

The Army and Society Forum

THE IDF AND THE PRESS DURING HOSTILITIES





The Israel Defense Forces



The Israel Democracy  
Institute

# **The IDF and the Press during Hostilities**

A symposium held on 4 June 2002 at  
The Israel Democracy Institute

The Army and Society Forum

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*Baruch Nevo and Yael Shur*

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## **PART ONE**

### **The IDF and the Press during Hostilities**

*Baruch Nevo and Yael Shur*

#### **PREFACE**

The fifth meeting of the Army and Society Forum, held in the summer of 2002, dealt with issues related to the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) and the media in wartime. A number of senior IDF officers participated, including the chief of staff, the senior fellows of the Israel Democracy Institute, academic researchers, and public figures from various sectors.

The conference took place in the wake of a series of suicide bomb attacks and the IDF's Operation Defensive Shield that followed, at a time when local and international media coverage of events in Israel was at its height.

This book summarizes the discussions and debates that took place during that conference. It is based on transcripts of the discussions, as well as background material distributed to the participants prior to its start.

## INTRODUCTION

Since September 2000, the Israel Defense Forces have been engaged in bloody conflict with the Palestinians. It might seem that the less known about the IDF's actions and capabilities the better. Yet, both past and current experience teaches us that this is a limited concept of military conflicts and that the media can shape reality. By influencing the perception of individuals, the media ultimately shapes public consciousness. In the current conflict, in which relations between the IDF and the media play an important role, it often appears that the struggle for hearts and minds overshadows the conflict itself—the hearts and minds of the Palestinians, the Israelis and the world at large (Arab and Western countries). There is no doubt that the media influences public opinion, and public opinion in turn directly affects the IDF's ability to carry out its missions and defend Israel from the dangers that threaten it. In the present context, this is reflected in a redefinition of concepts such as objectives and costs. If in the past the IDF's objective was a dominant hilltop or a fortified position, with costs assessed in casualties and arms, today the IDF must count public opinion and the image of its units, soldiers and officers as equally important objectives.

In light of this complex reality, in addition to achieving its security objectives, the IDF faces complicated communications challenges. We will attempt to describe these briefly.

## **THE OVERALL FRAMEWORK: THE NARRATIVE**

### **1. Basic Asymmetry**

International media portrays the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a David and Goliath story. Israel is big and strong while the Palestinians are virtually powerless and as such deserving of sympathy. Israel is the occupier; the Palestinian people, the occupied. Large sectors of the Israeli public see the presence of the IDF in the occupied territories as a necessary evil (with an emphasis on evil) and a temporary situation that is clearly undesirable in principle.

### **2. Civilianization of Battle**

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict belongs to a new category of war: a war in which the majority of casualties are civilian. The Palestinian side benefits from the contrast between the well-equipped official Israeli army and its own popular militia. It does not hesitate to use child soldiers. The media inevitably and automatically sympathizes with civilians.

### **3. Complex Context**

The circumstances of the conflict do not lend themselves to simple explanations. In a situation as complex as this, a picture is worth a thousand words. Frequently, these pictures are not complimentary to Israel.

### **4. Fundamental Disagreement at the Political Level**

Within the political sphere there are differences of opinion as to the very essence of the present conflict. Are we dealing with an



incident that got out of control, an *Intifada* (grassroots uprising), or a deliberate Palestinian attack that employs terrorist tactics? Such disagreement hinders both internal and international public relations. The Israeli people find it hard to distinguish between Palestinian terrorists and the Palestinian people. This difficulty extends to the battlefield, where the IDF frequently harms civilians and subsequently apologizes publicly.

## THE TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

### 1. Immediacy of News Reports

Flash media (cellular, Internet, live on-the-spot broadcasts) transmit information from an area of conflict almost instantaneously (and certainly more quickly than the official IDF spokesman's report). Not infrequently, however, (and sometimes intentionally) these initial reports are partial, unclear or erroneous.

### 2. Distortion of Reality through Framing and the Replay Effect

The picture reaches the public framed as the photographer, director or editor chooses. At times, a particular event is emphasized by dint of ignoring the surrounding events and circumstances. Thus, for example, the picture of the boy Mohammed Al-Doura and his father which caused considerable public relations damage to the IDF and the State of Israel, reveals nothing of the surrounding gunfight between the IDF and the Palestinian police. Thanks to the replay effect the photograph was broadcast repeatedly on all news editions and more than

once during each newscast. On more than one occasion photographs of rockets fired by the IDF in response to a terror attack have been replayed repeatedly, artificially heightening the intensity of the military reaction; the impression given is that tens of rockets were fired while in reality it was only a few.

