

Spy Wars: How Turkey Turned the Tables on Israel



In the Middle East, where the scent of oil mingles with gunpowder, the fiercest battles are often fought in the shadows. These are not measured by tanks or battlefield casualties, but by intelligence, communication networks, and the silent recruitment and exploitation of individuals.

In recent years, Turkey has stepped into this domain with increasing force, altering the intelligence game in the region particularly with Israel. Not through a fleeting victory, but by showcasing its counterintelligence capabilities and redefining the rules of espionage on its own soil.

The defining chapter of this hidden war is the now-infamous “Metron Operation,” in which Turkey exposed an espionage ring accused of working for Mossad, Israel’s foreign intelligence agency. But this operation was no anomaly it marked a climax in a long-standing intelligence tug-of-war between Ankara and Tel Aviv.

This report delves into the intricate details of this confrontation, tracing the covert and digital battlefield, and unpacking its implications and messages.

Caught in Turkey’s Counterintelligence Trap

At dawn on October 3, 2025, Turkish intelligence launched a sophisticated sting codenamed “Metron” a name cryptic in itself, with no apparent connection to agents, cities, or known spy jargon. In truth, the name was a coded message.

Coordinated raids in Istanbul, led by Turkish intelligence, anti-terror units, and the public prosecutor’s office, targeted a seemingly unremarkable Turkish man named Serkan Çiçek. But investigations quickly revealed this was an alias. His real name was Mehmet Fatih Kılıç, a man who had changed his identity after drowning in debt.

Çiçek worked as a private investigator and had opened a modest agency called “Pandora Investigations” in 2020. He handled routine civil cases, surveillance services, and open-market information sales until the wrong buyer came knocking.

-One day, he received an enticing offer via an encrypted messaging app: a four day job worth \$4,000, paid in cryptocurrency. Given his financial woes, the proposal was hard to resist.

Shockingly, the contact who hired Çiçek was a fictional digital identity named “Faisal Rashid,” managed by a cyber unit within Mossad. But the Turkish intelligence service had already begun piecing together the broader network through digital intercepts, phone tracking, and surveillance footage.

As Çiçek carried out the assignment, Turkish agents tracked his movements and communications. When suspicions solidified, authorities launched simultaneous raids and arrested Tuğrul Han Deep, a well-known Turkish lawyer. Behind his

polished office and tailored suits, he ran a covert trade in sensitive data.

Han Deep had been selling legal reports and confidential data to individuals secretly affiliated with Mossad including local investigators who believed they were working for media or research firms. His intelligence became a bridge between internal Turkish affairs and foreign operatives.

This was not a simple bust. It was a reverse intelligence operation that flipped the surveillance onto Mossad itself. The agents thought they were infiltrating Istanbul, but were, in fact, walking into a trap. Every message, transaction, and step had been closely monitored.

Turkish sources say this cell is just one among several. Days after “Metron,” another suspect, Osman Çelik, was arrested for sheltering Tuğrul Han Deep evidence that Turkey’s hunt is ongoing.

Yet, the real victory wasn’t in the arrests, but in what the operation revealed: Mossad’s new modus operandi no longer relied on planted spies, but on recruiting locals people in economic distress using money and digital tools to buy temporary loyalties.

Palestinians at the Heart of the Game

For years, Mossad maintained a covert presence in Turkey, building a complex network to monitor Palestinian figures and anti-Israel activists, as well as Iranian movements and other perceived regional threats.

Çiçek’s assignment is a prime example: he was tasked with surveilling a Palestinian activist critical of Israel, residing in Istanbul’s Bağakşehir district. He downplayed the task during interrogation, calling it a financial scam, but converging intelligence proved it was a calculated surveillance mission aimed at mapping Palestinian movements.

Some reports indicate that Çiçek was gathering data on senior Hamas official Zaher Jabarin—part of a wider Israeli plan to assassinate him after a failed attempt in Doha. This underscores Israel’s dangerous intentions and its direct targeting of resistance leaders on Turkish soil.

Mossad’s activity in Turkey has intensified due to its role as a hub for exiled Palestinians, including politicians, activists, academics, and even members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. This growing presence has made Turkey a focal point for Mossad operations.

The agency views Turkey as both a threat and an intelligence opportunity. This was made clear in 2024 when Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar publicly vowed to pursue Hamas leaders “everywhere”—including Turkey. This open challenge to Ankara signaled a shift beyond traditional diplomatic lines.

Following the eruption of “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” and unprecedented regional escalation, Israel revived its assassination policy beyond Palestinian territories. Ankara responded forcefully, with Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya warning Israel against any intelligence or assassination activities on Turkish soil. Security agencies followed up with strict countermeasures.

Compared to most Arab states, Turkey offers Palestinians relative safety, political space, and legal protections. This makes it an attractive operational base—and a prime Mossad target.

