

**NEW IDF CHIEF INHERITS ONGOING IRAN, HAMAS, AND
HEZBOLLAH CONFLICTS**

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Isranet Daily Briefing, January 17, 2019

<https://www.isranet.org/daily-briefing/4574/>

TRUDEAU SAYS HE WILL ‘CONTINUE TO CONDEMN THE BDS MOVEMENT’ AT ST. CATHARINES TOWN HALL: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has given a full-throated defence of his condemnation of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement...”We need to understand, as well, that anti-Semitism has also manifested itself not just as in targeting of individuals but it is also targeting a new condemnation or an anti-Semitism against the very state of Israel,” he said. The prime minister added that Canada must be very careful “not to sanction this new frame around anti-Semitism and undue criticism of Israel.” To support his case, Trudeau pointed to the so-called “Three Ds” test for separating criticism of the Jewish state and anti-Semitism: demonization, double standards, and delegitimization of Israel. “When you have movements like BDS that single out Israel, that seek to delegitimize and in some cases demonize, when you have students on campus dealing with things like Israel apartheid weeks that make them fearful of actually attending campus events because of their religion in Canada, we have to recognize that there are things that aren’t acceptable, not because of foreign policy concerns but because of Canadian values,” Trudeau said. ([Huffington Post](#), Jan. 16, 2019)

[A Full Plate Awaits Israel’s New IDF Chief: Yoav Limor, *Algemeiner*, Jan. 14, 2019](#)— It’s not surprising that Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot spent his last night as army chief in the command bunker underneath IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv...

[Is the IDF Ready for All-Out War?: Yaakov Lappin, *BESA*, Jan. 10, 2019](#)— The question of just how ready the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is for war has dominated Israel’s headlines in recent weeks.

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A FULL PLATE AWAITS ISRAEL'S NEW IDF CHIEF

Yoav Limor

[*Algemeiner*](#), Jan. 14, 2019

It's not surprising that Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot spent his last night as army chief in the command bunker underneath IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv, closely following the type of operation that has been synonymous with his tenure. It was full throttle up to the very last moment, one final mission before he handed in his dog tags.

As usual in the Middle East, nothing will change when Eizenkot is replaced. There's enough Syria for everyone (and Iran, Hezbollah, Gaza, and a few other headaches). Incoming IDF chief Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi wasn't in the command bunker Friday night — he was enjoying his last worry-free Shabbat evening — but his deputy, Maj. Gen. Eyal Zamir, was there as part of the process of passing the baton to the next IDF leaders.

An airstrike in Damascus on Friday, which has already been attributed to Israel, apparently targeted the logistics center Iran operates at Damascus International Airport — a separate and secured loading dock, where Iran does as it pleases. Several hours before the attack, an Iranian military plane landed in Damascus and unloaded its cargo. This was quite possibly the impetus for the strike, which according to satellite images, caused immense damage. Syria, per its custom, claimed that it shot down most of the missiles fired by Israeli warplanes. These claims don't always need to be taken at face value. Assad also has to cater to public opinion — at home and abroad — and he has to explain (domestically) why Israel is still attacking his country unhindered. As for the international community,

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he has to explain why Iran is operating its own secure terminal at the airport in Damascus, as if it were in Tehran.

It was hard not to notice the Russian silence on Saturday in the wake of the rather obvious attack. Ever since the downing of the Russian spy plane last September, Israeli-Russian relations have chilled. Israel was strongly rebuked, including by accusations that it was endangering Russian forces in Syria and regional security. Relations have warmed a bit in recent weeks, and Russia turning a blind eye to the attack Friday night (which didn't jeopardize its personnel) is a possible indication of this. Past experience teaches us that Israel, too, most likely informed the Russians prior to the operation. Israel would be wise to continue its recent policy of treading carefully as it pertains to operating in Syria. This is now Kochavi's job.

The good tidings on the northern front were somewhat tempered on Saturday by Hamas' video revelations regarding the IDF's botched operation in Gaza in November. Although Hamas invested a great deal in the video, it revealed nothing new of significance. But it did provide another glimpse into the drama that unfolded that night — from the moment the undercover soldiers were detected at a Hamas roadblock, to their narrow escape under heavy air cover and the subsequent round of fighting between Israel and Hamas.

It's safe to assume that this story isn't over. Hamas apparently has more information, some of which can potentially cause considerable damage. The Israeli mission inquiry is proceeding apace. Initial findings have already been presented twice to Eizenkot and the head of the Military Intelligence Directorate. The investigators were asked to fill in certain blanks and, on Monday, just before Eizenkot steps out the door, these additional findings will also be presented.

