



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 3, 2012

## War Between Israel and Egypt?

Just last month, Israeli's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had announced that Israel would delay an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities until several weeks before Israeli's election in 2013. But that in no way means that war is not in Israel's near future. Israel's Defense Force has just recently called up six reserve battalions as the tension on the Syrian and Egyptian borders continues to heighten. The *Times of Israel* [reports](#) that Israel's parliament has given the IDF permission to call up another 16 reserve battalions if necessary.



The *Times of Israel* notes, "According to 2008's Reserve Duty Law, combat soldiers can be called for active reserve duty once every three years, and for short training sessions during the other two. Rising tensions between Israel and Egypt and the ongoing unrest in Syria caused the army to ask the Knesset for special permission to call up more soldiers, more often."

That request was approved by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, which allows the IDF to call up to 22 battalions for active duty, of which six have already been summoned.

"This signifies that the IDF regards the Egyptian and Syrian borders as the potential source of a greater threat than in the past," said former deputy chief of staff, Dan Harel.

"The army needs a better 'answer' than in the past to the threat," he added, referring to Egypt's deteriorating control over the Sinai Peninsula, and an increase in the smuggling of weapons and other goods. Additionally, he points out the growing threat of terrorism from the Sinai.

The Syrian situation was is highly combustible, Harel said, "and it could explode at any moment... and pose a direct challenge to us."

In response to the volatile climate, the IDF chose to call up its reserves and canceled its training sessions for enlisted soldiers in order to do so.

Likewise, Uzi Dayan, the former head of Israel's National Security Council, is [urging](#) Israel to take military action.

"This is the time for the Israeli army to prevail its control inside Sinai," Dayan said. He went on to indicate that a meeting was held with the Israeli Army Chief of Staff Benny Jants last week for the purposes of discussing the issues related to the Sinai Peninsula.

According to the Egyptian daily Al-Arabiya, police stationed at Egypt's Sinai Peninsula have been attacked over 50 times by Palestinian groups and a local branch of al-Qaeda.

And Egypt's Al-Masry Al-Youm notes that most of the attacks have occurred in the mountains of central Sinai, most of which were carried out by Palestinian armed groups including Jaljalat, Army of Islam, Ezz Eddin al-Qassam Brigades and al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula.

"Sinai is now out of security control, and efforts exerted by the military and police forces have aimed to restore security, especially because a week ago Israel said Egypt is more dangerous to Israel than Iran, which the Jewish state accuses of trying to build nuclear weapons," the security source told al-Masr al-Youm.

Egypt has withdrawn its ambassador to Tel Aviv as relations between the two governments grow increasingly strained.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called Egypt's Sinai Peninsula a "kind of Wild West." Netanyahu is accusing Iran of contributing to that increased unrest in the region.

But Israeli troops are not permitted to enter the Sinai Peninsula under a 1979 peace treaty with Egypt.

Still, some analysts believe that if Egypt were to break the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, Israeli may move to take the Sinai.



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Mordechai Kedar, a research associate at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies and the founder and director of the Center for the Study of the Middle East and Islam, [asserts](#):

It is a possibility that cannot be ruled out because the Sinai was given to Egypt in return for peace. If the peace treaty is canceled by the Egyptians, there might be a justification for Israel to take the Sinai over. I have no idea if it will. But if the Muslim Brotherhood wins the presidency [May 23] and then cancels the peace agreement and starts to move the army, that would be dangerous and Israel would probably invade the Sinai to create a buffer zone between Egypt and Israel.

Still, tensions between the Israeli government and the Egyptian government are increasing dramatically. In fact, according to DEBKAfile, President Obama, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have received intelligence that Israel and Egypt are moving closer to war.

At the time, the Chairman of Egypt's Supreme Military Council, SCAF, Field Marshal Muhammad Tantawi said: "If anyone comes near Egypt's border, we will break their leg." Egypt's Second Army chief, Gen. Muhammad Higazi added: "Aggressors should reconsider before thinking of attacking any part of Egyptian territory."

Both sides are to share some blame in the growing animosity. While the Egyptian military has failed to properly protect Israeli sites and have virtually lost control of the situation there, Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman made remarks on April 23 during a visit to Baku, Azerbaijan that helped to inflame already growing tensions. He stated that the threat from Egypt was even graver than that from Iran.

Meanwhile, in addition to the tensions between Egypt and Israel, the tensions in Syria have also served to increase tension along the border near the Golan Heights, territory that Israel captured from Syria during the 1967 war.

Dayan asserts that Israeli officials should "maintain the security of their civilians whilst ensuring that no tensions between Israel and Egypt escalate." He adds that the military must "respond strongly by pursuing the terrorists and to inform the Egyptian government that we may militarily intervene in Sinai" in order to prevent Israel's border from becoming vulnerable.

Israel seems to be preparing for a war scenario, and is fortifying a wall on the border with Lebanon.

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that Israeli officials have coordinated the construction of the wall with the Lebanese army and the UN peacekeeping force in the region, UNIFIL.

But there is something suspicious about that assertion, as Israel and Lebanon do not share an amicable relationship.

Haaretz reported in April that Israel had been planning another invasion of Lebanon.

"Almost six years after the Second Lebanon War, special Israeli units are preparing to take part in mass incursions into Lebanon if another round of fighting with Hezbollah breaks out," the newspaper reported.

Where this will all lead remains to be seen.

Photo: Israeli soldiers prepare to move into the Gaza Strip back in 2006: AP Images



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