Many Palestinians in Turkey participate in media and academic spaces, maintain contact with Gaza and the West Bank, and form social circles that Mossad sees as rich intelligence mines. These can reveal political hierarchies, funding routes, and logistics networks.

Thus, Mossad doesn’t merely view Turkey as a monitoring ground, but as a strategic platform for indirect psychological operations and information warfare. Targeting individuals in Turkey sends chilling signals to broader Palestinian networks.

A Silent War Without Bullets

Israel has built global surveillance networks under the guise of private security firms, consultancies, and academic institutions. Turkey has not been spared. Mossad’s approach in Turkey is pragmatic and multilayered. It relies on digital tools and seemingly legitimate fronts like private investigation offices, allowing for discreet data collection. Financial incentives remain key turning economic hardship into a recruitment tool.

Agents use encrypted apps and fictional identities like “Faisal Rashid” to communicate securely across borders. Local intermediaries, often lawyers or data brokers, act as buffers between Mossad and raw intelligence sources.

This layered strategy links local operatives to handlers in Europe or Asia, reducing the risk of exposure.

Yet, Turkey’s operations especially “Metron” have disrupted this rhythm. They not only dismantled a Mossad ring, but exposed its operational doctrine: using Turkey as a theater of operations and recruiting unwitting locals.

In the past three years, Turkey has conducted five major counter-espionage operations, revealing how deeply Israel had penetrated the country’s intelligence environment.

For instance, in December 2022, Turkish agents arrested seven of nine suspected Mossad-linked private investigators. In 2023, they uncovered the

“Ghost Cell,” 56 people spread across nine Mossad-run networks based in Tel Aviv. That same year, 17 suspects were charged with planning kidnappings and assassinations.

In early 2024, more than 40 people were arrested after a failed attempt to abduct a Palestinian engineer tied to Israel’s Iron Dome breaches in 2015 and 2016.

Later, in September 2024, Turkey captured the so-called “Mossad mastermind” in Turkey—Kosovar national Liridon Rexhepi who managed Mossad’s digital financial transfers for drone reconnaissance and psychological pressure campaigns against Palestinians.

Strategically, Turkey has turned these revelations into internal morale boosters and international leverage. Domestically, they affirm state strength. Regionally, they warn Israel that its covert games carry diplomatic costs.

A Counterstrike With Strategic Messaging

Turkey didn’t quietly expose the spies. Instead, it opted for a bold, public-facing strategy naming suspects, revealing evidence, and detailing communication paths. This broke Mossad’s element of surprise and disoriented any remaining sleeper cells.

For Israel, these leaks are a major embarrassment, tarnishing the Mossad’s myth of invincibility. The disclosures came during the Gaza war, amplifying their symbolic weight. Where Mossad once operated in the shadows, Turkey now forces it into the public eye.

The exposure moved beyond media into courtrooms. Suspects face formal charges of espionage and endangering national security. This legal framing strips the espionage of ambiguity and declares it a punishable crime not a backroom affair.

Turkey’s strategy is clear: to assert that its sovereignty is not up for grabs. Even amid normalization efforts, Ankara insists the 2022 security agreement with Israel—meant to protect diplomatic missions was violated. Mossad’s operations clearly breached the no-assassinations clause.

Each Turkish intelligence press release now serves as a deterrent, crafted with political intent. These aren’t just spy games they’re power plays.

And Turkey’s message isn’t limited to Israel. Tehran, too, has faced similar accusations. In 2019, an Iranian diplomat was arrested for his alleged role in assassinating opposition figure Masoud Molavi in Istanbul.

Western capitals are also watching. With its spy ring busts, Ankara sends a clear

signal to all foreign agencies: Turkey is not an open playground.

President Erdoğan has leaned into this message, using key anniversaries and speeches to elevate the profile of Turkish intelligence and assert control over the domestic security narrative.

The Digital Frontier of Intelligence Warfare

Today, Turkey's approach to counterintelligence is preemptive. No longer reactive, it now relies on AI, behavioral analytics, and data mining to intercept threats before they materialize.

By studying Mossad's tactics in Iran and Lebanon, Turkey is building its own offensive and defensive playbook. It recognizes that this silent war demands precision, foresight, and a deep understanding of adversarial networks.

Just hours after Ankara unveiled the dismantling of the largest Mossad cell on its soil, Israel responded with a targeted assassination of senior Hamas leader Saleh al-Aroui in Beirut. The near-simultaneity of these events reinforced Ankara's conviction: preemptive counterespionage isn't just policy it's necessity.

In this spy war, it's not merely about catching agents it's about reshaping regional intelligence norms and elevating Turkey as a sovereign power not just in military or diplomatic terms, but through mastery of intelligence itself.