

Mossad kidnaps Iranian ex-official

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A former Iranian Defense Ministry official, who was reported missing in Turkey last month, has reportedly been kidnapped by Israeli secret services.

Alireza Askari, 63, was then taken to the United States by the Israeli spy agency Mossad, informed sources said.

Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki had earlier said that Iran will send a team of diplomats to Turkey to find out how the former deputy defense minister mysteriously disappeared while on a private trip to Istanbul.

According to informed sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not allowed to speak to the media, Turkey's secret services also helped the Israeli spy agency in kidnapping the former Iranian defense official.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini has said that Tehran hopes the sensitive issue would be resolved through diplomatic channels.

The Riyadh-based Saudi newspaper Al-Watan first reported the disappearance of the former Iranian official last month.

According to the paper, Askari arrived in Istanbul from Damascus, Syria, early February and then checked into a hotel that he never checked out of. Mysterious circumstances surrounding his disappearance have sparked suggestions that the former official has been kidnapped.

Al-Watan speculated that the former deputy defense minister would either have been abducted by Mossad and CIA agents, or left Turkey with a different passport.

The Zionist regime has reportedly stepped up security measures at its diplomatic missions around the world following the news of its secret services' involvement in the disappearance of the former Iranian official.

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