### **3. The Focus of Electronic/Visual Media on Results Rather than Causes**

Pictures of a given situation do not reveal either the context or reasons for the situation. Pictures of an urban area in ruins do not tell of the terror attack that preceded the military response, thus implying that the action and motives were unmeditated. The fact that the IDF uses rockets and helicopters to target terrorists responsible for mass murder does not speak to the millions of CNN viewers.

### **4. Israel's Poor Use of Electronic and Satellite Media Compared to Arab Countries**

Although Israel is considered a hi-tech country, it actually utilizes the Internet as a public relations tool far less than the Arab countries. It makes no attempt to use satellite communications to appeal directly to the Arab world and has no ability to broadcast direct follow-up from the field after the broadcasts of news agencies.

## **THE MILITARY-POLITICAL TENSION**

Three entities interact on the battlefield: the army, the state and the media. Consequently, there are three distinct perspectives: military, political, and civilian. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is difficult to pinpoint an important security-military issue that is not at the same time a civilian-political issue.

On more than one occasion the IDF has been in the position of analyzing situations and presenting positions that touch upon the political sphere and are related to the strategic context of the conflict. In the current political reality it is artificial to make a distinction between security action on the strategic plane and political action. The statement: "We must banish Arafat," is both military and political. The military figure about to make such a statement is faced with a dilemma: should he give his professional opinion and risk the IDF's being labeled political, or should he refrain from voicing this opinion, thus compromising the military's professional responsibility and possibly the very security of the State of Israel?

## **THE LIMITATIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

While the Palestinians make use of photographs of corpses and casualties in their propaganda campaign, the IDF decided at the outset of hostilities to set limits on Israeli public relations material. Thus, the IDF spokesman was not permitted to

distribute photographs of the bodies of the Israelis lynched in Ramallah in October 2000, even though such pictures could have been a significant public relations asset at a difficult time.

### **CREDIBILITY VS. SPEED**

The IDF's public relations department is often torn between the need to react quickly to events and its commitment to a high standard of verification. Such verification requires thorough investigation, including interviewing officers in the field, and takes time.

This dilemma is intensified when it comes to IDF casualties, where the military spokesman's announcement is delayed until after notification of the families. For these reasons the IDF's publication of information regarding the battle and casualties in Jenin in April 2002 was significantly delayed, unintentionally spawning rumors and uncertainty throughout the country.

Two blatant conflicts of interest add to the confusion: the IDF's need to maintain its deterrent ability often clashes with the tendency of the world to sympathize with the underdog. In order to deter, the IDF must appear and act like Goliath, but by doing so it inevitably loses media points. Furthermore, internal Israeli public opinion is distinct from that of the world community. While the Israeli public demands that the government act to combat Palestinian terror, the world pressures Israel to exercise restraint.

## **THE MEDIA AS A STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION IN PREPARATION FOR WAR**

On more than one occasion the IDF has been described as winning the military battle only to lose on CNN. What exactly does this mean and what are the implications?

The interdependence between war and mass communications is no less revolutionary than the great technological innovations that have altered the face of war over the centuries, such as the invention of the tank, the airplane and the cannon. While mass communications is specifically a civilian tool, it mediates all military action and influences the timing, placement and strategy of rival forces, as well as the concept of victory.

Should Israel relate to the media as a strategic consideration in preparation for war?

The starting points of our discussion are as follows:

1. All war comes down to a battle of wills, in that ultimately the defeated side must make a conscious decision to surrender. In today's world, this battle of wills takes place in the media, a media capable of striking powerful, swift blows at long range.
2. In an age of global communications and new satellite technologies, it is not possible to withhold information for any length of time.
3. New communications technologies mandate new coping

techniques. In addition to the hundreds of broadcast networks, there are cellular telephones, the Internet, personal computers, and personal video cameras. In the foreseeable future it will be possible to buy and broadcast satellite photographs that show the battlefield in real-time. The ability to control these innumerable streams of communication has diminished to practically zero.

4. In Western democratic society, the army's authority over the press is quite limited, as is any real censorship. The very idea of propaganda stands in stark contrast to the values of this society. For its part, the media does not like supervision, especially manipulation by spokespersons.

