

DID IRAN HACK OUR DRONE?

I've been saying for some time that America's hubris about drones will end as soon as one of our antagonists figures out how to hack them.

Which is why it's interesting that Iran has updated its claims to have "shot down" an American drone to suggest they had "brought it down." (Note, I found this statement on the Mehr website, but not the Fars one.)

The wreckage of the Lockheed-Martin RQ-170 Sentinel stealth drone was largely intact after it was downed, the Fars news agency said.

"Iran's army has downed an intruding RQ-170 American drone in eastern Iran," Arabic-language al-Alam TV said, quoting an anonymous source.

"The spy drone, which has been downed with little damage, was seized by the armed forces," the news network added.

The cyber warfare unit managed to take over controls of the drone and bring it down, a military official said, according to the TV.

An unnamed military official also told the Fars that Iran's response "will not be limited to the country's borders."
[my emphasis]

And after some initial doubts that the Iranian claims were correct, ISAF has now admitted that they lost control of a drone last week.

The UAV to which the Iranians are referring may be a US unarmed reconnaissance aircraft that had been flying a mission over western Afghanistan late last week. The operators of the UAV lost control of the

aircraft and had been working to determine its status.

Though the US remains coy over whether DOD was operating the drone (suggesting an Afghan mission) or the CIA was (suggesting a non-Afghan mission).

Although the Sentinel was developed for the Air Force, the U.S. official declined to confirm whether it was the U.S. military or the U.S. intelligence community operating the drone at the time of the incident.

Mind you, lurking in the background are the two recent attacks on Iran—the assassination of Hassan Moqaddam and the explosion in Isfahan. With both those previous explosions, Iran has officially offered conflicting stories about whether or not there was an explosion or why. If the drone was conducting reconnaissance of missile runs over Iran, both sides might say Iran “brought it down” to avoid discussions of where the drone was operating.

Remember, though: less than two months ago, Wired revealed that someone had gotten keylogger software onto Creech Air Force Base’s system in Nevada. So someone already infiltrated the Air Force drone system. It’s just not clear who did so.

Update: Also remember the probable disinformation from a few weeks back saying that the Israelis deliberately let Hezbollah take down one of its drones over Lebanon, which it then detonated to blow up a weapons depot. One reason the ISAF might admit to losing a drone is if it wasn’t their drone.

Update: This appears to confirm the Iranians were right. Though I would suggest both sides still might be lying about aspects of this.