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**Case 06.1: Deadly Walls – Border Security around
Saudi Arabia (long version)**

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Deadly Walls – Border Security around Saudi Arabia (long version)

Aside from European companies such as Airbus and Rheinmetall, Israeli manufacturers such as Elbit Systems Ltd and IAI (Israel Aerospace Industries) are also world leading in the production of border security systems. Elbit is currently building a fence that extends up to 40 metres underground on the border with Gaza. This is intended to render Palestinian tunnels such as those that Israel has tracked down and bombed in the past ineffective in the future. The underground fence follows the path of the above-ground border protection facilities, some of which are still under construction. It reaches down to the water table and is intended to prevent Palestinian intruders from entering Israeli territory at greater depths. One fence with electronic security systems has already been erected on the Sinai on the border with Egypt, another is being erected on the Golan along the border with Lebanon and Syria. In addition, according to Israeli military spokesman Jonathan Conricus, a surveillance system is being built that will respond to acoustic or seismic signals. These could indicate underground digging. Secret tunnel constructions such as those on the border to Gaza would no longer be possible in the future¹. When all of these installations are completed, Israel will be surrounded to the north, east and, to some extent, south by fences or high walls with electronic border protection systems such as radar, cameras and motion detectors. Palestinian enclaves like the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Bethlehem will be enclosed by concrete walls up to 10 meters high. The sea side in the west of Israel is monitored by coastal radar and drones such as the Heron reconnaissance drone.

Israel also exports border protection installations and radar and coastal surveillance systems to Europe and the USA, where they are to be used, for example, on the border wall with Mexico. The German Bundeswehr already leased a Heron drone from IAI for use in Afghanistan - more are to be procured and armed soon.

Israel has occupied a niche in the field of electronic border security technology, but above all in the field of drone technology, in which it can act as the "world market leader". This market leadership means: a technological presence in securing and sealing off borders in territories where Islamist terror groups are trying to expand their sphere of influence or where ethnically persecuted freedom fighters are struggling for independence – as is the case in Kashmir or Myanmar.

Israeli companies openly advertise ethnic or racial profiling, which the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) describes as follows: "‘Ethnic profiling’ is defined as the use by police, security, immigration or customs officials of generalisations based on race, ethnicity, religion or national origin -rather than individual behaviour or objective evidence -as the basis for suspicion in directing discretionary law enforcement actions"².

The data used for ethnic profiling is itself supplied by reconnaissance drones or - in the case of an attempted illegal border crossing - by specially programmed cameras. They

¹ AP (19.01.2020). Israel building underground defense system on Lebanon border. AP News. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from <https://apnews.com/article/277da5c673c194a616f703ef153292b1>

² ENAR & Open Society Justice Initiative (10.2009). Ethnic Profiling. *Enar Factsheets*, 40. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from https://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/enar_osji_factsheet_ethnic_profiling_oct09.pdf

scan faces and check whether, for example, a group of people approaching a border fence belongs to a hostile ethnic group based on characteristics such as skin color or physiognomy. In cases of illegal border crossings, the group can be fought immediately from the air - e.g. by armed drones - if the police or military think there is imminent danger. In April and May 2018, more than 60 demonstrating, stone-throwing Palestinian youth and children were shot dead at the Gaza border fence when Israeli security forces opened fire beyond the fence. In early September 2019, four Palestinians lost their lives as they approached the fence, according to the Israeli military, armed with rifles, and one of them tried to cross it³.

Israeli human rights activists criticize that reconnaissance technology and counterinsurgency weapons are directed against civilians in the majority of countries to which supplies have been and are being delivered. Israeli companies earn billions with electronic border security systems, reconnaissance and combat drones, as well as the sale of related know-how and training programs. In addition, the Israeli government has sent intelligence and military personnel to countries that asked for and paid for them, such as Kenya after the attack by Somali Al-Shabab militias on the Westgate shopping center in Nairobi in 2013. The fact that Israel can "test" many of its weapons systems in its own country or beyond its borders under the eyes of the world has given the state and its companies another market advantage. What happens almost daily in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank is likely to be closely observed by states that feel threatened by rebel or terrorist groups or whose autocratic rulers are challenged by insurgency movements. Thus, it is no wonder that at international arms fairs at the stands of Israeli companies one of the most frequently asked questions is: "Have you already tested what you are offering under war conditions yourself?"⁴