As mentioned earlier, one of the most difficult aspects of the IDF's fight against the Palestinians is the war on the screen—the battle for international consciousness, Israeli consciousness, and the consciousness of the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular. In such a battle the role of the media is even more critical.

Military actions are regularly evaluated in terms of their psychological public relations impact, and the media plays a significant role in creating this impact. Decisions such as what weapons should be utilized in any given operation take into consideration the image created (helicopters and tanks project a very different image from the more moderate platoon of foot soldiers, even though the price may well include soldiers' lives). Likewise, the timing of entry into Palestinian cities and the duration of the army's stay in these cities take into account

various media-related issues such as time differentials, times of major news broadcasts, etc.

Thus we see that the IDF must consider the media as a factor of strategic significance on the modern battlefield, just as it considers political, military and economic factors. The media is a strategic consideration in gearing up for battle, in the midst of battle and in the aftermath of battle.

### **THE MEDIA AS PART OF THE ARSENAL**

Another way to relate to the media is as an additional weapon on the battlefield that affects the balance of forces, as well as the goals of each operation. The camera can be viewed as a cannon, our goal being to ensure that more and more of these cannons are pointed in the right direction. Even though secrecy has always been a hallmark of the IDF, it may be advantageous to use the media as a tool even at the price of exposure.

### **FALLACIOUS PROPAGANDA**

The IDF deliberately refrains from using false and aggressive propaganda in the war of images. The military tries to act in accordance with an ethical code that dictates that accurate information be released and that it avoid putting out misleading information or abusing its position of trust. In a small democratic country, public criticism of media manipulation, especially false propaganda, would rob the military of its legitimacy.

## **IS THE MEDIA TRULY PART OF OUR ARSENAL?**

Countering the claim that the media is indeed a strategic consideration (and perhaps even a weapon) in battle preparation, some claim that the military is not designed to see the media in this role and that its only mission is to defeat the enemy. Where military decisions clash with positions taken by the media, the latter ought not stand in the way of the pursuit of military objectives.

## **EMBEDDING THE MEDIA IN MILITARY OPERATIONS**

Once it has been accepted that the media comprises a strategic consideration in war preparation and can be used as a weapon, the question arises as to how it can be embedded operationally so as to become an organic part of the military campaign.

Several suggestions follow:

### **1. Broader Inclusion of the Media on the Battlefield**

Allowing reporters to accompany IDF units on their missions is likely to result in the publication of verbal and photographic information from the perspective of the IDF. Had the media been permitted to enter Jenin at an earlier stage of fighting, it would probably have reported the fierce fighting in the city and may well have defused the rumors and Palestinian propaganda reports of an IDF massacre.



## **2. Inclusion of Communications Considerations in Battlefield Evaluations**

Prior to embarking on a military operation, media experts should be consulted (similar to consultations with logistics or medical experts) in order to evaluate the likely media repercussions and consequences of the action. Ongoing updates as to the media situation throughout the course of the operation would lead to a more coordinated and appropriate real-time reaction by military and political figures.

## **3. Media Damage Control**

We may need to focus on minimizing media damage rather than increasing possible benefits. Potential media-sensitive points should be identified and appropriate personnel or units should be on call to deal with a crisis as soon as it develops. This practice of "thinking media" can prevent unnecessary media bloopers.

## **4. Tell the Truth Even When It Hurts**

This is one of the best ways to deal with the media. Admitting that a town has been plundered may well provoke criticism, but such honesty wins trust over time.

## **5. Including the Humane and Ethical Aspects of Soldiers' Behavior**

A report of an IDF medic treating a Palestinian could make a powerful emotional impact. The image of constant friction between IDF soldiers and Palestinian civilians could be softened by a presentation of the dilemmas faced by Israeli soldiers and officers on a daily basis, and the extent to which they turn to

ethical considerations in their deliberations on appropriate operational action. The role played by ethical considerations is particularly important in the context of combating terrorism and guerilla warfare.

#### **6. The Officer as Spokesperson**

In the heat of battle, the demand for real-time accurate information dictates that officers of every rank will be called upon to be spokesmen for the IDF. Under such conditions the classic institution of the IDF spokesperson does not even begin to address the multitude of public relations needs. The officer at the scene is not expected to recite a planned statement; rather, he must be trained to "think media"—that is, to have an overall conception of how the media operates and to be prepared to make a positive impression. It is important to include such media-related material in IDF officer courses; it may well be that in the future an officer's abilities in this area will play a role in his advancement.

