

Israel may buy
Phalanx from U.S.

Yossi Melman, Barak Ravid
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IDF to dismantle 2.4 kilometers of separation fence at cost of NIS 50m

Army chief Ashkenazi:
The government, not
the military, should
determine barrier route

By Amos Harel

After a five-year battle, the defense establishment has finally given in: It agreed to dismantle a 2.4-kilometer stretch of the separation fence north of Qalqilyah. The move will return 2,600 dunams of agricultural land to its Palestinian owners.

The dismantled stretch will be replaced by 4.9 kilometers of fencing closer to the Green Line, at a cost of more than NIS 50 million. The new route largely follows the one proposed years ago by the Council for Peace and Security.

The change apparently stemmed in part from the views of new Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi, who believes the government, not the IDF, should determine the precise route of the fence.

The fence in this area was built in 2003, and residents of several nearby Palestinian villages promptly petitioned the High Court of Justice against it. They won several legal victories over the years: The court ordered the fence be moved closer to the Green Line around Bil'in, Alfei Menashe and Tzofim.

In the latter ruling, issued in 2006, the court lambasted the state for having concealed the fact that the original route of the fence, east of Tzofim, was dictated not by security considerations, but by the settlement's expansion plans. In the Bil'in ruling in 2007, the court reiterated that the fence's route must be dictated by security, not a settlement's expansion plans.

Despite these precedents, however, the defense establishment initially refused to change the route north of Tzofim. Later, the state agreed to move the fence closer to the Green Line, but not all the way, which would return 1,500 out of 3,000 dunams of land confiscated from local Palestinians. It explained this offer by say-

ing that the original route had passed four kilometers east of the settlements Kochav Yair and Tzur Yigal – far more than needed to keep them out of the range of gunmen on the other side of the fence.

In 2006, the Council for Peace and Security filed an *amicus curiae* brief in which it argued that a route very near the Green Line would satisfy the demands of security. In June 2007, however, the defense establishment told the court that it viewed this alternative as "inferior in terms of security." IDF representatives also took this line in meetings with then-defense minister Amir Peretz.

But Ashkenazi, who was appointed in February 2007, was outraged when he later discovered that the real reason for the original route was not security needs, but rather plans to set up a new neighborhood north of Tzofim. He told Peretz at the time that he no longer wanted IDF officers defending the fence's route in court. The route is a political issue, he argued, and therefore, it must be determined by the government.

The IDF, he continued, will defend nearby settlements given whatever route the government decides on.

Since then, the IDF has been much less involved in determining the fence's route. Nevertheless, more than a year passed before the defense establishment finished replanning the route north of Tzofim – and only last month did the state finally inform the High Court of this decision.

In its announcement, the state claimed that the new route – which is almost identical to that originally proposed by the council – "provides a reasonable security solution to the various threats." It attributed its change of heart to the Bil'in ruling, which forbade the route from being based on planned settlement expansions.



Construction work on the West Bank separation fence near Qalqilyah in 2003. The IDF refused to allow its people to defend the fence route in the High Court.

The delays in the fence / Amos Harel

Frozen by lawyers, budgets and politics

Until two years ago, the defense establishment typically blamed leftists and lawyers for the delays in building the separation fence. Anytime a terrorist entered Israel via a gap in the fence, Israel Defense Forces officers would point fingers at the numerous petitions against the route and the High Court of Justice's slowness in ruling on them.

Today, senior officers offer a very different excuse: money. The sharp drop in successful terror attacks, they say, has reduced pressure on the Finance Ministry to fund construction.

But others, including Col. (res.) Shaul Arieli of the Council for Peace and Security, say the real problem is that in all the areas where the fence has yet to be completed, the proposed route cuts deep into the West Bank, and would thus never be approved by either the court or Washington. Therefore, construction has effectively been frozen.

On one point, everyone agrees: The pace of the fence's construction has slowed drastically. When the government first approved the project in 2002, it was supposed to be completed in 2005. Today, the official forecast

for completion is 2010. And one senior officer admitted that at the current rate, "it won't even be finished in 2014."

