

Germany agrees to lease Israeli-made drones: manufacturer

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A file photo taken on October 8, 2007 shows an Israeli Heron TP surveillance drone

Germany has agreed a nine year deal worth over half a billion dollars to lease Israeli military reconnaissance drones capable of carrying missiles, the aircraft's manufacturers said Thursday.

European aerospace giant Airbus, which signed the \$600 million (500 million euro) agreement on behalf of the German defence ministry, will maintain and provide operational support for the Heron TP drones, Israel Aerospace Industries said.

An official from the state-owned Israeli firm, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the [deal](#) covered five drones.

The German military currently uses Israel's Heron 1 in Afghanistan and Mali, with the more advanced Heron TP drones expected to replace earlier models.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that the German parliament had approved the deal the previous day following the government's green light.

"It's a very large deal," Netanyahu said, "and that of course helps our defence industries and I think it helps security in Europe."

"It's a very, very good piece of news," he said at a security conference in Jerusalem.

IAI said the deal was pending German federal budgetary approval.

In 2016, then-German defence minister Ursula von der Leyen said the intention was to use the Israeli drones until a similar European model was operational.

Germany had considered buying Predator drones from the United States, but ultimately opted for the Heron TP, which German officials have said could be made available more quickly and would provide a smoother transition between models.

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