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AMAN Chief: Syria's new Russian missiles could challenge Israeli Air Force

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Tags: [Hizballah >>](#) [IDF >>](#) [Iran nuclear >>](#) [Israeli military intelligence >>](#) [Syrian missiles >>](#)



Outgoing AMAN chief Amos Yadlin: Two wars in five years

In his farewell briefing to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, Tuesday, Nov. 2, departing Israel Military Intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin listed the threats to Israel as headed by Iran. But he warned that Syria is buying advanced Russian self-propelled air defense missiles with long-range optical and targeting ranges that would encumber the Israeli Air Force warplanes' freedom of action in an emergency.

"We used to calculate that in just 48 hours we could wipe out enemy anti-air systems. Now things have changed and we could be thrown back to [the "days of] "the Canal."

(DEBKAfile's military sources say "the Canal" is a shorthand reference to the War of Attrition Egypt waged against Israel after the 1967 War fighting with Russian-manned air defense missiles and Russian-piloted planes deployed on the Suez Canal to down Israeli warplanes. The late Air Force chief Ezer Weizman spoke of "the missile which bent the IAF's wing.")

Syria while snapping up every advanced piece of war hardware coming off Russian production lines, also continues to arm the Lebanese Hizballah, said the AMAN chief. Although Iran's Lebanese surrogate has the resources for hitting Tel Aviv, its leaders are afraid of Israel because they know the price that would be exacted from them and have not forgotten the real lessons of the Second Lebanon War of 2006.

Referring to Hizballah's threats of dire consequences if the Special Lebanese Tribunal incriminates its officials for the murder of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri, Yadlin said: "It is a disaster for Hizballah's image and for Lebanese stability. Should Hizballah resolve to conquer the entire country, it could do so within hours because Lebanon does not have a single military force capable of standing up to them."

Iran, said the intelligence chief, is constructing another two nuclear facilities although its plan to build another eight has been slowed down by "technical problems." Tehran will soon have accumulated enough fissile material to build two bombs. International sanctions are however biting harder than Tehran is willing to admit, especially since Russia and China have taken a hand in the penalties. Today, the ordinary Iranian has to pay more for water than he does for oil.

Maj. Gen. Yadlin makes way for his successor Maj. Gen. Avivi Cochavi after five years.

Regarding the lessons Israel has drawn from the 2006 war, the IDF Tuesday unveiled a series of logistical and technological improvements.

The process of mobilizing reserves has been cut down from a day and-a-half of an hour and-a-half; solar energy will replace electricity and fuel-powered apparatus in the new military tent bases. Members of the Yahlom, the Engineering Corps special unit will be supplied with special ventilators for their work in subterranean sites in case of accidents - Hizballah bunkers in Lebanon and Hamas tunnels snaking under the border from the Gaza Strip. Food rations will include goulash, Indian shwarma and meat balls and chocolate snacks. With the addition of water, they are suited to any field conditions. The individual soldier will be outfitted with better equipment, lighter helmets and flak vests and orthopedic boots.