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The Heron UAV
Photo: IAI

Israel Develops Remote Air and Land Combat Robots

by Ezra HaLevi

(IsraelINN.com) Israel has developed the capabilities to engage in both air and land combat via remote control.

Israel's Air Force received the Heron (*Mahatz* in Hebrew) unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) from Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) Thursday. The UAV is called the Shoval by the IAF and expands Israel's capabilities greatly.

The Heron has a 50-foot wingspan, can fly at an altitude of up to 30,000 feet and carries a 550-pound payload. It can fly up to 30 hours without refueling and can be operated completely remotely. The large UAV can identify the launch sites of missiles as well as deliver air-to-surface missiles itself, eliminating targets as far away as Iran.

It will be phased in at the expense of the older Sarcher model.

The Heron is considered the most advanced UAV in the world and can carry the largest payload as well. Israel leads the UAV market and is currently producing several models on rush order for US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Another Israeli defense company, Elbit Systems, has designed a new robot that can enter a combat zone, hurl grenades and shoot an automatic pistol at enemy forces.

Called the VIPeR, the robot is about the size of a small television. The machine moves on tread and is "undeterred by stairs, rubble, dark alleys caves or narrow tunnels," according to Elbit.

Elbit says the machine has bomb-detecting capabilities as well and greatly reduces the risk to soldiers in hand-to-hand combat situations such as those encountered in the war against Hizbullah terrorists last summer.

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