

# Israeli firm in running for

**DON LAVERY**  
EXCLUSIVE

AN Israeli government-owned company is expected to be in the running to win a multi-million-euro order to supply the Defence Forces with 10 million bullets — even though Israel is suspected of using fake Irish passports in the murder of a Hamas militant.

While the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Garda are still investigating the use of false Irish passports by a hit team of over two dozen agents who murdered a Hamas leader in Dubai in January, a government-owned armaments company, Israel Military Industries, is likely to be a front runner in the competition.

Israel's secret service, Mossad, is believed to be behind the killing of Hamas military commander Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in a hotel room on January 20, but the country's ambassador to Ireland told Foreign Affairs Minister Micheal Martin that he knew nothing about it.

The Defence Forces wants to buy 10 million rounds of

5.56 x 45mm ammunition, used by the Army's standard infantry rifle, the Steyr Aug, over a five-year period. Israel has supplied such ammunition in the past.

Bids for the contract have to be in by April 27, and Israel Military Industries is seen as a key competitor.

A decision on who wins the tender competition will end

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# Defence Forces arms deal

up on the desk of Taoiseach Brian Cowen, who has taken over the defence portfolio in the wake of Willie O'Dea's resignation.

The SS109 round sought by the Army is a standard Nato bullet able to penetrate a steel helmet at 600m and is produced by a large number of countries, including Australia, the UK, and India; but Israeli

ammunition is competitively priced and of a high standard.

The *Sunday Independent* highlighted last year how Israel won a series of lucrative Irish military contracts which included: a €2.37m contract with Elbit Systems Limited for surveillance systems mounted in a new fleet of South African armoured vehicles for Ireland; a €780,000

contract with Aeronautics Defense Systems for a fleet of Orbiter robot spy planes which have been used in Chad; a €2.5m contract with Rabintex Industries Ltd for 12,000 helmets for the Defence Forces; and a €1.5m artillery fire control system from Elbit Systems Limited for the Army's 105mm light-artillery guns.

When the contracts were raised in the Dail by Fianna Fail TD Chris Andrews, Mr O'Dea, the then defence minister, said the tender competitions were open to companies in individual countries in accordance with the terms of the UN, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and EU arms embargos or restrictions.