

Syria Sees Israel Through a Rose-Colored Gas Mask

Even before recent conflicting reports of Israel striking targets in Syria (said to be a military installation that produces chemical weapons, and/or a convoy transporting sophisticated missiles to Lebanon), Israel had placed its own sophisticated Iron Dome anti-missile system in the north as the threats to Israel from Syria and Lebanon become greater with Syria unraveling.

While not taking responsibility for the alleged attacks against these Syrian targets, certainly the transport of such weapons to Iranian puppet Hezbollah or another terrorist group would be a game changer, and a grave threat to Israel. Whether Israel was responsible for any such attack or not, it certainly makes sense that we would be. As an Israeli, it gives me comfort knowing that our government and military are on top of these developments, and it makes sense that we are not publicly bragging about or taking credit for them.

As much as I'd like to believe that we did carry out these operations, with the state of civil war in Syria and rebels attacking anything that's connected to the Assad regime and its military, it's not impossible that another group may have done this. Following analysis in the press here, it's also possible that one of these didn't even happen.

What is for sure, and is inevitable as the Syrian government continues to lose control of the country, is that blaming Israel for any and all of its problems is not just an easy tactic to divert attention from the real issues of the civil war there. It has been a familiar strategy among Arab regimes for decades. It's a national pasttime to blame Israel as a means of deflecting attention from their own domestic problems and uniting the masses against Israel, rather than taking

responsibility or allowing blame of their own regimes for their domestic problems, which have nothing at all to do with Israel.

But who says reality has to have any place on the ground in the Middle East.

History has shown that it's often easier for Arab governments to lie and blame Israel rather than be accountable to their own people. That happened before the enlightened "Arab Spring" and has continued as it's turned to a frigid Arab Winter. No global warming here.

Back to the view from northern Israel. It makes sense that Israel would be on high alert and carefully monitoring any potential threat against the homefront and its population. The threats posed by Syrian chemical and biological weapons are very grave, and terribly frightening. Nobody in the world has shown much interest in Syria using these against their own people, but Israel does not have the luxury to ignore, or not respond to, these threats.

As a result, there is reported to be an increased demand for gas masks among the population in northern Israel. Last summer, while shopping at back to school sales, Israelis flocked to malls and other central distribution points to pick up gas masks handed out for free. My family had the ominous occasion to pick up our first gas masks, now conveniently stored in the upper bomb shelter of my house, just in case. My tax shekels at work.

I can't help but feel for the residents of the north and think that the risk they face is possibly more severe than others. Possibly. It made me think I should share my gas masks with friends or family in the north who might be more at risk. But the reality is that with Syrian missiles able to reach most of Israel, who really knows where the stray missile loaded with chemical weapons that makes it past the Iron Dome will land.

We are all at risk. So I don't think I am lending out my gas masks any time soon. If this were happening in the U.S., I can't help but think that "entrepreneurial" people would be scalping gas masks like tickets to a major concert. To the best of my knowledge, that's not happening. But we all do have to protect ourselves.

Given the rising tension and instability in Syria, new threats from Iran with even longer range missiles, terrorist tentacles that reach worldwide, and bigger nuclear weapon aspirations (and where an explosion at their largest nuclear plant was reported recently), it's not unlikely that Israelis may start taking their gas masks down off the shelf and start carrying them to school, work, shopping, the dentist, and even on a date.

Personally, my job is to protect my immediate family. To be honest, with a daughter leaving the house next year and applying to programs in different parts of the country, I'd be lying if I said I was indifferent to where she went and how far from home she was. While living in New Jersey in 2001, I was mindful of how far I was from home and where my family was, anticipating the next 9/11-like terrorist attack, and planning our escape route. The same way, there are places I perceive to be safer here, and those that are less safe.

Of course, I have little basis for this as fact, but it gives me a sense of comfort to think that I may actually be able to control my fate if I, or my wife and kids, were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Parallel to this all, I am heartened to read widespread and deeply sincere online wishes and prayers for Israel and our safety. As much as this is a scary time to be in Israel, not knowing if or when something could blow up, literally, these prayers and expressions of support provide genuine comfort.

May God answer these prayers, continue to extend His

protecting shield over us, and thwart our enemies wherever they are.

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