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IRAN

Israeli drone crashes in ball of fire

January 29, 2012 | By Guy Azriel, CNN

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An unmanned Israeli airplane capable of reaching parts of Iran crashed during an experimental flight Sunday, the Israel Defense Forces said.

The Eitan-type drone spun in the air, lost a wing and crashed in a ball of fire, an unnamed witness told IDF Radio.

There were no injuries reported, and the cause of the crash is being investigated, the IDF said.

Israel unveiled the Eitan drone nearly two years ago, announcing in an unusual public demonstration of the plane's capabilities that it could fly 1,000 km (620 miles) -- putting western Iran within range.

The Israeli drone aircraft, the Eitan, is pictured in February 2010.

The plane was initially designed to gather intelligence, but can be modified to carry missiles, the company that makes it said at the unveiling in February 2010.

IDF Lt. Col. Shlomo Nissim declined to go into details about the plane's abilities, but said: "The future capabilities of this vehicle will allow us to carry whatever is needed in this vehicle."

Iran drone unveiled in 2010

Israel Aerospace Industries general manager Tommy Silbering said the drone could stay aloft 24 to 36 hours.

"It will be a major weapons system of future war," he said.

The name Eitan is a Hebrew word meaning strong.

The drone has a 26m (85-foot) wingspan and 1200-horsepower engine, the manufacturer said at the launch.

Israel has at least three different types of unmanned aircraft, the IDF said in December.

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