The final conclusions will be up to Kochavi. In television interviews on Saturday, Eizenkot said the operation wasn't inherently flawed, and that a chain of unfortunate events resulted in the outcome. But the information that has been accumulated thus far paints a different picture, one that raises serious questions about the operation, its approval, the conduct of the soldiers, and the makeup of their team — not to mention questions about structural changes within the unit that carried out the operation and the chain of command.

The operational inquiry (headed by Maj. Gen. Nitzan Alon) will surely lead to many professional conclusions and perhaps personal ones as well. Within the unit, there's been bad blood for the past two months, which must also be drained

quickly. The operation in Gaza has already failed. Along with mitigating the fallout, it's now time to internalize the proper lessons and turn this failure into future operational success. Kochavi will have to lead the way.

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IS THE IDF READY FOR ALL-OUT WAR?

Yaakov Lappin

[BESA](#), Jan. 10, 2019

The question of just how ready the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is for war has dominated Israel's headlines in recent weeks. The issue came to the fore following the stormy end to the 10-year tenure of IDF Ombudsman Maj. Gen. Yitzhak Brick. Brick released a scathing report and multiple statements claiming that the military's ground forces are grossly underprepared for conflict. He went so far as to say, during an address to the Knesset's State Control Committee, that "the IDF is undergoing a process of deterioration that has reached its peak in recent years."

Brick's alarming assessments have been outright rejected by military chiefs, including outgoing IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot and the Commanding Officer of the ground forces, Maj. Gen. Kobi Barak. While Eizenkot has ordered the military to examine Brick's claims, he has consistently affirmed that the IDF's war readiness has improved dramatically in recent years. Eizenkot focused his four years as Chief of Staff on improving readiness, meaning that Brick's criticisms are being leveled directly at the heart of his efforts and legacy.

Dr. Eado Hecht, a researcher at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, is a defense analyst specializing in military theory and military history and a lecturer at Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan. Hecht also lectures at the IDF Command and General Staff College. In conversation with the author, Hecht agreed with Brick and other critical voices who think the IDF is unprepared - but added that this is not a zero-sum argument. "There are areas in which the IDF has done excellent work, and there is a reason why foreign militaries come here to learn from it," said Hecht. "On the other hand, there are areas in which the IDF is not good enough."

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Hecht explained that the way in which Brick and military command measure war readiness is different. To understand this difference, it's necessary to dive into the IDF's history. The Second Lebanon War of 2006, Hecht said, was the second-lowest point in the history of Israel's military. The lowest was in the years 1950-53. "The difference between these two points is that while in 1950 to 1953, the IDF did not know how to conduct routine security missions and did not know how to conduct major wars, in 2006, the IDF knew how to do continuous security in an excellent manner," Hecht said. "Hence, it defeated the Palestinians in the 'Ebb and Flow' War [the so-called 'Al-Aqsa Intifada' of 2000 to 2006]."

However, it was during those years of the Al-Aqsa Intifada that new concepts were taking hold regarding the future of warfare. The concepts were that there will be no "big, high-intensity wars" anymore, and in the unlikely event that such wars do occur, they should be fought with high-quality intelligence and through the use of long-range firepower, mostly delivered by fighter jet, to destroy enemy targets. As a result, "the IDF deliberately neglected the necessary requirements for ground combat," said Hecht. By the time Lt. Gen. (ret.) Dan Halutz became Chief of Staff in 2005, the ground forces had suffered major neglect, leading to significant failures in the war that erupted with Hezbollah the following summer.

The strategic gains Israel received from that war came "despite tactical failures," noted Hecht. Those failures led the next Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. (ret.) Gabi Ashkenazi, to demand a "return to basics" for the ground forces. They underwent a major upgrade during Ashkenazi's tenure. But then, under the leadership of Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon and Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. (ret.) Benny Gantz, this trend was stopped. The older trend of focusing on airpower and intelligence, which dominated before the Second Lebanon War, made a comeback, according to Hecht. The current outgoing Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot, "brought back Ashkenazi's trend," Hecht said. "However, the reference point for Eizenkot and the General Staff compares today's IDF to the military of 2006. Brick's reference points compare today's IDF to the military when it was at its peak, 40 to 50 years ago."

