



Israel Is Prime Suspect In Bombing of Damascus Airport As It Wages War On Syria

Israel implied that it was responsible for the missile strikes at the Damascus airport in Syria that they claim was a depot for weapons imported from Iran by Hezbollah militants. Hezbollah is allied with Assad's forces and is fighting against ISIS. Earlier this week, Israeli forces bombed a military camp for pro-Syrian forces. There is no doubt that Israel is waging war against Syria. –GEG

Israeli strikes have hit an arms depot operated by the Lebanese Hezbollah group near Damascus airport, Syrian opposition sources told Al Jazeera. Witnesses said a total of five strikes occurred near the Damascus airport road, about 25km from the capital, early on Thursday. Syrian state TV quoted a military source saying rockets fired from Israeli territory targeted a military area in the southwestern part of the airport which caused explosions.

Al Jazeera's Hashem Ahelbarra, reporting from the Turkish city of Gaziantep near Syria's border, said opposition activists posted pictures online showing a huge fire near the area.

"We do understand that the Israelis have been carrying out strikes in the past. The last one was in January targeting the Mezze military base.

“In 2015 they also launched attacks near the capital Damascus and in the Golan Heights, killing two prominent Hezbollah commanders, including Jihad Mughniya who is the son of the top military commander of Hezbollah Imad Mughniya who was also killed in Damascus in 2008,” Ahelbarra said.

Israeli Intelligence Minister Israel Katz, speaking from the United States where he has been meeting US officials, told Israeli Army Radio: “I can confirm that the incident in Syria corresponds completely with Israel’s policy to act to prevent Iran’s smuggling of advanced weapons via Syria to Hezbollah ... Naturally, I don’t want to elaborate on this.

“The prime minister has said that whenever we receive intelligence that indicated an intention to transfer advanced weapons to Hezbollah, we will act.” Katz added. An Israeli military spokeswoman declined to comment.

Reuters news agency, citing an intelligence source, said the depot that was targeted handles a significant amount of weapons that Tehran, a major regional ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, sends regularly by air. The source said the arms depot gets a major part of the weapons supplied to an array of Iranian backed armed groups, led by Hezbollah, which have thousands of fighters engaged in battle against Syrian rebels.

Rami Abdurrahman, head of the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said the blasts were heard across the capital, jolting residents awake. Activist-operated Diary of a Mortar, which reports from Damascus, said the explosions near the airport road were followed by flames rising above the area.

This is the second Israeli attack on Syria in the past week: on Sunday, Israeli forces bombed a camp for pro-government forces killed three fighters near the Golan Heights on Sunday [according to AFP](#). Two fighters were also wounded in the attack on the Al-Fawwar camp near Quneitra in southwestern Syria,

adding that it was unclear whether the damage was inflicted by an air strike or shelling.

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University of California Concealed \$175 Million While Demanding More Funding, Audit Says

A recent audit revealed that the University of California concealed the existence of \$175 million in funds while its leaders asked the state for additional funding. It was discovered that Janet Napolitano, former head of The Department of Homeland Security who now is in charge of the school system, overstated how much is needed to run the system. Napolitano also paid school employees significantly more than state employees and interfered in the auditing process. –GEG

The University of California hid a stash of \$175 million in secret funds while its leaders requested more money from the state, an audit released on Tuesday said.

The San Francisco Chronicle [reported that the audit](#) found that the secret fund ballooned due to UC Office of the President

overestimating how much is needed to run the school system that includes 10 campuses in the state. Janet Napolitano, the former Department of Homeland Security chief, is in charge of the school system.

Napolitano denied the audit's claim. She reportedly said the money was held for any unexpected expenses. Her office also denied the amount in the fund.

"The true amount is \$38 million, which is roughly 10 percent of (the office's) operating and administrative budget, a prudent and reasonable amount for unexpected expenses such as cybersecurity threat response and emerging issues like increased support for undocumented students and efforts to prevent sexual violence and sexual harassment," her office said in a statement.

Elaine Howle, the state auditor who came up with the report, found that from 2012 to 2016 the office looked to raise more funding by inflating estimates. Howle also said that a top staff member in Napolitano's office improperly screened confidential surveys that were sent to each campus. Howle said answers that were critical of Napolitano's office were deleted or changed before being sent to auditors.

"I've never had a situation like that in my 17 years as state auditor," Howle said. "My attorneys are looking at whether any improper government activities occurred."

The UC Board of Regents is now hearing calls to overturn its decision to increase tuition this fall by 2.5 percent.

Howle said Napolitano also overcharged the system's 10 campuses to fund its operations, paid its employees significantly more than state employees and interfered in the auditing process.

"Taken as a whole, these problems indicate that significant change is necessary to strengthen the public's trust in the

University of California,” Howle wrote in the report.

The audit found that over the course of four years, the UC’s central bureaucracy amassed more than \$175 million in reserve funds by spending significantly less than it budgeted for and asking for increases in future funding based on its previous years’ over-estimated budgets rather than its actual expenditures.

“In effect, the Office of the President received more funds than it needed each year, and it amassed millions of dollars in reserves that it spent with little or no oversight,” the report said.

Napolitano argues the amount accounts for 10 percent of the operating and administrative budget. She called it “a modest amount for an organization our size.”

The office argued it did not need to disclose its reserves because the regents had approved the spending in previous years’ budgets. Howle said the undisclosed funds included \$32 million collected from campuses that could have been spent for other purposes.

University employees and lawmakers, who requested the audit, expressed outrage over the audit’s findings.

“Today we learned that after squandering millions of public dollars on bloated management and unaccountable ‘initiatives,’ (the Office of the President) has effectively been operating a slush fund that shields hundreds of millions of public dollars from public scrutiny,” Kathryn Lybarger, president of UC’s largest employee union, said in a statement.

She criticized the office’s “skyrocketing executive pay,” a reference to the audit’s finding that the 10 executives in the office were paid a total of \$3.7 million in the 2014-15 fiscal year – over \$700,000 more than the combined salaries of their highest paid state employee counterparts.

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French Mayor Found Guilty of a Thought Crime For Saying Schools With 91% Muslim Students Are a “Problem”

France: Robert Menard, Mayor of Beziers and an adviser to Marine Le Pen, was fined 2,000 euros for saying there were too many Muslim children in his city's schools because they account for 91% of the student population. The native French population is being replaced, but it is a thought crime to speak about it. -GEG