

Monday, 10 June 2013

## Jordan begins 'Eager Lion' military drill



Jordan announced Saturday the start of "Eager Lion" military exercises with the participation of 8,000 soldiers from 19 Arab and Western countries, said Major General Awni el-Edwan, the Jordan Armed Forces' operations chief of staff.

In a press conference held at the Jordan Special Operations Command in Amman, Edwan said the military exercise will last till June 21 and will take place in Jordan's central and southern region.

Stressing that the drill is not linked to regional developments around Jordan, Edwan said the military exercise will not take place near the northern border with Syria.

Dismissing speculation that the Syrian rebel army might take part in the drill, Edwan said "only nations" were invited to participate.

Part of the military drill involves air exercises on how to control and reduce effects of chemical weapons on military units and civilians.

In the presence of Major General Robert G. Catalanotti of the US Army Central Command, Edwan said that F-16 fighters and Patriot missiles will be used in the drill but he did not disclose how many of these fighters and missiles are brought to the kingdom.

"Our political leadership will decide if these weapons are to stay behind, we [the military] follow and execute orders," Edwan said.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a Jordanian source told Al Arabiya that the government will officially ask Washington to keep the Patriot missiles in the kingdom after the exercises.