The bottom line, said Hecht, is that compared to its performance in 2006, the IDF of 2019 has "undergone a terrific improvement." At the same time, he warned, there is a need to take stock of the growing threat posed by Hezbollah, which today is equivalent to some five infantry divisions, in terms of relative power. "Hezbollah is like the PLO and the Syrian army in Lebanon in 1982 combined. True, they [Hezbollah] do not have tanks, but they have many things that the Syrians

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and the PLO did not have then,” said Hecht, pointing to powerful guided anti-tank missiles as one example. “They are moving ahead with the fortification of southern Lebanon at a scale that did not exist before, and they are much more professional and skilled than the PLO was back then,” he said.

According to public sources, in 2006, Hezbollah’s forces in southern Lebanon were equal to perhaps two infantry brigades, and the organization was armed with far fewer anti-tank missiles, mortars, and other powerful weapons. Hezbollah today is some six times more powerful than what it was in 2006, said Hecht...[*To Read the Full Article Click the Following [Link](#)—Ed.*]

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A ONE-TIME OPPORTUNITY FOR ISRAEL IN THE GOLAN?

Michael Oren

[JNS](#), Dec. 25, 2018

Donald Trump’s decision to withdraw American troops from Syria shocked many in the United States and the Middle East. In Israel, most of the public discourse about this decision revolves around the challenges of this process, but we seem to be largely ignoring the question of what opportunities it may present: For one, could Israel, as compensation, secure a pledge from Washington to help it in times of war and on other vital diplomatic issues?

Given the recent discovery of Hezbollah’s grid of terror tunnels and Iran’s attempts to upgrade its offensive capabilities, it is reasonable to assume that Israel is closer than it has ever been in the last decade to a war in the northern sector. This could prove highly complex from a military standpoint and even a legal-diplomatic one: Most of Hezbollah’s arsenal of 130,000 projectiles is hidden under civilian homes. Neutralizing them would require investing considerable military resources and likely entail large civilian losses.

It is important to remember that in the last four military campaigns since 2006, Israel has had to ask the United States for additional ammunition, and we would

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probably have to do the same in a future war. Israel would also likely need diplomatic and legal backing to defend it against condemnations in the UN Security Council and the International Criminal Court.

The same opportunity exists regarding the situation opposite Hamas in the Gaza Strip: Israel can win a US commitment for the post-Hamas era there. Naturally, the IDF is capable of removing Hamas from the Gaza Strip on its own, but the question is who would take its place. Understandings could be reached with the United States — and through it, the Sunni world — on Gaza's rehabilitation and the establishment of an economic infrastructure for the civilian population there.

As Israel prepares for military campaigns in its north and south, as part of my position as deputy minister for public diplomacy at the Prime Minister's Office I am promoting a first-of-its-kind initiative to develop the Golan Heights. The goal is to have more than 100,000 Israelis move to the area over the next decade, thereby increasing the Israeli population there by five times, and to establish the necessary industrial and transportation infrastructure for such a move. My efforts have already gained widespread support domestically and internationally.

Now, given the fragile situation in Syria, Israel must reach a comprehensive understanding with the US on recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. This would send a message to our enemies about the decisive American position on the eternal Israeli ownership of the Golan Heights. It would be a good idea to make a large portion of these commitments public in multiple languages. Such a move would bolster America's somewhat bruised image in the Middle East, and even reinforce its ability to promote diplomatic processes and its position as a very effective mediator in possible peace negotiations.

It is no secret that during the Obama administration, the United States lost some of its status in the region. The Trump administration has taken several steps — from striking Syrian assets in response to Syrian President Bashar Assad's use of chemical weapons to pulling out of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran — to improve this situation. A commitment to aid Israel would be a continuation of this policy of improvement, presenting multiple possibilities not only for Israel but also for the Trump administration. The recent changes in the region present a one-time opportunity for Israel, and we should take advantage of it.

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IS EUROPE READY TO DEFEND ITSELF?

Yaroslav Trofimov

[*Wall Street Journal*](#), Jan. 4, 2019

The new Republican administration in Washington issued a blunt warning: Unless Europe quickly set up its own unified army, the U.S. would be compelled to undertake an “agonizing reappraisal” of its commitment to defend its European allies.

The year was 1953, and the main target of American ire was France, whose delay in ratifying the European Defense Community treaty, signed the previous year, meant that preparations for a federal European army had to be paused. But the pressure applied by the Eisenhower administration backfired spectacularly: A joyous choir of French lawmakers broke into the “Marseillaise” when France’s parliament finally rejected the treaty in August 1954. The idea of a joint European defense policy was shelved for decades.

Today, the push for European autonomy in defense—and even for a common European Union army—is gathering momentum again, in part because of doubts in many European capitals about President Donald Trump’s willingness to defend the continent against a renewed threat from Russia. Mr. Trump’s abrupt decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria, which prompted Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to resign, has added new urgency to the drive.