The main remaining holes are around Ariel, Jerusalem and Gush Etzion, plus the entire section south of Yotvata. "The budget for the next two years stands at less than a third of what would be needed to finish," the senior officer said. "We aren't pushing the High Court in some cases because even if the court were to approve [the routes], we have no money to complete them. When the number of terror attacks drops, public pres-

sure dies down, and with it, the attention paid to the fence."

Arieli, however, argued that neither the court nor the Americans would approve the current invasive routes for the missing sections, while the right refuses to move the fence closer to the Green Line – and "because of this lack of political consensus, there is no pressure to approve a budget for the fence."

He therefore predicted that the fence will never be completed unless a) an agreement is signed with the Palestinians or b) terror once again surges.



Barack Obama's stolen
Western Wall note sparks
outrage, calls for boycott

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Another fatal
debacle at Hadassah
University Hospital

Ran Reznick, Page 7

Gates: War with Iran would be 'disastrous'

By Amir Oren

A war with Iran would be "disastrous on a number of levels," according to U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

In an article appearing in the latest issue of Parameters, the U.S. Army War College quarterly, Gates wrote that with the army already bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan, "another war in the Middle East is the last thing we need" – despite the fact that Iran "supports terrorism," is "a destabilizing force throughout the Middle East and Southwest Asia and, in my judgment, is hell-bent on acquiring nuclear weapons."

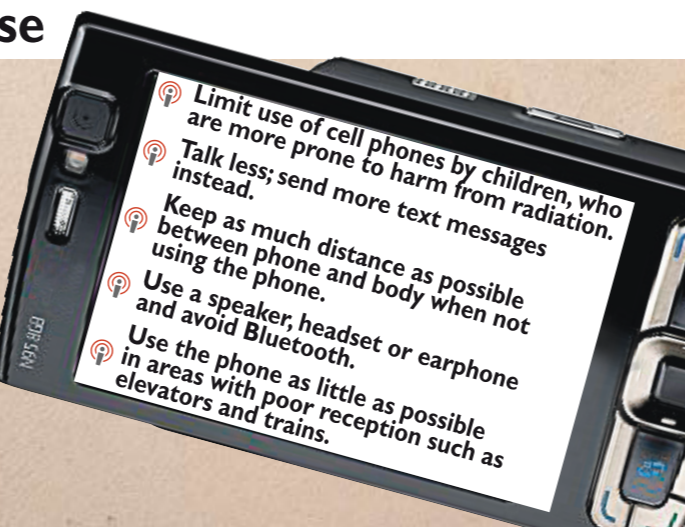
Nevertheless, he continued, "the military option must be kept on the table, given the destabilizing policies of the regime and the risks inherent in a future Iranian nuclear threat, either directly or through nuclear proliferation."

Gates offered these remarks on Iran as commentary on how to apply an axiom

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Recommendations for safe use

- 8.9 million** Cellular lines in Israel. More than the population.
- 355 minutes** Average monthly cell-phone use by Israelis. Third place world-wide.
- 60%** Households in Israel with two cell phones or more.
- NIS 142** Average monthly outlay by cell-phone user.



Photograph for illustration only; Archive photo: Yaron Kaminsky

Health Min.: Limit kids' use of cell phones

For first time, ministry issues guidelines over link between mobile phones, cancer

By Yuval Azoulay
and Zafir Rinat

The Ministry of Health yesterday published for the first time public guidelines for safe use of cellular and cordless phones. They call for limiting children's use of cell phones, avoidance of cellular communication in enclosed places such as elevators and trains, and use of wired, not wireless, earpieces.

The guidelines were drafted by Dr. Siegal Sadetzki, head of the Gertner Institute for Epidemiology and Health Policy at Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer. The decision to formulate and publicize them followed mounting requests to the ministry from the public, as well as increasing information on the subject as a result of

recent research, she said. "Even though we have not yet reached the height of information on the issue, there are already answers to some of the questions that have arisen regarding the use of mobile phones," Sadetzki told Haaretz yesterday.

