IDF: Foiled drone strike planned and funded by Iran from luxury villa near Damascus

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By Yoav Zitun

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The plan to attack Israeli targets with explosive-laden drones that was foiled by the IDF was planned by Iranian officials from a luxury villa near Damascus, a military spokesman said Sunday.

The IDF attack targeted Shi'ite militiamen that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's Quds force brought into Syria, funded and trained. In recent weeks, the drone equipment also arrived at Damascus International Airport alongside Iranian experts, who, together with local Shiite activists, gathered at the fenced complex in the village of Aqraba, south of the Syrian capital.

According to the IDF, the drones are also used by Houthi rebels in Yemen and are capable of dropping several kilos of explosives.

The IDF said that the Quds force paid for the facility hidden in the gated villa – which comes with a pool, a large garden and a storage room. The equipment intended for the attack was also stored there.

The four-member cell set to carry out the attacks settled into this compound to prepare with the assistance of Quds Commander Qasem Suleimani.

The cell was then spotted on Syrian side of the Golan Heights on Thursday while attempting to carry out the attack. The IDF managed to in disrupt the effort and also discovered the location of the terrorists' hideout. The equipment at the site was destroyed and the drones stayed on the Syrian side.

The IDF is blaming the Syrian regime for allowing Iranian activity on its territory and turning a blind eye and even cooperating with the Iranian militias.

IDF Chief of Staff Aviv Kochavi was to visit the local Golan division Sunday afternoon to conduct a situation assessment.

"We are continuing preparations for a variety of defensive and offensive scenarios and are conducting a situation assessment with senior IDF officials," said the IDF Spokesperson's Unit.

Kochavi said late Saturday that, "the attack we thwarted tonight was an Iranian attack from Syria's territory against the State of Israel.

"It was supposed to include attacks by a number of explosive-laden drones against a number of targets in the country. Qasem Soleimani personally drove the terror attack and commanded it," Kochavi said.

"He financed and trained the Shi'ite activists who were to carry out the attack. We have to prepare for every possibility in the best possible way."

According to IDF sources, the decision to publicize its attack and avoid maintaining ambiguity as in the past was due to the fact that this was a specific terrorist attack rather than an attack on a military target or to prevent the transfer of weapons.

"The Iranians were planning to kill Israeli soldiers and civilians with explosives on our own territory - and this is not something that we can keep quiet," the IDF said, adding that there had been previous occasions when Israel had readily spoken about its actions.