



Israel's AI drones Hoover up info to prioritise which Palestinians to kill

## Description

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An Israeli air-force single isolated drone in the distance against a partly cloudy background. This is not a photo

Leaked military documents show how AI helps Israel's killer drones target and surveil Palestinians. The algorithms also allow the [settler-colonial military](#) to gather information and build a sharper picture of the "battlefield".

The technology is added on to Hermes drones which patrol occupied Palestine. Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* [reported](#) in June:

The algorithm independently analyzes the intelligence gathered by the drones' sensors and cameras, automatically detecting targets, classifying them and deciding whether to track them or pass them on "to the command center, air force pilots or troops on the ground.

The paper [said](#) the leaked files "reveal a previously unreported system known as Server in the Sky, or SITS".

Running on a computer installed on a drone, the "onboard" analytics software uses algorithms to carry out a wide range of unmanned missions that utilize AI analysis and decision-making.

The technology is terrifying, particularly for Palestinians and [Lebanese people](#) who live under Israeli military occupation.

*Haaretz* wrote:

The server and the analytics it runs also allow the drone fleet to be managed autonomously, handing over tasks as the drones surveil a defined sector, shifting the burden among these unmanned aircraft to maintain continuous visibility.

For example, if cloud cover suddenly blocks one drone's view, or another must break off to dodge a ground-to-air missile, coverage passes automatically to another available drone.

## Israel intelligence tech: How does it work?

Journalists [said](#) that the documents corroborated reports from ex-military whistleblowers from an organisation called Breaking the Silence.

That testimony exposes "what one source calls the growing "algorithmicization" of the IDF's unmanned systems".

The technology can be fitted with Hermes 450 and Hermes 900 drones. These also carry missile payloads. Hermes are the workhorses of the occupation forces and pose a familiar threat to the people of Palestine and Lebanon.

The system forms a key part of Israel intelligence and surveillance known as wide area persistent surveillance, or WAPS.

Israeli officials confirmed to *Haaretz* it has been used in the Gaza genocide and the illegal invasion of Lebanon.

The [surveillance] payload is mounted on the Hermes 450 or 900, holding a set of 10 advanced cameras that use electro-optical sensors that can visually capture "in real time and from a single drone " 80 square kilometers (31 square miles).

So-called "intelligence forensics" allow Israel to "play back video in real time and in retrospect, pulling together different vantage points".

Analysts use this function to "trace an object back to its point of origin, or reconstruct a chain of events after the fact".

Elements of the technology are automatic, though reporters said it wasn't clear what that meant.

## What we learnt in 2024

*+972 Magazine* [detailed](#) the Israeli military's use of AI in April 2024. The Israeli-Palestinian-led outlet warned:

Formally, the Lavender system is designed to mark all suspected operatives in the military wings of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), including low-ranking ones, as potential

bombing targets.

However:

During the early stages of the war, the army gave sweeping approval for officers to adopt Lavender's kill lists, with no requirement to thoroughly check why the machine made those choices or to examine the raw intelligence data on which they were based.

It seems improbable that civilians were not pulled into Israel's killing machine as part of the process given such indifferent oversight. The same drones are [used](#) by countries like India, Brazil and Singapore and even for EU border surveillance. Showing once again that Israel's genocidal assaults on Palestine and Lebanon are a laboratory for killing technology with global implications.

Featured image via [Oren Ravid/ Getty Images](#)

By [Joe Glenton](#)

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