

Report: US Secretly Reviews and Approves Many Israeli Airstrikes in Syria

The latest Israeli airstrikes on Syria disabled the Damascus International Airport

By [Dave DeCamp](#)

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According to a report [from The Wall Street Journal](#), Israel has been secretly coordinating with the US on many of its airstrikes in Syria, and senior officials at US Central Command have reviewed and approved many plans in recent years.

Israel frequently bombs Syria and frames the operations as strikes against Iran or Hezbollah, although the air raids often kill Syrian government troops and members of Iraq's Shia militias. The latest Israeli airstrikes on Syria [disabled the Damascus International Airport](#), marking a significant escalation in the air campaign.

Current and former officials told the *Journal* that the main focus of the coordination is on airstrikes that pass near al-Tanf garrison, a US military base in southern Syria near the border with Jordan. The officials said that the "vast majority" of the strikes passing through that area had been approved by the US.

The Israelis started flying airstrikes near al-Tanf in 2017 to avoid Syrian air defenses. The officials said that Israel notifies CENTCOM of its plans ahead of time. The command conducts a review of the operation and also notifies the secretary of defense and joint chiefs chairman. Israel has also notified Russian forces at the Khmeimim Air Base in western Syria of planned strikes.

The report said that the US doesn't review all Israeli operations inside Syria, and doesn't help Israel pick its targets. A significant number of Israeli airstrikes in the country don't pass al-Tanf, including the strike on Damascus Airport.

The US has about 1,000 troops stationed in eastern Syria. On paper, the presence is about supporting the Kurdish-led SDF against ISIS, but the occupation is also about putting pressure on Damascus. The US maintains crippling economic sanctions on Syria, preventing the country from rebuilding after over 10 years of war.

The *Journal* report is the first time that the close US-Israeli coordination on airstrikes in Syria has been reported. But the US has always tacitly endorsed the operations as it never condemns them.

In 2019, Brett McGurk, the top Middle East official on President Biden's National Security Council, penned an op-ed where he outlined his ideal Syria policy after resigning from the Trump administration over unfulfilled plans to withdraw from the country. In the article,

McGurk said [the US should support Israeli airstrikes](#) in Syria.

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