"The public is very interested in the issue of radiation emanating from cell phones, but continues to use them as usual," she added. "The purpose of the guidelines we formulated is to get the public to use these phones wisely."

According to Sadetzki, taking precautionary measures can reduce the health risks posed by radiation, "but they won't eliminate them entirely."

The measures proposed by the Health Ministry are based on a series of studies

conducted throughout the world in recent years, which point to a connection between cell-phone use and exposure to a cancer-causing radiation. One of the studies was conducted by Dr. Sadetzki herself, in collaboration with experts in 16 other countries. The study found a clear link between cell-phone use and a rise in the risk of developing cancer of the salivary glands. In particular, it found a heightened risk for cancer among subjects who made long calls, especially in areas with few cellular antennae, since the latter have to emit proportionally more radiation to ensure effective communication.

Health Ministry officials said yesterday that it is still not clear whether

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Fear of flying (to the wrong destination)

El Al mistakenly flies 8-year-old to Brussels instead of Munich

By Zohar Blumenkrantz

An 8-year-old boy traveling unaccompanied was flown by El Al Israel Airlines from Ben-Gurion Airport to Brussels instead of to his destination in Munich, Haaretz has learned.

The mistake was only discovered when his relatives, waiting for him in Munich, saw that he did not land and called Israel. After the incident, which occurred about two weeks ago, El Al investigated and took disciplinary action against those responsible, including the sacking of a ground attendant.

Like many airlines, El Al operates a paid service for unaccompanied minors. A ground attendant accompanies the child through airport procedures and sees the child onto the plane.

The boy's parents bought the child's ticket to Munich and brought him to the El Al check-in counter for unaccompanied minors, as required. They also filled out the forms identifying the boy's grandparents as the people waiting to pick him up. However, the ground attendant placed him aboard a plane flying to Brussels by

mistake, without anyone at El Al realizing the error.

In Munich, when all the passengers had left the plane, the grandparents realized that the boy was not there. He was eventually located in the Brussels airport and flown on to Munich. His parents declined to comment or provide further details. His mother works for El Al.

Another shortcoming revealed by the incident is that the flight-service manager on the Brussels flight, who took over responsibility for the boy from the ground attendant, did not look at the boy's ticket. The flight crew also neglected to compare the number of passengers with the number of tickets, which would have revealed the presence of an extra passenger.

El Al said in response: "El Al considers it a very serious incident. The company investigated it, dismissed the ground attendant responsible for the failure and reprimanded her superiors. El Al is working to ensure that such cases do not recur. The compa-

13 killed, 70 hurt in double Istanbul bombing

The Associated Press

ISTANBUL, Turkey – Two bombs exploded minutes apart in Istanbul, killing 13 and injuring around 70 others last night in a square packed with people, the governor said.

"It is certain that this is a terror attack," governor Muammer Guler told reporters at the scene.

The bombs were placed in trash cans and police were investigating who might be behind the blasts, Guler said. The explosions in the working class residential Gungoren district occurred about 10 minutes apart.

Kurdish, leftist and Islamist militants are active in Istanbul and have carried out bombings in the city in the past.

Many people were injured in the second blast after they rushed to the area to help people following the first explosion.

"The first explosion was not very strong," said Huseyin Senturk, who owns a shoe shop in the area. "Several people came to see what was going on. That's when the second explosion occurred and it injured many onlookers."

The second explosion could be heard a mile away, according to an Associated Press reporter who arrived at the scene shortly after the blasts.

Nurettin Kapucu, a doctor at a nearby hospital, said some 25 people were being treated there. Three of them were in serious condition.

Broken glass, clothing items, shop mannequins and other debris were strewn on the ground.

Police sealed off the two separate locations at the square where the explosions occurred. The square is closed to vehicles, and people congregate there at night.

"The fact that there was a crowd in the area has increased the number of casualties," Guler said.

Bomb squad members in white overalls could be seen inspecting the scene.

For updates, see Haaretz.com



Alon Ron