

Israeli Military Chief: IDF Is Fully Prepared for War

Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot sends letter to cabinet in wake of recent criticism of the military's preparedness by IDF ombudsman.

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Israeli armored vehicles take part in an army drill during a visit of Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman in the Golan Heights, Israel, August 7, 2018. Amir Cohen/Reuters

- Israel struck 200 targets in Syria in the past year and a half
- Israeli court orders state to compensate left-wingers whom troops tried to block from protest
- If Israel had to enter Gaza today, the Israeli army would have a big problem

In an unusual move, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot recently sent a detailed document to the members of the security cabinet and of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, in which he assured them that the Israel Defense Forces is in a state of full combat readiness.

Although it wasn't explicitly stated, the move seems to have been motivated, at least in part, by recent criticism of the military's preparedness by the IDF ombudsman, Maj. Gen. (res.) Yitzhak Brik.

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Eisenkot wrote to the ministers and MKs that the report on readiness was conducted as part of compliance with a law passed in 2008, in the wake of the

2006 Second Lebanon War, stipulating closer monitoring of the IDF's combat readiness. The report addresses the military's overall readiness as well as that of different branches and divisions. The readiness report in each area is signed by the relevant general.



Eisenkot wrote that the army is "at a high level of fitness and readiness for war with regard to any threat scenario. As the person responsible for the readiness of the army for war I state that the IDF is prepared for any mission required of it, an army with intelligence and air superiority, ground capability and rich operational experience that is tested daily in every arena of war."

However, he added, "Combat readiness will always be lacking. There are gaps and they exist alongside risk management and priorities. We, the commanders, are responsible for adjusting the process of building the force to preserving the IDF's quality and superiority in the present and for exploiting the window of opportunity to adapt the IDF to the challenges of the future."

The IDF said Tuesday that the army was more powerful now than at any other time in the past. The army argues that its combat concepts, quality of intelligence, procurement precision, the scope of its training and the state of spare parts and inventory are better than in previous years. Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who visited a military exercise in the north Tuesday, said, "I got the impression that we have an operational force that maneuvers at the highest possible level."



Lieberman and Eisenkot in an exercise in northern Israel, September 4, 2018. Ariel Hermoni

Despite the public statements made by top defense officials, it's clear that Brik's criticism hit a nerve. His remarks, and the audit reports published by the previous defense establishment comptroller Col. (res.) Hagai Tenenbaum-Erez, on the condition of the ground forces garnered marked attention from the security cabinet and Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee members, who asked for explanations. As reported by Haaretz, Brik sent two letters to committee members, in which he reported on gaps he had identified, inter alia, in the realm of personnel management. The ombudsman is expected to send the MKs another document shortly, in which he documents his impressions from a series of visits he made to ground forces units.

The strong disagreement with Brik and its coverage in the media has caused tension in the General Staff. At the end of August, Brik met with members of the General Staff forum and voices were reportedly raised at times. Lieberman, to whom the ombudsman is subordinate, has yet to respond publicly to his claims. However, at various opportunities Lieberman has expressed concern about the condition of some of the ground forces units, and in particular some of the reserve forces, which somewhat conflicts with the confidence in the IDF's capabilities that he conveys when speaking to the media.



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