

# Iranian Warships Patrolling in Red Sea Pose 'Direct Threat,' Israel's Gantz Warns

Israel has discovered what it described as the most significant Iranian military presence in the Red Sea in the past decade, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz revealed on Tuesday.

"Today, we can confirm that Iran is methodically basing itself in the Red Sea, with warships patrolling the southern region," Gantz said. "It is a direct threat to international trade, energy supply, and the global economy."

"It is also a direct threat to peace and stability in the maritime arena, which may affect the Mediterranean and beyond," he warned.

Speaking at the 26th annual Economist Government Roundtable in Athens, Greece, Gantz displayed satellite images of four Iranian warships patrolling the Red Sea in recent months, during a period when Tehran is entrenching itself in the area.

The defense minister cautioned that Iran's recent test of a satellite launcher from the Semnan province demonstrates a capacity to make intercontinental ballistic missiles reaching as far as the center of Europe.

"This is in addition to operational ballistic systems and UAVs that can already reach the East [Mediterranean]," he explained. "Over the last year, Iran has seized international tankers and attacked vessels."

Western officials last year blamed Iran for a "suicide" drone attack on the Israeli-managed Mercer Street oil tanker, killing two crew members from Romania and the UK. Most recently, in May, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard seized two Greek-flagged ships in Gulf waters, over the confiscation of Iranian oil by the US from a tanker near Greece.

The Israeli defense chief discussed the impact of Iran's activities beyond the immediate region.

“Iran is first a global challenge, then it is a regional challenge, and only lastly, it is a threat to the State of Israel,” he stated. “In addition to its nuclear ambitions, Iran exports terror to Turkey, Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East.”

And he accused the Iran-backed Hezbollah terror organization in Lebanon — which on Saturday launched three UAVs at Israel’s Karish gas rig — of attempting to “sabotage” sensitive maritime negotiations between Israel and Lebanon.

“It is in fact an attack on Lebanese citizens, who face extreme economic hardship,” Gantz continued. “It also shows that Hezbollah is an extension of the Ayatollah’s regime — operating to destabilize the region and to cause miscalculations.”

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