



News



Israel Ex-commandos Training Kurds in North Iraq: Report

CAIRO, December 1, 2005 (IslamOnline.net) - Dozens of former Israeli commandos have been training Kurdish security forces in northern Iraq, supplying them with equipment worth millions of dollars, *Yedioth Aharonot* newspaper reported Thursday, December 1.

Over the past 18 months, these ex-commandos, who were sent to Iraq by several Israeli corporations, have been training special security units as part of a program organized by the Kurdish authorities, said Israel's top-selling daily.

Operating from a secret desert stronghold dubbed Code Z, the ex-Israeli soldiers, all with elite-unit experience, have been training the Kurds in weapons, self-defense and anti-terror techniques.

The newspaper showed photographs of men it said were Israelis, their faces concealed, training Kurds in the use of weapons at an unknown location and preparing vehicles at an airport.

The New Yorker veteran investigative reporter Seymour Hersh said [Israeli intelligence and military operatives](#) were quietly at work in northern Iraq, providing training for Kurdish commando units and running covert operations inside Kurdish areas of Iran and Syria.

Israeli Arms

According to the Israeli daily, Motorola Israel and Magalcom Communications and Computers won contracts with the Kurdish government to the tune of hundreds of millions of US dollars.

As part of the program, the firms have supplied the Kurds with tones of Israeli-manufactured



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equipment, including dozens of motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles, sniffer dogs, devices for upgrading Kalashnikov rifles, flack jackets, uniforms and helmets.

They have also been involved in the secret construction of a major airport near the northern town of Arbil, known as "Hawler International".

The Israelis entered Iraq through its northern border with Turkey posing as construction engineers and agricultural experts, the paper said.

Yedioth Aharonot added that a company owned by Israeli entrepreneur Shlomi Michaels is in full business partnership with the Kurdish government, providing strategic consultation on economic and security issues.

The company was initially established by former Mossad chief Danny Yatom and Michaels, yet Yatom sold his shares upon his election to the Knesset.

A shroud of secrecy has been imposed on the project for fear the Israelis could be targeted by Iraqi resistance groups.

The Kurds, who make up 15-20 percent of Iraq's population and live mostly along the borders with Iran and Turkey, have enjoyed broad autonomy since the 1991 Gulf War.

Despite assurances from both sides, Turkey has repeatedly raised concerns about the reported presence of Israeli operatives in northern Iraq and their cooperation with the country's Kurdish community.

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