

Gantz says Israel has list of Iran-backed targets ready to strike



The remarks by Benny Gantz come as US President Joe Biden's administration considers rejoining the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. (Photo: Jalaa Marey/AFP)

Tel Aviv, March 6 (RHC)-- The Israeli defense minister says that Tel Aviv has identified Iranian targets to attack if Tehran continues what he calls "nuclear escalation." Benny Gantz has said that his country has drawn up plans to hit Iranian targets and "we have them in our hands."

At a news conference in Tel Aviv, he showed a map of Lebanon that he said includes ground forces, missiles and launching sites set up by Iranian proxy forces along the border. "This is a target map. Each

one of them has been checked legally, operationally, intelligence-wise and we are ready to fight," Gantz said.

The remarks come as U.S. President Joe Biden's administration considers rejoining the 2015 Iran nuclear deal to limit Iran's nuclear program, with some changes to toughen curbs on Tehran's activities. Former President Donald Trump cancelled the U.S. membership in the nuclear accord and imposed sanctions instead.

"The Iranian nuclear escalation must be stalled," Gantz said, repeating the Israeli government's approach to the new administration on the issue. "If not, we must stand independently and we must defend ourselves by ourselves."

Gantz had on Tuesday said his country intends to develop a "special security arrangement" with new Gulf Arab allies who share common concerns about Iran. The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain established formal relations with Israel last year.

While playing down media reports about the establishment of a formal defence pact with Gulf countries, Gantz said security ties would be pursued. "I don't think it's going to be a defense pact but we are going to develop defence relations with every country that we have relations with," Gantz told Reuters news agency.

"We have this process of setting up (a) special security arrangement, and within this arrangement we can continue and develop our relations," he said. Gantz declined to go into details on what such an arrangement would entail. He moreover signalled that Israel had no opposition to the sale, approved during Trump's last days in office, of 50 Lockheed Martin F-35 stealth jets to the UAE. The deal is now under review by the Biden administration.

Asked about the Israeli government's view of the sale, Gantz said Israel's "qualitative military edge" must be preserved by the United States, adding that the advanced warplane was already in the country's arsenal.

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