



Israel's Response To Iran's Missile & Drone Barrage

Israel Responds with a Precise, Limited Strike

- ▲ Israel retaliated to Iran's April 13 attack with simultaneous airstrikes on an airbase in Isfahan, Iran, and Iranian proxies in Syria and Iraq.
- ▲ The April 19 response was limited in nature and scope.
- ▲ Reports indicate missiles were launched at the Artesh airbase in Esfahan, damaging a Russian-made S-300PMU2 surface-to-air missile battery's radar.
- ▲ Iran downplayed the Israeli response, claiming, without evidence, that the projectiles were all shot down.
- ▲ Satellite images show damage to the S-300 surface-to-air battery's mobile radar.
- ▲ *While the military target was a radar installation at an airbase guarding Iran's key nuclear facility, the political target was Iran's leadership. Israel demonstrated the IDF can hit Iran's most sensitive installations with pinpoint precision and with little warning.*

Israel delivered its response to Iran's earlier (April 13) missile and drone barrage by launching targeted simultaneous airstrikes on an airbase in Isfahan, Iran as well as Iranian proxies in Syria and Iraq. The April 19 Israeli response was limited in nature and scope.

Israel typically refrains from officially acknowledging actions by its military. However, credible reports indicate at least three missiles were launched from outside Iranian airspace, targeting the Artesh airbase

mark.vitner@piedmontcrescentcapital.com

Chief Economist (704) 458-4000

saul.vitner@piedmontcrescentcapital.com

Policy Analyst (704) 458-8570

in Esfahan, Iran. This airbase provides protection for the Natanz Nuclear Complex, Iran's main uranium enrichment facility. The target of the strike appears to have been a Russian-made S-300PMU2 surface-to-air missile battery position, and the strike is believed to have damaged the battery's target engagement radar. Both the International Atomic Energy Agency and various Western and Iranian media outlets have confirmed that Israel did not cause any damage to Iran's nuclear facilities. Israel also hit Iranian proxy positions in Syria and Iraq, with either missiles or drones.

The IDF successfully sent a meaningful message of deterrence without escalating tensions.

The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) had to walk a fine line of sending a message that Israel has the capabilities and the willingness to respond to an attack on its territory without further escalating the conflict into a full-scale war. This attack appears to have been successful in this regard.

Iran heavily downplayed the Israeli response, claiming that all projectiles were shot down and any explosions were the result of falling debris. The Islamic Republic also downplayed the role of Israel itself and ruled out a retaliatory strike. Iran appears to have given itself an out after weeks of escalation and will likely revert to its prior strategy of conducting its shadow war with Israel through proxies.

Private satellite-based radar pictures from Umbra Space show what appears to be damage to the mobile



radar of the S-300 surface-to-air battery.¹ Israel is believed to have fired a supersonic Rampage missile at the battery from some point outside of Iranian airspace, and likely fired the missile from an F-35.

The distinction between Iran and Israel's attacks is striking. In Iran's previous attack, Israel and its allies had ample time to prepare for the relatively slow-moving drones traversing Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. These drones were accompanied by 120 fast-moving ballistic missiles, synchronized to enter Israeli airspace simultaneously. In contrast, Israel's strikes on Isfahan were only revealed after they had been executed. This demonstrates Israel's capability for stealthy and precise strikes against Iran, contrasting with the Islamic Republic's more overt approach.

Iran's intended political targets were to terrify Israeli citizens and mollify hard-liner Islamists.

The difference in how the two nations chose to strike one another is their respective military capabilities and political priorities. Iran military aim was to terrify the Israeli public and cause Israel and its allies to use their relatively expensive defensive systems to counter relatively inexpensive drones and missiles.

Iran's key political objective was to mollify hard-liner Islamic groups within Iran and its Middle East surrogates. The Iranian attack failed on the former and only partially succeeded on the latter. Iranians were shown pictures and video of fires in Texas and Chile and told that it was Israel.

Israel's attack was primarily driven by political considerations. They could not let Iran's drone and missile barrage go unanswered, as it would lead to more intense attacks later. The intended political target for the Israeli strikes was Iran's leadership, which now knows the IDF can stealthily hit their most sensitive installations with pinpoint precision.

Israel is not the first country to directly strike Iran this year. In January, Pakistan launched airstrikes against targets in western Iran as a response to an Iranian missile strike on its territory. After this tit-for-tat exchange, the two countries made amends and no further hostilities followed.

Tensions between Iran and Israel will obviously remain hostile for the foreseeable future, but their recent exchange bears some similarities to the January Iran-Pakistan clashes in that the strikes caused few casualties and were clearly designed to showcase capabilities rather than instigate a broader conflict.

Passover may bring calm to the region but there is still plenty of potential for a re-escalation.

While Iran and Israel have deescalated over the past few days, broader war is not out of the picture entirely. Israel's anticipated Rafah offensive still looms, as does the potential for an Israeli move on southern Lebanon to confront Iranian-proxy Hezbollah. Iran could use either as justification for more attacks. Iran pulled most of its key military advisors out of Syria and Lebanon so that they would not be targeted by Israel. The return of those advisors would raise the possibility of additional strikes against those Iranian forces, particularly if they are engaging in planning or executing attacks on Israel.

This week marks the beginning of Passover, which might bring a period of relative calm in the conflict. Large and disruptive protests at Columbia University and other universities also raise the political stakes in the United States. These protests appear to be amplified by outside interests, which may account some of heightened rhetoric. Israel has been cautioned about how it should proceed with a final push against Hamas forces in Rafah, and an attack resulting in massive civilian casualties would likely raise the decibel level of those protests and spark some political backlash.

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68866548>

The long delayed \$17 billion military aid package to Israel passed the House over the weekend and looks certain to pass the Senate. The program will allow Israel to replenish and enhance their Iron Dome missile defense system and other critical air defense systems, as well as fund purchases of weapons, defense systems and other needed supplies. The measure also includes \$9 billion of aid to Gaza and other war-torn areas around the world.

Disclaimer: This publication has been prepared for **informational purposes only** and is not intended as a recommendation offer or solicitation with respect to the purchase or sale of any security or other financial product nor does it constitute investment advice.

