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Iran: Israeli nuclear sites within missile range

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TEHRAN, Iran Iran's military chief warned Israel Wednesday that its nuclear facilities are within range of Iranian missiles, the latest message from Tehran that it will strike back if attacked.

Israel, which is itself believed to possess atomic arsenal, has warned that it could attack Iran if it does not abandon its nuclear program, which Israel and the U.S. suspect is a cover for weapons production. Israel's prime minister-designate, Benjamin Netanyahu, is among those taking a tough line and considered likely to keep open the option of a military strike.

Revolutionary Guards commander Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari said Iran now has a mighty military force capable of deterring any U.S. or Israeli attack.

"All nuclear facilities in various parts of the lands under occupation of the Zionist regime are within the range of Iran's missiles," the official IRNA news agency quoted Jafari as saying.

A day earlier, his deputy said Iran had a contingency plan for hitting back hard and causing many casualties.

Iran's Shahab-3 missiles have a range of up to 1,250 miles, putting Israel within striking distance. Iran has said it has also increased the range of its warplanes, allowing them to fly as far as Israel and back without refueling.

Tehran denies any aim to make nuclear weapons and says its atomic program is only for generating power and other peaceful purposes.

Iran has worked hard to increase the accuracy of its missiles. In November, it successfully test-fired the Sajjil, a solid fuel high-speed missile with a range 1,250 miles. Solid fuel is considered a significant breakthrough because it increases accuracy.

Jafari's deputy, Mohammad Hejazi, told the semi-official Fars news agency Tuesday that Iran has drawn up a contingency plan to retaliate against any Israeli attack and "impose high casualties in a short period of time."

"The enemy refrains from taking military action because it has estimated the damages it will sustain in a war against Iran," Fars quoted Hejazi as saying. "Having analyzed Iran's defense capabilities, they have reached the conclusion that military confrontation with Iran is tantamount to an endless quagmire."