

Breaking report: US/Israel military drill cancelled, after US tells Israel to back off

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US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey

Huge news. [Israel Hayom](#) ([Sheldon Aldeson's](#) Israeli newspaper) has just reported that the military drill with Israel entailing the [deployment of thousands of American troops](#) this spring has suddenly been canceled.

[Israel Hayom](#) based its report on an Israeli Radio report this afternoon:

Set for May, "Austere Challenge 12" was supposed to be the largest drill ever held between the two countries • U.S. Joint Chief of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey to arrive in Israel later this week to receive assurances from Israel that it won't strike Iran.

The cancellation-- if true-- has huge political significance. It would be the culmination of a war of words between Israeli officials and US officials in recent days. Two days ago, the Wall Street Journal reported that the [US had warned Israel to back off](#) in its actions and rhetoric re Iran.

Following the Wall Street Journal report, the [Jerusalem Post](#) republished an announcement first made in [December](#) regarding the deployment of thousands of US troops in a military exercise in Israel next spring although, it has now been edited to read "later this year". The announcement of the deployment was hardly covered in the US media.

Israel Hayom:

A large joint U.S.-Israeli military drill, scheduled to take place in the coming months, has been cancelled due to budgetary constraints, Israel Radio reported on Sunday afternoon.

It was unclear from the Israel Radio report which side cancelled the drill. The radio report said that the drill would likely be held toward the end of the year.

Set to take place in May, the drill called "Austere Challenge 12" was supposed to be the largest ever held between the two countries, and was designed to improve defense systems and cooperation between the U.S. and Israeli military forces. Just on January 6th the IDF spokesperson, commenting on the future joint drill with the U.S., said thousands of U.S. and Israeli soldiers from different units would take part. He said the drill would test multiple Israeli and U.S. air defense systems against incoming missiles and rockets. Israel has deployed the "Arrow" system, jointly developed with, and funded by the U.S., designed to intercept Iranian missiles in the stratosphere, far from Israeli airspace.

UPDATE:

[Jerusalem Post](#) now reporting "officials cite technical, logistical issues" as the reason the drill was cancelled. Claiming both "Israel and the US canceled a missile defense drill".

The parties were scheduled to simulate missile defense scenarios with the objective of creating a high level of interoperability so that, if needed, US missile defense systems would be able to work with Israeli systems during a conflict.

Officials refused to elaborate on the reasons behind talks to postpone or cancel the drill, but said they were mostly "technical and logistical."

Talks about postponing the drill took the Americans, as well as the Israeli Air Defense division, responsible for missile defense, by surprise. Just last Thursday, top IAF officers had said that the drill was scheduled for this spring.

This year's drill was expected to be unique in its size and scope and also mark the first time that commander of the US European Command, Adm. James Stavridis, would participate in the simulations. In the event of war, the EUCOM commander will be responsible for approving Israeli requests to deploy US missile defense systems in Israel.