

VIDEO: IAI demonstrates Heron UAV's maritime credentials

By: [Arie Egozi](#) Tel Aviv
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IAI has previously sold maritime surveillance-configured Heron systems to the Indian navy, and is now in negotiations with three more potential customers. The UAS is also gradually replacing [IAI Westwind](#) 1124 business jets operated by Israel since 1978 in the Seascan model, with the unmanned type carrying an Elta Systems search radar and a Tamam stabilised long-range electro-optical/infrared sensor.

The Israeli air force operates the type on behalf of the navy, with foreign sources saying it is now being used to protect the nation's offshore natural gas fields from possible attack by Hezbollah militants.

A retired Israeli navy captain, the marketing manager of IAI's Malat UAS plant, identified as Eli G, claims that the adapted Heron 1 can perform the maritime patrol mission better than any manned aircraft.

"The size of the Heron system's bay and its electrical supply systems enable us to put on the platform an array of systems," he says. By equipping the Israeli navy's surface ships with a special antenna the UAS can also be "slaved" to the vessel, allowing "complete radio silence in the area of operation", he adds.

IAI says a typical maritime UAS mission is performed at an altitude of between 5,000ft (1,525m) and 8,000ft, and is offering a satellite communications equipment fit that allows the platform to transmit the data from its sensors despite the low flight level.

The Heron has a service ceiling of 30,000ft and a maximum endurance of more than 40h. It can carry multiple payloads with a total weight of 250kg (550lb).