#### **7. The Public Relations Hierarchy**

The head of Military Intelligence is charged with strategic public relations under political guidance, while the IDF reports operations from the field. The importance of the media must be drilled into the consciousness of every military figure, from chief of staff to the lowest ranking soldier, whether in the standing army or in the reserves. This degree of institutionalized media consciousness will ensure that a soldier is cognizant of the ramifications of shaking his fist at the camera or mowing down civilian cars with a tank.

### **8. Different Approaches in Different Situations**

The IDF must be prepared to deal differently with the media in peacetime, in all-out war and in situations of limited conflict, such as the ongoing fight against terrorism. In the context of combating terrorism, preparing the story before the event will allow for a presentation of the context and motives largely absent from reports transmitted by the electronic media. Directing public relations efforts towards explaining the connection between an attack and the reaction to it will result in a greater readiness on behalf of the target audience to accept the message.

### **9. Grasping the Ongoing Nature of Reciprocal Relations with the Media**

It must be understood and accepted that the military-media relationship is of an ongoing nature. The military must take such steps as allocating resources, establishing task forces, setting daily agendas and goals and formulating appropriate operating procedures. These fixtures are to be ready when needed, whether in times of war or peace. The intention is to initiate regular daily or weekly briefings that transmit a consistent message, similar to American media briefings in Washington.

### **10. Different Public Relations Strategies for Different Target Audiences**

It is important to remember that the media is not uniform. The variety of rapid communications tools available today may well offer the opportunity to transmit precisely tailored messages to different target audiences. We must understand that these target audiences differ drastically, and our attempts to appeal to them

must differ accordingly; we must distinguish between written and electronic media, transmissions in different languages and differences among target audiences in such locations as Europe, the United States, Israel, etc. Furthermore, we must pay attention to the image of the figure transmitting the message, taking into consideration such factors as whether he should appear in battle fatigues, in uniform, in civilian clothing, etc.

### **11. Media and Ethics**

We must consider whether the transparency caused by the presence of the media on the battlefield and its influence on public opinion in Israel and abroad amounts to the ultimate check on military action. Alternatively, the real check may well be an honest desire on the part of the IDF to act within the framework of ethical norms and values to which it is committed by dint of its role as the agent of a democratic country that views itself as a member of the family of nations. Since the IDF considers itself to be an ethical army, and is seen as such by Israeli society, a structural conflict between the IDF and the media is hardly inevitable. IDF soldiers and officers are expected to act in accordance with ethical codes regardless of the presence or absence of the media at the scene of action. Nonetheless, since the presence of the media on the battlefield is more and more common, an association has been created between its presence and ethical behavior, as people tend to see it as an ethical watchdog.

## **THE IDF AND THE MEDIA: RECIPROCAL RELATIONS**

### **PRINCIPLES AND INTERESTS OF THE MEDIA**

In order to discuss military-media relations, it is first necessary to understand the overt and covert factors that motivate the media.

The key fact to remember is that the media operates according to the law of supply and demand. Often, this cannot be reconciled with the military's sense of responsibility. Tomorrow's headlines are not necessarily influenced by values, even those such as the right of the public to know. In order to maximize sales (of a newspaper or of advertising time) it is precisely the errors, the failures, the bizarre and the unusual that appear in the headlines, while the commonplace and the mundane are sidelined. The media, in a permanent ratings war, is motivated by the fear of missing the collective heart's desire. An example of what this can lead to is the split screen on Israeli television's Channel Two, where they broadcast an ongoing soccer game alongside photos of the evacuation of those injured in a terrorist attack.

Electronic media has no memory. It deals with the here and now. Electronic media places visual considerations before content; it deals not with processes but with incidents, not with what is important but with what is of interest to people.

## **A. THE IDF'S APPROACH TO THE MEDIA**

### **The Role of the Military vis-à-vis the Media**

The IDF operates in two different realms. The first realm is that of physical reality in which it must achieve concrete results (victory, decision, prevention, achievement). The second is the virtual realm where the IDF has a chance to shape the perception of its actions and achievements.

