

Developing



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UAE, Israel & Iran Alert: NSC advisory on January 14 warns of Iranian efforts to lure Israeli citizens into traps abroad, reveals latest plot involving UAE soil; take precautions

Current Situation:

- Israel's National Security Council (NSC) issued an advisory on January 14 highlighting Iran's increasing efforts to target Israeli citizens by luring them to travel to fake meetings abroad.
- Within this context, the NSC stated that Iranian elements recently tried to lure an Israeli businessman into traveling to a meeting in Dubai. They posed as members of the Persian language department of the Saudi "al-Arabiya" media agency and contacted the Israeli businessman via the Telegram social media application. The Iranian officials also tried to gain access to the businessman's cell phone by sending malicious links.
- The Israeli businessman's personal vigilance led him to suspect and refer the case to the NSC, triggering the investigation that revealed that Iranian elements were behind it.

Source: [Prime Minister's Office](#)

Assessments & Forecast:

1. Iran's efforts to target Israeli entities and nationals abroad, including by luring them to travel, are not unprecedented. For instance, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) reportedly attempted to [abduct](#) an Israeli journalist, Babak Yitzhaki, by luring him to travel to the Turkish border from where they plotted to smuggle him to Iran. Iranian efforts to target Israeli businesspeople are also not unprecedented. In this context, the latest NSC advisory further highlights Iran's perception of Israeli citizens, including those who are not related to the government or military, as legitimate targets. This, in turn, highlights the sustained threat faced by Israeli nationals considering Iran's ongoing campaign against Israel.
2. The current incident also highlights Iran's use of impersonation tactics in plots tailored to target specific individuals, aimed at increasing the chances that the latter will be lured into the plot. This also included forms of social engineering, as was highlighted in the fact that the current plotters sent the Israeli target malicious links to gain access to his phone. This further highlights the risk posed by Tehran and the relative sophistication dedicated to devising these plots. Against this increased threat, heightened personal vigilance, as showcased by the Israeli businessman in the latest instance, can be crucial. This was highlighted by the fact that only his own suspicion prompted him to raise the issue with Israeli authorities.
3. The fact that the plotters' goal was to lure the individual to travel to Dubai lends further credence to the assessment that Iran retains a significant operational footprint in the UAE. This was further highlighted in several instances in the past, including the [assassination of the Israeli Rabbi and Chabad representative in the UAE in November 2024](#) and the abduction of a German-Iranian national to Iran during a flight layover in Dubai in 2020. In this context, Tehran likely wished to lure the individual into arriving in Dubai in order to either assassinate or abduct him, likely capitalizing on established Iranian operational infrastructures in Dubai. This further highlights the threat posed to Israeli nationals, specifically in the UAE, which has been persistently reflected in NSC's travel advisories.
4. Overall, this development highlights Iran's sustained resolve to target Israeli nationals and symbols. Iran's motivation and efforts in this context have likely increased against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war, the latest round of direct tit-for-tat between Israel and Iran, and the [tilting of the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East region to the detriment of Tehran](#).

FORECAST: Against the backdrop of this development, Israeli authorities will likely bolster their security protocols, specifically in cyberspace, against such plots. Additionally, Emirati authorities are also likely to strengthen surveillance and vigilance to prevent kidnapping plots from materializing on their soil. However, Iran will likely continue to resort to targeted operations against Israeli nationals, including through the use of social media applications and attempts to lure Israeli nationals to travel abroad. In addition to Israeli citizens, the threat of kidnapping and harm by Iran will likely extend to Jewish targets, Iranian dual nationals who are considered dissidents, and journalists and individuals perceived to be engaging in anti-Iran activities. The risk of such plots on UAE soil will likely persist despite Emirati measures to diminish this threat. It may also extend to other countries where Iran dedicated efforts to establish operational capabilities.

Recommendations:

1. Israeli and Jewish nationals are advised to reconsider the necessity of travel to the UAE, as well as to other NSC-designated countries for high-risk areas of Iranian clandestine operations at the current juncture. Remain cognizant of the elevated threat of Iranian plots to target such individuals abroad.
2. Verify the identity of unknown parties before engaging in a direct conversation with them.
3. **MAX has extensive protective intelligence capabilities that can help identify potential social engineering attempts and other fraudulent and malicious online activity. Contact intel@max-security.com for more information.**
4. For those conducting essential travel to the UAE:
 1. _____
 2. It is advised to maintain a low profile and heightened vigilance while travelling to the country. Avoid unnecessary contact with strangers and be suspicious of suggestions and inquiries from

- unknown parties, including on social media. This includes local service providers.
3. Avoid revealing your position or affiliation with foreign-based firms to strangers.
 4. Ensure that places of stay are equipped with sufficient perimeter security details.
 5. Review privacy settings on social media platforms and refrain from sharing personal information, including your live location, schedule, and pictures that disclose location.
 6. Avoid disclosing itinerary information to unnecessary parties.
 7. Inform Israeli authorities in the UAE of your visit and travel plan in the country.
 8. Avoid traveling alone over a long distance and in remote areas of the country.