However, Israel will struggle to defend its market leadership in the field of surveillance and border security technology. Other suppliers such as Airbus and Rheinmetall Defence are already present in Eastern Europe and Asia. Rheinmetall is promoting its border protection program as follows, "Rheinmetall's Persistent Surveillance System (PSS) provides a wide-area, long range observation capability for the detection, identification, and monitoring of potential threats against military installations and other critical infrastructure, such as forward operating bases, forward operating positions, petroleum facilities and power generation stations. ... "The Persistent Surveillance System (PSS) ... offers long-range surveillance capability over long distances. It can be used to detect, identify and monitor potential threats to military installations and other critical infrastructure - such as bases and operational and supply bases, but also oil and power plants. ... The PSS has a proven record, being in service for the Canadian Forces' Forward Operating Bases in Afghanistan, the Winter Olympic Games 2010 in Vancouver, and the G8 and G20 summits 2010 in Canada.⁵

³ CFR/DPA/AFP (10.08.2019). Israelische Soldaten erschießen vier militante Palästinenser an der Gaza-Grenze. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/nahostkonflikt-israelische-soldaten-toeten-vier-militante-palaestiner-a-1281373.html>

⁴ Roeh, Y., Zamir, A. (Producers) & Feldman, Y. (Director) (2013). The Lab [Motion Picture]. Israel: Cinephil

⁵ Rheinmetall Defence (n.d.). Persistent Surveillance System - PSS. Rheinmetall-Defence.com [Company Website]. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from https://www.rheinmetall-defence.com/en/rheinmetall_defence/systems_and_products/c4i_systems/reconnaissance_and_sensor_systems/persistent_surveillance_system/index.php

Company Profiles

IAI (Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd.), the largest state-owned Israeli weapons company. It also has a civilian branch responsible for the manufacture and repair of luxury jets. IAI is best known as a producer of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and missiles.

Elbit Systems Ltd, the largest private Israeli weapons company, which is strongly associated with former politicians and specializes in a wide range of military technologies that can be combined with U.S.-made elements (e.g. helmets, cameras, batteries).

Rafael Advanced Defense System Ltd. is also state-owned and known for missile defense systems such as the "Iron Dome", which the company produces together with US manufacturer Raytheon. Rafael also manufactures unmanned vehicles and protection systems for armored vehicles.

IMI Systems Ltd. (formerly Israeli Military Industries) is Israel's oldest weapons manufacturer. Its products include ammunition, tank ammunition, rockets and engines. The sale to Elbit Systems is currently being prepared.

Israeli Weapons Industries Ltd. (IWI) is a private weapons company that is one of the manufacturers that use the Israeli military to promote their products and sell small arms that they do not manufacture themselves.

Aeronautics Ltd. is also a private weapons company notorious for selling military equipment to customers with problematic human rights records. Rafael and another private investor are currently (status 2019) trying to buy Aeronautics.

All of these companies have a Homeland Security Products division (systems for border security and domestic surveillance), which further blurs the line between the Israeli weapons industry and manufacturers of homeland security products. According to the Israeli Ministry of Economy and Industry, approximately 600 smaller companies are registered as homeland security specialists.

Offender Profiles

Bezhael Machlis, President and CEO of Elbit Systems, became the top representative of Israel's largest weapons company in April 2013. Previously, he had been Vice President and General Manager for Land and Battlefield Systems. He has been with Elbit since 1991 and initially worked in various management positions. He served as an artillery officer in the Israeli Army before studying engineering and computer science at the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology in Tel Aviv and completing a management program at Harvard Business School.

Nimrod Sheffer, President and CEO of IAI (Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd.) started his career as a pilot in the Israeli Air Force and after various command positions he rose to Major General. He is considered a reformer of the structures of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). He took control of IAI in 2018.

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