

## Battles on the home front

**When our enemies are otherwise occupied, Israel's generals have no choice but to fight among themselves.**

By Amos Harel

Hezbollah is completing its (thus far relatively quiet ) takeover of Lebanon, Egypt is experiencing riots the likes of which it has not seen for more than 30 years, the Palestinian Authority is struggling to shake off the accusations ignited by Al Jazeera's leaked documents, Tunisia has exiled its tyrannical president and Iran is planning to inaugurate the Bushehr reactor. The Israeli big guns, however, have been mired in the affair of Maj. Gen. Yoav Galant's property on Moshav Amikam, and whether it should stop Galant from becoming the next chief of staff.

On Wednesday evening State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss gave Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein his findings concerning the affair. The seven-page document contains sharp criticism of Galant's conduct, especially regarding the plot where he planted olive trees. However, Lindenstrauss did not come up with a bottom line, and passed along the final decision to the attorney general.

Ten days ago, Weinstein told the High Court of Justice about new findings that the Turkel committee for senior appointments hadn't had at its disposal. In a case like this - and in the absence of clear evidence of malice or mendacity on Galant's part - it is possible the appointment will be reconfirmed once the land affair is investigated.

The Green Movement petitioned the High Court over the affair, and Weinstein has undertaken to reply by February 1. On February 6 the Greens will submit their response, and at that point there will be only three days until the appointment is supposed to be approved.

The nature of Weinstein's response will indicate whether he is likely to approve the slated appointment, delay it until the case is clarified (and here an important secondary problem crops up: Who will serve as chief of staff in the interim?) or scuttle Galant's promotion.

Did Galant sin by lying to the authorities over the lands affair? Several of the people who read the comptroller's report say that it does not say this, rather merely points out contradictions in Galant's answers. "If, nevertheless, Galant really did lie, he can't become chief of staff," even his supporters said to the media.

By implication, this is also the opinion of Defense Minister Ehud Barak, who appointed Galant. An interesting article by Alex Fishman in the daily Yedioth Ahronoth Wednesday indicates that Barak is preparing to emotionally disengage from his candidate if the attorney general vetos him. The piece also mentioned alternative candidates should Galant be disqualified: Defense Ministry director general Maj. Gen. (res. ) Udi Shani; Maj. Gen. Yair Naveh, who recently returned to the Israel Defense Forces as deputy chief of staff; and EI Al CEO Maj. Gen. (res. ) Eliezer Shkedy.

The three candidates are very qualified, but none was considered a realistic candidate in the past. Shani retired from the General Staff after a single stint and never headed a command or was deputy chief of staff. Naveh returned to the IDF after three years as a civilian, during which he was involved in real estate in India and managing the Jerusalem light rail project. Shkedy excelled as commander of the air force, but it seems his chances of becoming chief of staff were blocked after Dan Halutz's performance in the Second Lebanon War.

Barak does not mention another outside candidate who has all the required prerequisites: former deputy chief of staff Maj. Gen. (res. ) Moshe Kaplinsky. Barak did not agree even to interview Kaplinsky as a candidate for Defense Ministry director general about a year ago.

### **On lies and the military**

This week the court deliberated on the petition of Brig. Gen. Imad Fares against current Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi and the IDF authorities concerning the decision to terminate his military service. The IDF's response sanctifies truth and justifies Fares' ouster (he apparently lied to his commanders by not reporting that his wife was driving a military car at the time of an accident ).

This document has been extensively quoted as indirect proof that Galant cannot be chief of staff: If this is what happens to a brigadier general whose trustworthiness was questioned, what shall be done to a lieutenant general? The paradox is that the person who ousted Fares is Ashkenazi, whose probity is not looking good either in the context of the Harpaz document affair.

Fares' fate apparently will be sealed a few days after the chief-of-staff changeover. Fares, who served under Galant as a division commander in the Southern Command, hoped it would be the new chief of staff who makes a final decision on his case. If Ashkenazi does so, Fares has no chance of returning to the army. If Galant is appointed, he will not be able to touch any affair involving mendacious reporting with a 10-foot pole. In the best case, Fares might win the satisfaction of a moral victory over Ashkenazi. But he won't return to the IDF.

The demand that senior officers speak the truth, and only the whole truth, is appropriate and vital. However, anyone who is shocked by the conduct of Galant (or Ashkenazi, or Fares ) would do well to visit the officers training school, at Training Base 1, which taught them all. One of the best-liked instructors there has a regular exercise. The man opens his lecture with a question to the audience of several hundred cadets: How many of you have had a direct commander lie to you? Time after time, about 90 percent of the cadets raise a hand - and these are relatively young soldiers, a year and a half or two in the army, many from top units.

This week the Jerusalem Institute for Market Studies published a survey indicating that public confidence in the IDF is still high. However, it also emerges that older adults give the chief of staff a much higher grade than people aged 18 to 24, many of whom recently served or are still serving in the army.

The prevailing opinion in the IDF yesterday was that Galant's appointment will go through. Weinstein will express reservations, but ultimately a way to approve him will be found. This, of course, is a problematic compromise: Amikam's shadow will follow Galant, just as the Harpaz affair has blighted Ashkenazi's final months.

### **'The wrong Harpaz'**

In apparently fortuitous proximity to the deliberations on the lands affair, on Wednesday the State Prosecutor's Office informed Lt. Col. (res. ) Boaz Harpaz's attorneys that it has decided to indict him for forging a document in an attempt to influence the chief-of-staff appointment process