This time around, the revival of European defense integration is championed by French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, while the American president keeps lobbing angry tweets at the very idea. And inside Europe, the skeptics today aren’t in Paris but in the former Soviet vassal-states in the east that, despite all their misgivings, still view the U.S. as the only credible guarantor of their survival as independent nations. A historic swing in Europe’s public opinion, particularly in Germany—the EU’s most powerful state and one where trans-Atlantic cooperation was the bedrock of the political consensus since the end of World War II—has fueled this change.

Mr. Trump has described the EU as a “foe” and the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization as “obsolete,” and he has publicly questioned why American soldiers should die for a NATO ally like Montenegro. One recent opinion poll showed that Germans now rank Mr. Trump as the greatest threat to their country. In another, 73% of Germans described their relationship with the U.S. as “bad,” and 72% wanted a foreign policy more independent from Washington’s. “The shift in public opinion is due to a mix of disappointment and fear,” said Volker Perthes, director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, a think tank that advises the German government and parliament. “There is a fear that the U.S. will be less interested in Europe, and that the security commitments of the U.S. will no longer be reliable.” It was in this political environment that Ms. Merkel told the European Parliament in a landmark speech in November: “The times when we could fully rely on others have ended....If we Europeans want to survive as a community, we must make a greater effort to take our destiny into our own hands.”

Achieving such “strategic autonomy” became the EU’s official policy in 2016. Though calls by Mr. Macron and Ms. Merkel for a European army are largely rhetorical so far, several concrete initiatives to achieve that goal have been launched since then. Probably most significant is the \$15 billion European Defense Fund, which aims to spur Europe’s military industry and could limit the influence of American weapons manufacturers. Another new initiative is the so-called Permanent Structured Cooperation system, under which European armies seek to remove the barriers to joint action that stem from fielding so many different—and often incompatible—types of weapons. Addressing a frequently voiced demand of Mr. Trump, European governments have also raised their defense spending to get closer to the NATO target of 2% of each country’s GDP.

On the face of it, there is no reason why an economic giant like the EU shouldn’t be able to protect itself against Russia even without American help. Setting aside Britain (which seeks to continue to cooperate with the EU on security and defense even after leaving the bloc), the remaining EU’s population and defense budgets are roughly three times Russia’s size. France, the EU’s military powerhouse, spends almost as much as Russia on defense just by itself and operates an independent nuclear arsenal. All those sums, of course, are dwarfed by the U.S., whose military budget is nearly double the defense spending of the EU (minus the departing U.K.) and Russia combined. “Europe is addicted to the American security umbrella,” said Bruno Tertrais, deputy director of the Foundation for Strategic Research, a think tank that advises the French government. “But if the U.S.

weren't there, Europe would have found a way to defend itself.”

Yet there is a Catch-22 that makes these aspirations risky. Building up European defenses after seven decades of American protection would take time. Meanwhile, every move that Europe attempts in this direction spurs an American backlash, further undermining NATO's cohesion—and its deterrent capacity against a rapidly militarizing Russia. “We have to hedge. But it is a very tricky situation: When does the hedge become a wedge?” said François Heisbourg, a veteran French expert who advised Mr. Macron's presidential campaign on security and defense...

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[Prime Minister Denounces BDS at Town Hall Meeting \(Video\)](#): Anthony Housefather, *CBC*, Jan. 16, 2018—At last night's town hall meeting at Brock University, PM Justin Trudeau was asked to apologize for opposing BDS. Instead, he gave yet another forceful denunciation of a movement which makes pro-Israel students and, in particular, many Jewish students feel uncomfortable on college campuses and holds Israel to a different standard.

[The Challenges Ahead for Incoming IDF Chief of Staff Kochavi \(Video\)](#): *Breaking Israel News*, Jan. 16, 2019—Aviv Kochavi became the 22nd Chief of Staff of the IDF. As he assumes one of the most demanding jobs in the world, here's a look at some challenges ahead of him.

[Israel Air Force Invited to First-Ever Joint Exercise With Britain's RAF](#): *JNS*, Jan. 17, 2019—Israel's air force is to take part in its first-ever joint drill with the Royal Air Force in Britain in the most open level of cooperation between the two forces yet, *The Jewish Chronicle* reported on Tuesday.

[How Changing U.S. Policy Can Improve the Indo-Pacific Relationship](#): Brahma Chellaney, *Globe & Mail*, Nov. 21, 2018—The Indo-Pacific is emerging as the centre of global power and wealth, with security dynamics changing rapidly in the region.