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## US: Sarin bombs ready for Assad's "go" order. Israel's odd silence

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The USS Eisenhower in a lightning storm

American officials said Wednesday, Dec. 4, that they believed bombs had been made ready with sarin gas, but not yet loaded onto fighter planes and Assad had not issued the "go" order. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned President Assad once again that he would be crossing "a red line" if he used nerve gas against the country's rebels. But "there's little the outside world can do to stop it."

In answer to US allegations, Syrian spokesmen reiterated that their government would not use chemical weapons against its own people.

This statement leaves wide open the possible use of lethal gas against the countries supporting the Syrian rebels, such as Turkey and Jordan. And indeed, the Assad regime has in the past referred to "external enemies" as possible targets of chemical warfare.

This locution undoubtedly covers Israel. Yet against the flood of information and warnings coming from the United States, Israel is strangely silent and its media are officially discouraged from tracking the Syrian chemical weapons menace.

Surprise was voiced in some Israeli defense and military quarters, when the prime minister, the defense minister and other key ministers traveled to Europe Wednesday for visits to Prague and Berlin, at a time when Israel's northern border with Syria might be targeted for a chemical attack.

Although it was only a 48-hour absence - they return Friday - Binyamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak are holding to an outward attitude of coolly controlling the situation, in contrast to the Turkish government which has prepared itself for possible attack - and not only with defensive measures. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu remarked Wednesday that the Syrian regime has 700 missiles whose location, storage method and holders are no secret to Ankara. This was a veiled threat to destroy them.

Prime Minister Netanyahu said nothing more than the routine: "We are watching the Syrian chemical weapons with concern."

debkafile reported Wednesday:

The USS Eisenhower Strike Group transited the Suez Canal from the Persian Gulf Saturday, Dec. 1, sailing up to the Syrian coast Tuesday in a heavy storm, with 8 fighter bomber squadrons of Air Wing Seven on its decks and 8,000 sailors, airmen and Marines.

The USS Eisenhower group joins the USS Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group which carries 2,500 Marines.

Facing Syria now are 10,000 US fighting men, 70 fighter-bombers and at least 17 warships, including the three Iwo Jima amphibious craft, a guided missile cruiser and 10 destroyers and frigates.

Four of these vessels are armed with Aegis missile interceptors.

This mighty US armada brings immense pressure to bear on the beleaguered Assad regime after it survived an almost two-year buffeting by an armed uprising. Its presence indicates that

the United States now stands ready for direct military intervention in the Syrian conflict when the weather permits.

Left behind in the Persian Gulf is just one US aircraft carrier, the USS Stennis and its strike group.

Welcoming NATO's decision Tuesday, Dec. 4, to deploy Patriot missile batteries in Turkey, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said Wednesday: "The protection from NATO will be three dimensional; one is the short-range Patriots, the second is the middle-range Terminal High Altitude Air Defense [THAD] system and the last is the AEGIS system, which counters missiles that can reach outside the atmosphere."

debkafile's military sources: While the Patriot is land-based and will be deployed on the Turkish-Syrian border, the THAD and the Aegis have just reached the Syrian coast aboard the USS Eisenhower strike group.

"With this integrated system," said Davutoglu, Turkey will have maximum protection."

He added: "The Syrian regime has 700 missiles," and their location, storage method and holders are no secret to Ankara. This was the first time Ankara had made threats to destroy Syrian missiles, including any carrying chemical warheads.

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