One of the IDF's basic ethical obligations towards Israeli society is to help the media carry out its role in satisfying the right of the public to know. Nonetheless, in light of the nature of the media game and the fact that war has changed from the way it used to be, some are of the opinion that the role of the IDF has altered as well. It no longer suffices to explain military actions after the fact; rather, a military-media agenda should be conceived at the outset. According to this opinion, while the military must indeed direct its efforts towards triumphing first and foremost on the physical plane, it may make restrained use of the virtual plane, both by gaining legitimacy for its actions or by influencing the perspective from which the narrative itself is told.

### **The Military's Expectations of the Media**

Underlying the military's expectations of the media is the understanding that the media is a tool for transmitting information to the public in accordance with the public's right

to know. It is also accepted that the media is bound to expose problems it identifies within the military. Nonetheless, there is a feeling that the military has not managed to "sell" itself as successfully as it could and that it has attracted unjustified media criticism on more than one occasion. While the military would like the ninety-percent-favorable truth to be portrayed, the media gleefully presents the ten percent that is unfavorable to Israel. Emphasis on this ten percent gives the impression that the negative is the norm. An example of this was the media treatment of the call-up of reserves prior to Operation Defensive Shield in April 2002. While both the percentage of those reporting and the level of motivation were extremely high, first reports described the lack of preparedness of the forces and absence of sufficient food for the soldiers.

The military's expectations of the media are as follows:

1. Commitment to the veracity of reports: facts must be verified prior to publication and the media must behave responsibly when considering the sensitive nature of certain military stories
2. Balance between the right of the public to know and commercial interests of the media, such as ratings
3. Dynamic balance between criticizing and presenting positive aspects of the military
4. Fairness: the media could be asked to specify the nature of its source in order to allow the military to investigate and respond

## **The Public's Right to Know vs. Battlefield Security**

The State of Israel is the only democratic state in the modern world with prior military censorship of all publications, print or electronic, mandated by law.

### **Historical Overview**

In 1948, the Emergency Defense Regulations were incorporated into Israeli law, establishing the military censor. Over the years the censor and the media tended to institutionalize the power and status of the censor by agreement rather than by law. This agreement in its various forms was drafted and developed after extended negotiation between the board of editors of the daily Israeli newspapers and representatives of the military and the government. From time to time changes were made, the most important of which, adopted in 1989, was the limitation of the authority of the censor to instances in which there was a clear and present danger of a real threat to the security of the state.

The military censor is re-evaluating itself in light of the changes in the media and the military realm, and has begun asking important questions:

Is the clear and present danger standard still alive and kicking, or has it become limited?

Are we talking about a quantitative or a qualitative standard?

Was the clear and present danger standard too limited for



wartime, and could it endanger the lives of soldiers and civilians? (The question arose whether to allow the live broadcast of the pursuit and capture of a terrorist who had infiltrated a West Bank settlement.)

How do we uphold the public's right to know about a planned military operation without losing the element of surprise essential for its success?

How do we maintain the privilege of the investigator?

Is it necessary and appropriate to keep secret the name of an operation like Operation Defensive Shield?

What are realistic goals during wartime and do these change once things have calmed down?

In the present conflict the IDF placed the principles of openness and credibility above the principle of availability. According to the IDF, the Israeli public believes in the IDF as an organization and believes in its officers and soldiers. This credibility is an asset that must not be lost **under any circumstances**.

### **A Closed Military Zone**

For years the military was wedded to the idea of closed military zones that evolved from routine security needs. Today the media finds its way into even those areas designated as closed, whether by breaking the ban or via stringers working in the cities or by way of foreign network reporters who reside within the Palestinian Authority.

Moreover, closing an area to the media in the context of a war that is not being fought between two armies immediately arouses suspicion and hostility. In the first days of Operation Defensive Shield, Palestinian cities were closed to the media. The IDF was sharply criticized for this. Some claimed that if the media had been permitted to enter Jenin in the early stages of the battle, Palestinian accusations of massacre would have had a different reception.

One of the lessons of Operation Defensive Shield was the IDF's change in attitude towards the media. Today the battlefield is normally open to the media. A few exceptions follow:

1. First and foremost, if the presence of the media is likely to endanger the IDF's main mission: to win the battle
2. When opening the area to the media endangers the lives of IDF soldiers
3. When there is significant risk to media personnel. The IDF considers itself responsible for anyone who enters the battle-zone, even if the party has signed a document absolving the military of any responsibility. There have been incidents in which correspondents who signed such a document nonetheless blamed the IDF when they were accidentally injured.

