

REVOLUTION IN THE INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

Aman, ISA and Mossad have recently undergone a series of significant organizational changes. What stands behind these major shifts?

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The IDF Military Intelligence Directorate (Aman), Mossad and ISA have recently undergone far-reaching changes. The most significant changes were introduced in the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate, where almost 1,000 officers changed positions and the organizational structure has been revolutionized.

This massive wave of changes is the result of the process known as the Arab Spring and of a dramatic technological revolution.

“Today’s intelligence systematically misses the most significant historic developments,” says a senior intelligence officer with respect to those major changes. “In the era of the Internet and the social networks, events take place at a mind-boggling pace. Processes that once took years are now being concluded within days and even hours.

However, beyond the regional instability, the really fateful change, as far as the intelligence agencies are concerned, has been a technological one. In the past, the primary intelligence effort was SigInt (Signals Intelligence, based on the spotting of electronic signals and monitoring of radio communication networks and telephone lines).

Today, no one uses telephones or radio transceivers anymore. The enemy has evolved into an entity that is usually amorphous, with no definite chain of command, and each independent intelligence objective keeps a number of different cellular telephones which it uses to send written messages through E-Mail, the social networks and WhatsApp, or uses the Internet-based Skype network that offers basic encryption capabilities.

The entire concept and all of the resources should be revised in order to keep on collecting SigInt in this day and age, and that is only one example of the change.

“Generally, the intelligence community must adapt itself and provide real-time information about Jihad organizations and arms transfers, but also about enemy targets in caves and in urban areas – so that the information may be handed over promptly and the targets may be ‘treated’ by precision-guided munitions. The intelligence systems developed in order to track and monitor any object within spaces

that can be as large as dozens of square kilometers are sometimes inconceivable. As a result of all this, today's intelligence is radically different even compared to the methods of the last decade."

One of the most significant changes made in the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate has been the appointment of a new commander to the special operations layout.

The new commander, A, had advanced through the ranks of Intelligence Unit 504, a specialist HumInt unit. He was placed in charge of a series of elements which had thus far been subordinated directly to the Head of the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate. This position did not exist before and involves command of a substantial number of well-known and less well-known units (the best known special units of the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate are Sayeret Matkal and the technological R&D unit, regarded as a sort of special operations laboratory, much like the workshop headed by the "Q" character in the James Bond movies).

The new position augments the position of Head of the Operational Employment Department, manned by a Brigadier-General, which came into effect about four years ago. The Head of the Operational Employment Department serves as the director of operations (G3) of the entire Intelligence Directorate.

Other officers at Brig. Gen. rank serving in the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate include the commander of the prestigious 8200 SigInt & cyber unit and the IDF Chief Intelligence Officer, Brig. Gen. Eli Ben-Moshe. The standing orders prescribe that the IDF Chief Intelligence Officer serve as the Directorate's chief of staff in addition to his role as Chief Corps Officer, in charge of the build-up of the force throughout the Directorate/Corps.

Another recent change involves the fact that the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate has significantly reduced a specific technological element within the 9900 VisInt unit (the unit in charge of collecting visual intelligence from surveillance satellites and other visual sensors). Instead of that unit, a new technological unit has been established under command of the IDF Chief Intelligence Officer's HQ. The new unit is charged with providing a standard technological infrastructure to all the various intelligence elements, notably the SigInt unit, the VisInt unit, the special operations units and the HumInt elements (Human Intelligence units that employ human assets - agents).

At the same time, an additional colonel's position was created for an officer who would serve as the Intelligence Directorate's director of information systems, and hundreds of new positions were created for the IDF's fastest-growing activity – cyber warfare, whose offensive operations are the responsibility of Unit 8200 (while the defensive operations are the responsibility of the IDF C4I Directorate's Lotem unit).

