

Israel Concerned ISIS Could Reach Its Borders

Israel has provided satellite imagery and other intelligence in support of the aerial campaign against Islamic State in Iraq, a Western diplomat said on Monday.

Once “scrubbed” of evidence of its Israeli origin, the information often has been shared by Washington with Arab and Turkish allies, the diplomat said.

Israel’s Defense Ministry neither confirmed nor denied involvement in any international efforts against the militant group.

“We don’t comment on any assistance by us, or if there is such assistance, in the fight against ISIS,” said Yaacov Havakook, spokesman for ministry, using one of Islamic State’s former names.

The spread of Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, the insurgent group’s foreign volunteer contingent and the execution of two U.S. journalists have jolted Western powers into military intervention.

Israel, worried that Islamic State could eventually reach its borders and keen to repair international ties frayed by its policies towards the Palestinians, has offered to help.

Satellites and Databases

The Western diplomat said Israeli spy satellites, overflying Iraq at angles and frequencies unavailable from U.S. satellites, had provided images that allowed the Pentagon to “fill out its information and get a better battle damage assessments” after strikes on Islamic State targets.

Israel had also shared information gleaned from international

travel databases about Western citizens suspected of joining the insurgents, who could be potential recruits for future attacks in their native countries.

“The Israelis are very good with passenger data and with analyzing social media in Arabic to get a better idea of who these people are,” the diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

Underscoring Israel’s backstage role, it is not among countries being visited by U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel this week as he builds the anti-Islamic State coalition.

But the Israeli-supplied intelligence would reach the U.S. partner “with the Hebrew and other markings scrubbed out” to avoid raising hackles among Arabs, Turks and perhaps even the Iranian forces who also view Islamic State as a foe, the diplomat said.

Finance Minister Yair Lapid, a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s security cabinet, told a conference hosted by the IDC Herzliya college near Tel Aviv that Israel should “build a coalition of sanity” in which Israeli intelligence “is part of the regional effort” against Islamic State, Lebanon’s Hezbollah group and al-Qaida.

Editing by Jeffrey Heller and Tom Heneghan

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