

Israeli nuclear forces¹

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Table. Israeli nuclear forces, January 2003

| Type | Range (km) ^a | Payload (kg) | Status |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--|
| <i>Aircraft</i> | | | |
| F-16A/B/C/D/I Falcon | 1 600 | 5 400 | 205 aircraft in the inventory; some are believed to be certified for nuclear weapon delivery |
| F-15I Thunder | 3 500 | 11 000 | 25 aircraft in the inventory; some may have a long-range nuclear delivery role |
| <i>Ballistic missiles</i> | | | |
| Jericho I | 500 | 450–650 | Operational, c. 50–100 missiles; first deployed in 1973 |
| Jericho II | 1 500– 1 800 | 750–1 000 | Operational; c. 50 missiles; first deployed in 1990 |

^a Missile payloads may have to be reduced in order to achieve maximum range. Aircraft range is for illustrative purposes only; actual mission range will vary according to flight profile and weapon loading.

Sources: Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1998); Albright, D., Berkhout, F. and Walker, W., SIPRI, *Plutonium and Highly Enriched Uranium 1996: World Inventories, Capabilities and Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Lennox, D. (ed.), *Jane's Strategic Weapon Systems* (Jane's Information Group, Ltd: Coulsdon, UK, 2003); and Author's estimates.

Israel is widely considered to be a de facto nuclear weapon state. Like India and Pakistan, it is not a party to the 1968 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Despite some debate on the subject in 2000 in the Knesset (Parliament), Israel continues to maintain its long-standing policy of nuclear ambiguity in which it neither officially confirms nor denies that it possesses nuclear weapons. However, Israel is believed to have achieved a nuclear weapon capability in the 1960s. Most estimates claim that Israel currently maintains up to approximately 200 nuclear weapons. This means that it may have a larger nuclear arsenal than the UK, which is one of the five legally recognized nuclear weapon states under the NPT.

¹ Excerpt from Kristensen, H. and Kile, S., 'World nuclear forces', *SIPRI Yearbook 2003: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2003).

Many analysts believe that Israel maintains a recessed nuclear arsenal (i.e., one that is stored but not armed, requiring some preparation before use); hence, the warheads for Israel's purported nuclear weapon delivery systems may not actually be deployed. These delivery systems are believed to be strike aircraft and land-based ballistic missiles. Some analysts believe that Israel also possesses a non-strategic nuclear arsenal, possibly consisting of nuclear artillery shells and atomic demolition munitions or landmines (ADMs).