Russia Today) [reports](#) based on a “reliable source” that Turkey allowed Israeli air-force jet bombers to use one of its military bases to attack the Syria port of Latakia, where the government had stored Russian-made Yakhonts anti-ship missiles. Israel believed the armaments were destined for Hezbollah, which would use them in the next war in Lebanon to neutralize Israel’s naval forces. For a discussion of the weapons system and the role it might play in such a battle, read [this report](#).

Given that this story keeps getting curiouser and curiouser, I believe the story is very possibly true. So now we have to ask ourselves a number of questions:

Why would a Turkish government nursing a deep grudge against Israel for killing 9 of its citizens in the Mavi Marmara massacre, all of a sudden turn around and lend an air base for an attack on a third country? Further, why would Turkey cooperate with Israel in attacking Syrian missiles destined for Hezbollah? Turkey has no quarrel with the Lebanese militant group.

There are several answers. Turkey is opposed to the Assad government and anything that will weaken it may cause Turkey to relax its former animosity toward Israel. Also, Hezbollah has escalated its involvement in the Syrian conflict by sending thousands of its fighters to capture Qusayr. This would be a way for Turkey to make the Islamist group pay a steep price for its intervention. It would be yet another way for both Israel and Turkey to say to Assad that he faces a looming alliance among former enemies who are now united (at least covertly) in their opposition to his rule.

Second, if Israel wanted to attack Syria without violating its airspace it could just as easily have flown north from Israel to a point west of Latakia and attacked from the Mediterranean. Why did the Israeli air force feel it needed to attack from Turkey? The answer may lie in the fact that attacking from Turkey would allow Israel to attack from the north rather than the west. Syria would not have expected an attack on Latakia from the north and therefore might not have defended against it. This would give the Israeli attackers an element of surprise.

If this account is true, it proves that Middle East relations are based far more on shared interests than on principles. In other words, pragmatism and even cynicism is the rule of the day. Turkey, which trumpets its dedication to the Palestinian cause and its implacable opposition to Israel’s Occupation, can do the unthinkable and allow Israeli military forces to use its sovereign territory to attack an enemy. So much for the notion of Muslim solidarity.

And so much for the Islamist criticism of Muslim states (Saudi Arabia, etc.) that allow non-Muslim military forces (U.S., etc.) to attack fellow Muslim states, thereby betraying Islam.

For Erdogan, the opportunity to bloody Assad's nose trumped all those considerations. The other problem with Turkey's decision is that it will give Israel the impression that since Turkey granted access to its military bases, it will also fold regarding its support of the Palestinians.

Alternately, we may see that Israel retracts its opposition to paying \$1-million to each of the families of the victims of the Mavi Marmara attack. Israeli capitulation on that score may signal a quid pro quo for Turkey's help in attacking Latakia.

One way to gauge this is by whether Erdogan follows through on his commitment to visit Gaza. He was supposed to come last month. But the turmoil in both Egypt and Turkey caused a delay. If he does visit Gaza Israel should know this alliance is extremely tactical and targeted at a very narrow range of issues. If he doesn't, then we'll know that Israel has succeeded in co-opting yet another opponent of Occupation.

Finally, it's interesting that the source for this report is a Russian media outlet. Remember that Russia's missiles were targeted and destroyed in Israel's attack. Vladimir Putin has not responded in any way to this. Alex Fishman, in yesterday's Yediot, took his silence as a confirmation that Putin is at heart nothing but a cynical weapons merchant who doesn't care what happens to his weapons as long as he's paid for them. As with so much of what he wrote in that article, I think it's a crock.

Israel's attack is an affront not only to Hezbollah and Assad, but to Russia as well. Putin is not the disinterested arms dealer Fishman makes him out to be. There will be an accounting for this act of aggression by Israel. The only question is where and when and under what circumstances. If RT's reporter learned her information from a Russian intelligence source, I wouldn't be at all surprised.

I am trying through DC and Turkey-based journalists with U.S. or Turkish military-intelligence sources to confirm this story.

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