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US military drills Day One after strike on Iran, deploys F-22s to Gulf

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USAF F-22s deployed to Persian Gulf

US Navy, Air Force, ground, intelligence and special forces units based at home, in Europe and the Middle East, took part this week in a special exercise ordered by President Barack Obama to simulate reactions to a potential US-Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, debkafile's exclusive military and Washington sources report.

Sunday, April 22, the US also transferred a number of advanced stealth F-22 fighter bombers, believed to be from the 302nd Fighter Squadron 302, from the joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska to

the Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates.

According to our sources, the F-22 jets will join the F-15s of the Massachusetts Air National Guard's 104th Fighter Wing which were transferred to the Al Udeid base a month ago.

Their mission will be to destroy the Iranian air force and air defense batteries so as to clear the way for US and Israeli bombers to go into action against Iran's nuclear sites and the strategic infrastructure of its army and Revolutionary Guards Corps.

This unprecedented US buildup of air might - supplementing the aircraft on the decks of the USS Abraham Lincoln and USS Enterprise, to be joined by a third carrier as soon as the offensive gets underway - shows Tehran that the Obama administration is serious about using military means as extra pressure on Iran to give way in diplomatic negotiations - both with the six powers and with the US through clandestine channels.

Both moves took place as the United States and five other world powers prepares for the second round of talks with Iran scheduled for next month to rein in its nuclear program.

The comment Israel's chief of staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz made to AP on April 26 about "other countries" having readied their armed forces for a potential strike "to keep Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons" referred to the deployment of the F-22 stealth jets. He did not name the other countries.

His comment was received in Washington as Israel's strongest message till now that it will not be alone in attacking Iran but will have partners, presumably the US - and possibly also Britain, France, German, Holland or Italy.

At the end of the US exercise simulating Day One of this attack, debkafile reports that Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey submitted to the White House three conclusions:

1. Iran's response to a military strike will be "measured," both to limit the damage to the regime and to conserve military resources for a possible follow-up attack;
2. The Iranians will go back to work on building a nuclear weapon within a short time;
3. The destruction of core elements of its nuclear program is expected to change Iran's attitude in negotiations, making it less cocky and more submissive to international demands.

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