

In a first, ISIS militants target Israeli troops near Golan Heights, get wiped out by warplanes

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Jerusalem: Israeli forces killed four Islamic State militants in Syria in the first direct clash between the country and the jihadi group.

Israel troops

The militants opened fire on a military patrol on the Israeli side of the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, a military spokesman was quoted by the Independent online.

Lt. Col. Peter Lerner said the patrol came under machine gun and mortar fire early on Sunday.

During exchange, the militants launched mortars at the Israeli soldiers, the air force was called in, and an airstrike hit the vehicle carrying the fighters, killing its four passengers.

All of the gunmen were suspected militants from "Shuhada al-Yarmouk," an IS offshoot which controls the area.

The confrontation appeared to be the first of its kind between Israel and Islamic State-affiliated forces based in Syria.

Lerner said none of the Israeli soldiers, from the Golani Brigade, were wounded in the clash.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu congratulated the soldiers who 'successfully repelled an attempted attack on the convergence point of three borders'.

He added: 'Our forces are prepared on our northern border, and we won't let ISIS elements or other hostile elements use the cover of the war in Syria to establish themselves next to our borders.'

Israel seized 1,200 sq. km (460 sq. miles) of the Golan from Syria in the Six-Day War of 1967 and later annexed it in a move never recognised by the international community.

Israel has been largely unaffected by the Syrian civil war next door.

While avoiding being drawn into the internal Syrian conflict, Israel attacks Syrian military targets when fire, even unintentional, spills over the demarcation line.

The Israeli army holds the Syrian government accountable for any fire from its territory, regardless of the source.

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