In light of this new policy, the question arises: does not the very existence of public discourse on the matter of closed military zones challenge the right of the military to determine what it may and even must keep secret, operationally and otherwise, while at the same time other organizations in the democratic

system (including the media) that are responsible to a smaller segment of society reserve that right to themselves?

### **IDF or National Spokesmanship?**

Public relations and propaganda play an important role in the world today. Questions pertaining to this area are increasingly posed, such as: Who is Israel's official national spokesperson (the one who sets overall policy for Israeli public relations)? What areas of public relations should be handled by the IDF as opposed to the government (foreign and defense ministries)? Ought there to be a combined public relations entity for the IDF and the government? Even the state comptroller has addressed these issues in the yearly report.

Those who maintain that the government ought to be in charge of public relations claim that the military must focus on fighting the enemy and not on public relations. Furthermore, involvement in public relations activities may adversely impact on the military's credibility, an asset it must carefully preserve.

It is therefore recommended that the national public relations mechanism be an all-encompassing system in which the military participates, by presenting information among other things.

## **The Foreign Press**

In the current conflict Israel is strong while the Palestinians are weak; as such it is to be expected that the foreign media will report incidents in a manner not complimentary to Israel. Nonetheless, the IDF needs to handle the foreign press with kid gloves and should be aware how foreign correspondents operate.

### **Characteristics of the Foreign Press:**

1. It bends over backwards to avoid being labeled unprofessional. If it has erred by being unprofessional, inaccurate, unfair or not balanced, it is generally ready and willing to correct the mistake.
2. It is tolerant of repeated requests for corrections or clarifications, even when they border on harassment.
3. It thrives on attention. Foreign press personnel, especially correspondents, are lonely and seek human contact. Their main criticism of the IDF is that it turns to them only when it has complaints and does not bother to update them or inform them of matters of interest on a regular basis.
4. It is available and willing to listen. The foreign press is very interested in meeting with representatives of the IDF, to hear what they have to say and to be present during their operations.

The proper way to relate to the foreign media:

1. **A unified presentation of Israeli policies:** The foreign press wants to understand Israeli policies and expects its representatives to be able to explain these policies. In a democratic country, it is not always simple to present such a unified policy.
2. **Background talks:** If they wish to transmit desired messages to members of the foreign press, the IDF must hold background talks with reporters to explain events from its perspective.
3. **Accompanying IDF operational activities:** The idea of attaching foreign correspondents to an operational force worries IDF officers, but it has been demonstrated to be beneficial.
4. **Reacting in real time:** Working with the foreign press demands the quick response of people trained for this task who are knowledgeable in a wide range of topics.
5. **Giving an overall picture:** Often, the foreign press is not satisfied with strictly military information, and its questions touch upon areas that fall somewhere between military and general policy. We should try and engage it by providing personal glimpses and more private insights into the nature of the dispute.

## B. THE MEDIA'S STANCE TOWARDS THE IDF

Any discussion of the media's treatment of the IDF must take into consideration additional factors. These can be divided into three dimensions:

- 1. The political dimension:** Those who address media-related issues have pre-existing ideological-political claims as well as differing world perspectives. At any given time, the media is perceived as both a backstabbing traitor and a whitewashing IDF propaganda machine. It all depends on the viewpoint of the media critic.
- 2. The interest-group dimension:** Many critics of the media are affiliated with a particular sector (a newspaper, IDF public relations, academic research, or political institution). Each of these sectors has its own interests that influence its contribution to the discussion.
- 3. The emotional dimension:** It is virtually impossible to discuss the media's treatment of the IDF without the emotional baggage of terrorist attacks and their aftermath.

### The Function of the Media

The main question that comes up in the context of today's conference is whether the media has one role only. Several other questions follow from this: Is it the media's function to present facts alone? Should it supply interpretation and opinion? Should it promote public discourse?

The Vietnam War ushered in a new era in military-media relations. The perspective of American journalism shifted from objective to investigative; the press no longer accepted as absolute official statements from Washington, but insisted on seeing for itself what was happening in the field. In Israel a similar process unfolded in the wake of the Yom Kippur War. The media was critical of itself for having served the political and military machine and for not having asking crucial questions in time.

Modern democratic understanding expands the responsibility of the media and requires that it question and critique. An important function of the media is to provoke public debate. This is particularly relevant with an organization such as the IDF, which enjoys a monopoly on information in the military arena.

