

US Has No Information to Corroborate Claims that Iran Helped Plot Hamas Attack

'We're always continuously and continually assessing our understanding of the Iran-backed terror network,' says official

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The US said Monday it does not have any information to suggest that Iran helped Hamas plan an unprecedented attack on Israel in which Hamas operatives infiltrated the country from land, sea and air amid barrages of missiles.

Speaking to reporters on condition of anonymity, a senior Defense Department official said that while Iran is definitely "in the picture" after having provided Hamas with years of support **"we have no information corroborating the specifics of" Iran's reported aid for and sign-off on the attack.**

The official maintained, however, that Iran has been supporting Hamas, Lebanese Hezbollah and other groups across the region for years, and has been increasing the sophistication of weaponry it provides.

"We're always continuously and continually assessing our understanding of the Iran-backed terror network across the region. And we've been very clear for years that Iranian support to a variety of militia groups, the sophistication of weapons its providing has been increasing," the official said.

"This is not something new. It's been going on for years," the official added.

The comments come one day after the Wall Street Journal newspaper reported Sunday that Iranian agents helped plan Saturday morning's attack, and green lit it during a meeting in Beirut on Monday.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps had worked with Hamas since August to plan out the attack, including during a series of meetings that included other Iran-backed groups,

including Hezbollah, the Journal reported citing senior Hamas and Hezbollah leaders.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in an interview with CNN Sunday that Washington has “not yet seen evidence that Iran directed or was behind this particular attack, but there is certainly a long relationship.”

Hamas launched Operation Al-Aqsa Flood against Israel early Saturday, firing a barrage of rockets and infiltrating Israel by land, air and sea. It said the surprise attack was in response to the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem, and increased settler violence against Palestinians.

At least 900 Israelis have been killed since Saturday, and over 2,616 have been wounded, including 380 who are in critical condition, according to the Israeli Health Ministry.

In a related development, the Israeli army revealed the names of 12 military personnel who were recently killed in the conflict with Palestinian gunmen, pushing the death toll of Israeli forces to 85, according to the Israeli daily Maariv.

In retaliation, the Israeli military launched Operation Swords of Iron against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, killing at least 560 Palestinians and wounding at least 2,900 others. Israel has also said it will completely halt all supplies of electricity, food and fuel to Gaza, which is home to over 2 million people, about half of whom are children.

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