

## Maker: Israeli 'Drones' Fly Over Iraq

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JERUSALEM (AP) - Pilotless planes small enough for a single soldier to carry and operate are gathering intelligence for U.S.-led forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Israeli manufacturer said Monday.

Elbit Systems, one of Israel's leading defense electronics companies, said its little "Skylark" can cover an area within a range of 6 miles day or night. It is about 7 feet long with a wingspan of nearly 8 feet, the company said.

"Skylark is operational and currently deployed in the global war on terror in Israel, Iraq and Afghanistan," the statement said. It described the Skylark as suited for "close range, beyond-the-next hill, counter-terror missions."

Lt. Col. Matthew McLaughlin of CENTCOM, the American command that handles Iraq and Afghanistan, said the military "would not confirm the use of the drone," but is always looking for aircraft with such capabilities.

The U.S. relies heavily on pilotless planes of all shapes and sizes for surveillance, launching missiles and other missions in the region.

Elbit said the Skylark, one of several items of Israeli defense hardware deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, would be unveiled to the public at the March 20-25 Australian International Airshow.

Earlier this month, state-owned arms-maker Rafael said it had won a contract to supply the U.S. Marine Corps with state-of-the-art armored vehicles, and military analysts said Israeli firms had long been supplying and maintaining equipment for American ground and naval forces in Iraq, although both buyers and sellers generally preferred to keep a low profile.

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