

Israeli air raid targets key Syrian port of Latakia

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Firefighters work at the scene of the attack at the seaport of the coastal city of Latakia [SANA via AP Photo]

Damascus, December 28 (RHC)-- An Israeli air raid has struck Syria's Mediterranean port of Latakia for the second time this month, causing "significant material damage," according to Syrian state media.

"At around 3:21 am (05:21 GMT), the Israeli enemy carried out an aerial aggression with several missiles from the direction of the Mediterranean ... targeting the container yard in Latakia port," SANA state news agency cited a military source as saying on Tuesday.

Live footage aired by state television showed flames and smoke in the container terminal. Later on Tuesday, the Syrian government's media office said emergency services brought under control fires that had broken out in the port's container storage area.

The missile attack also wrecked the facades of a hospital, some residential buildings and shops, according to SANA. There were no immediate reports of casualties from the attack, which activated Syrian air defences, it said.

Since the outbreak of Syria's war in 2011, Israel has routinely carried out air raids on its strife-torn neighbor, mostly targeting Syrian government troops as well as allied Iran-backed forces and fighters affiliated with the Lebanese Hezbollah group.

A reporter for the state-run Al-Ikhbariyah TV in the area said the explosions could be heard in Tartus, another coastal city more than 80 km (nearly 50 miles) south. Asked about the raid, an Israeli army spokesman said: "We don't comment on reports in foreign media."

Latakia is Syria's main commercial port. Russia, which has been President Bashar al-Assad's most powerful ally during the war, alongside Iran, operates an airbase at Hmeimim, some 20 km (12 miles) south of the city.

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