

# Peres: Israel Keeping Close Watch On Northern Borders

TEL AVIV (WNS) — Israeli officials were quick to express surprise over a report in the London-based Jane's Defense Weekly that Syrian forces were poised to attack Israel on the Golan Heights.

Their prompt reaction was intended to defuse the tension that the report itself could create. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin stressed that contrary to Jane's report, which was headlined in the Israeli media, there has been no change in the deployment of Syrian forces facing the Golan Heights.

Officials admitted that there has been an escalation of tension in recent weeks since the Syrians moved SAM-2 surface-to-air missiles close to their border with Lebanon, posing a potential threat to Israel's reconnaissance flights over Lebanon. But this situation is hardly new. Israel has already conveyed a warning to Damascus, through the U.S., and the U.S. itself has cautioned both sides to exercise restraint.

Israeli leaders, senior army officers and researchers at the center for Strategic Studies have noted often in the past that Syria's defensive deployment along the Golan Heights could very quickly be altered to an offensive posture. But they stress there is no indication the Syrians would effect such a change before they achieve their goal of strategic parity with Israel.

So far, the tension over the missile deployment has not spread to the Golan Heights where the Syrians take pains to abide by the terms of the 1974 disengagement of forces agreement reached in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War.

Premier Shimon Peres told a meeting of Israeli editors that Israel is keeping a close watch on developments along its northern borders but has no intention of escalating the situation with Syria.

Health Minister Mordechai Gur, a former Chief of Staff, discussed recent events

during a tour of northern Israel. He said Israel should not react to the movement of Syrian missiles. "We are stronger than the Syrians and they know that," he said. "Therefore we shouldn't panic whenever they move their missiles and make the entire region nervous." Gur recalled the recent incident in

which Israel Air Force fighters downed two Syrian jets over Syrian territory. "It was not our intention or part of a special policy. But from the Syrian viewpoint, they were shot down in Syrian skies and you cannot expect the Syrians to overlook that in silence," Gur observed, apparently referring to the missile movement that

followed the incident. "We've seen such ups and downs in the past and if there is anybody who cannot restrain himself and cannot discuss the issue calmly, I can only regret that but won't allow him to pass unreasonable bounds," Gur said. "I think the government's present policy is the correct one and we should continue along this line and only reconsider if there are any new developments," he said.

## Congressman Solarz Meets With Hussein And Peres

JERUSALEM (WNS) King Hussein of Jordan is determined to go ahead with the peace process, Congressman Steven Solarz told Premier Shimon Peres.

Solarz just arrived here from a visit to Jordan, where he met with the Monarch. He said Hussein was keen on advancing the peace process in an international forum, which would serve as a framework for direct negotiations with Israel. This is the for-

mula which is favored by Premier Peres. The Congressman's comments came but a few days after President Hosni Mubarak expressed his view that if Arafat did not show greater flexibility, Hussein would join the peace process without the PLO. Premier Peres told Solarz that he was determined to bring about an improvement in the relations with Egypt.

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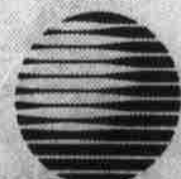


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