

# Why have Israeli military aircraft been landing at a UK air base?

Israel's air force recently undertook three flights from the Royal Air Force's main base in Oxfordshire. Were they carrying arms?

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Israeli military flights have been landing at Brize Norton. (Photo: APS / Alamy)

The Israeli Air Force (IAF) operated at least three transport flights from RAF Brize Norton in October and November last year, *Declassified* has found.

Two of the flights – on 13 October and 28 November – went to the US Air Force base at Dover in Delaware. The third arrived from Dover on 20 November and flew out the same day to Israel's main air force station at Nevatim in southern Israel.

It is not known from where the first two flights originated or how long the Israeli aircraft had been in the UK.

There are suspicions that these flights were carrying US arms. Israeli aircraft packed with “advanced weaponry” have been [reported](#) as regularly [flying](#) from Dover to Nevatim since Israel began its destruction of Gaza.

Protests have [taken place](#) at the Delaware base against its involvement in genocide and demanding an end to weapons transfers to Israel.

The Israeli planes were Boeing 707 transport aircraft, known for carrying freight at long distances.

Brize Norton is the RAF's main operating base. The RAF [says](#) that “with its mixed fleet of aircraft, RAF Brize Norton provides rapid global mobility in support of UK overseas operations and exercises”.

## State secrecy

This is not the first time that Israeli military aircraft have recently landed in the UK. In February 2024, the government [admitted](#) that nine IAF aircraft had taken off and landed from British territory since the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023.

But the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has [refused](#) to tell parliament what the Israeli aircraft were carrying.

Then defence minister James Heappey said: “For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the MOD does not offer comment or information relating to foreign nations’ military aircraft movements or operations”.

This level of state secrecy highlights the sensitivity of the issue. UK ministers are potentially liable for prosecution by international courts for complicity in Israel’s genocide.

Chris Doyle, director of the Council for Arab-British Understanding, told *Declassified*: “The UK continues to treat Israel as a strategic ally even as it engages in genocide and massive violations of international law.

“The total secrecy surrounding these flights just highlights that the government knows the levels of legitimate outrage that would break out if this was more widely known. A legal case for complicity with Israeli war crimes is getting stronger by the day.”

Scottish National Party MP Chris Law, who represents Dundee Central, told *Declassified*: “The Ministry of Defence continues to have serious questions to answer around the extent of their involvement in Israel’s military campaign in Gaza.

“These latest revelations, on Israeli transport flights landing in UK military bases, will only further fuel concerns that the MoD and the wider UK government have been actively complicit in what many now consider to have been a genocide in Gaza.

“The MoD must provide full transparency and detail precisely the extent of the support they have given to the Israel Defence Forces since October 2023. By doing so, they can quell any concerns around the UK’s complicity in potential human rights abuses.”

*Declassified* has put in a freedom of information request to the US authorities about the 13 October flight to Dover, asking to disclose the flight manifest. We have not so far received a response.

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## Arming Israel

The UK has long been believed to be playing a role in helping the US to arm Israel.

Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* [reported](#) in October 2023 that dozens of US and British transport aircraft had flown to RAF Akrotiri, Britain military base on Cyprus, carrying equipment, arms and forces for Israel.

*Declassified* recently [discovered](#) that over 50 tonnes of US arms bound for Israel had been secretly flown through UK airspace.

In answer to a parliamentary question, the government [admitted](#) this month that the RAF flew 78 transport aircraft to Israel during the destruction of Gaza.

Britain has given Israel extensive military support to Israel during the genocide. The RAF has flown hundreds of [surveillance flights](#) over Gaza in support of Israeli intelligence, in order to locate hostages, the MoD says.

The MoD is also believed to be [training](#) Israeli armed forces personnel in Britain while UK arms and military equipment have continued to be [exported](#) to Israel despite some restrictions being imposed by the government.

Asked for comment on the presence of the Israeli aircraft in Britain, the MoD pointed to an [answer](#) to a parliamentary question reiterating that the government does not comment on movements of foreign military aircraft in Britain.