It should be noted that while all other IDF units face severe budget cuts and massive layoffs (since the beginning of 2014, 1,000 regular servicepersons left the IDF, and the total number of regulars to be laid off is expected to reach 2,500 by the end of the year), the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate is the only element enjoying additional budgets and establishment expansions. In fact, the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate is at the top of the scale of priorities of Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon and IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz – even ahead of the IAF.

But are these changes and establishment expansions justified even in view of the organizational upheaval and occupational instability they are causing?

A senior IDF intelligence officer said in response to this question that the recent revolution is the outcome of a comprehensive program consolidated by the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate over the last few years. The Head of the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate, Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, has been leading this program.

The comprehensive program, designated “Ma’ase Aman” (A Work of Art, in Hebrew) has recently reached its implementation stage. The program had been developed at a series of workshops attended by hundreds of IDF and Intelligence Directorate officers and endorsed, naturally, by the IDF General Staff.

The objective of the program was to adapt the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate to the dramatic changes that had taken place in the intelligence world, and in addition to the recent changes outlined above, it included revisions that were introduced last year, such as the establishment of a new desk known as “The Regional Desk” at the IDF Intelligence Analysis Division. The new desk deals with phenomena that had not existed in the past, like the process of Islamization and the massive presence of Jihad combatants in the region. The IDF Military Intelligence Directorate also led a comprehensive program known as IBW (Intelligence Based Warfare), whose objective was to deliver tactical intelligence all the way down to the tactical echelon, namely – the platoon engaged in combat on the ground.

However, the crown jewel of the changes included in the “Ma’ase Aman” process was a program designated “Network Intelligence”, in the context of which all of the elements of the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate, which were almost totally isolated from one another, should communicate. Later on, the same would be applied to all branches of the IDF in the context of a program endorsed by the Chief of Staff and designated “Networked IDF”.

So, instead of the previous breakdown into different intelligence activities, where each field of activity had developed its own systems, an “infrastructure layer” and an “application layer” were established throughout the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate, so that all of the elements within the Directorate may communicate with one another on the basis of the same database and through a standard network and the same computer application.

Mossad & ISA

Substantial organizational changes have taken place within the other intelligence agencies of the State of Israel, ISA (Israel Security Agency) and Mossad.

At ISA, the most important, most significant change was concluded last year and included a substantial reinforcement of the cyber activities in the context of a cyber-SigInt division. ISA had recruited extensively for its cyber activities, and is currently regarded as one of the leading agencies in this field – as it is the agency in charge of securing all national infrastructure and utility systems.

The Mossad has also adapted itself to the era of cyber warfare. The world media attributed numerous cyber warfare operations to this agency, including the attack against the Iranian nuclear reactors using the Stuxnet computer virus.

The Mossad has undergone an organizational upheaval in recent years. Pursuant to the retirement of former Mossad chief Meir Dagan, not less than three division heads left the organization as well, including the heads of two of the primary divisions, Tevel and Caesarea. The transition of Yossi Cohen, formerly the deputy chief of Mossad, to the position of Chairman of the National Security Council in late 2013 also generated serious shockwaves.

Cohen was regarded within the agency as a natural-born operative. His replacement, N, came from the technical division and his recent appointment as deputy chief has not gone down very well.

Above all, the agency is currently coping with yet another structural change led by Mossad chief Tamir Pardo. In the context of this change, the agency's staff is being reinforced and responsibilities that were once the exclusive domain of the operational divisions are being assigned to it. This change, too, is not going down without internal opposition – and that's putting it mildly.

Within the Mossad there is a general sense of cutbacks after the years under Meir Dagan, during which the agency had grown substantially. Pardo is not interested in expanding the agency.

Does that mean that the agency will become less productive with regard to its intelligence and operational yields, or that it will become stagnant? It is too early to tell.

One thing is certain, though: the relations between Israel's three intelligence agencies – the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate, ISA and Mossad – are the best ever. In the past there were times when the heads of these agencies were actually hostile to each other, but that is not the case at present, possibly under the influence of the era of infinite information, where the different organizations have no choice but to cooperate in order to elicit significant snippets of information from the countless texts and signals running through the web.