A more extreme claim is that a function of the media is to criticize. The press must question the dominant narrative, challenge government policies, spur Israeli society to re-think fundamental issues, challenge the legitimacy of operational norms. In effect, it must be somewhat hostile and combative towards the military institution.

### **Journalistic Dilemmas When Covering War and Times of Emergency**

In the context of reporting on the military, journalists face a variety of dilemmas. Conflicts such as national security versus patriotism, or the journalist as professional versus the journalist as citizen, are exacerbated in times of war or crisis.

Clearly, most Israeli journalists are patriots according to the simplest definition of the term: they live in the State of Israel, pay taxes, take in immigrants, etc. As journalists, however, they encounter the essence of patriotism. Is someone who opposed the Lebanon War less of a patriot than someone who did not? Is the journalist who published the picture of the live terrorist [after the attack] on the Number 300 bus [when the security forces said that the terrorists had all been killed when the army stormed the bus] less patriotic than others who did not? It is important to recall that patriotism is relative; if the media supports a given position, that position is inevitably labeled unpatriotic by those who support the opposite position.

This question of patriotism is even more complex in the context of the present conflict, which calls for stamina and morale. Is it the media's job to contribute to morale by supporting the IDF and its actions? Perhaps the real question is which morale to bolster: the immediate or the long-term? For example, in the wake of a serious terrorist attack, an immediate harsh reprisal might support morale in the short-term while a more restrained policy might work in favor of morale in the long-term.

The necessary conclusion might be that every journalist does that which seems appropriate to him. Nonetheless, it is important to note that a compliant and patriotic media that facilitates cover-ups and censors will itself be seen merely as a mouthpiece of the government and risks losing all credibility. An incisive media, whose information is accurate and grounded in fact, gains the public's trust, even in times of emergency when rumors tend to be rife.



### **Unrealistic Expectations of Harmony between the Military and the Media**

The expectation that there can be complete harmony between the military and the media is unrealistic for two main reasons:

1. Since these two organizations operate within a democratic society, they tend not to have identical interests, and these interests may be in direct conflict at times.
2. The pluralism of opinions both within the military and in the media, coupled with the lack of consensus in society in general on many domestic and foreign issues, prevents consensus between the military and the media.

Many people do, however, view the media's treatment of the IDF to be quite sympathetic. There is a willingness to emphasize the positive, to understand military goals, to accept failure, and to identify with the goals, methods and needs of the IDF. Part of the reason for this is the fact that many of the media figures who report on the military grew up within it and continue to do reserve duty. Some argue that the media is too ready to accommodate itself to and cooperate with the military, and that it highlights military solutions and tactics at the expense of fundamental problems or conceptual errors.

### **Objectivity vs. Honest Subjectivity**

The media is expected to provide an accurate and objective

representation of reality. In this context the following questions arise:

Is it really possible to express objective truth?

Is the Israeli media capable of maintaining its objectivity in reporting on the very military that defends it?

Does the manner in which the media necessarily operates (seeking out the bizarre, the flawed, the shocking) adversely impact on the media's ability to be objective and present the full story, including context and motives?

Does the concept of objectivity really exist at all?

The concept of honest subjectivity might be a more reasonable expectation than absolute objectivity. Thus, personal opinions of reporters, interpretation, context and narrative would be presented from the outset as subjective rather than as unadulterated truth. Honest subjectivity does not rule out the facts, but acknowledges that they cannot be described absolutely.

On the other hand, some argue that the basis of human culture is a belief (subjective) in the existence of objectivity, and that negating objectivity sends a dangerous message to the media, exonerating it from the commitment to seek truth.

A possible solution may lie in adopting the concept of balance used by the American media. This method involves the following practices: allowing an opposing side to respond, presenting more than one point of view, admitting that a personal opinion is being expressed.

## A RESEARCH AGENDA

While such topics as effectiveness of weaponry, development of defense methods, expected response of the civilian front to terrorist attacks, and morale have been the focus of IDF and defense ministry research efforts for decades, the subject of the media in wartime has been overlooked. Serious groundwork is needed in this area.

Following are a number of issues that need attention and action:

1. What are the main characteristics, components and directions of the "food chain": security incident → media report → personal/individual impression → public opinion → political and operational decisions?
2. What is the draw of security incidents of various kinds (suicide attacks, capture of terrorists, battle, injury to Palestinian civilians during battle, etc.) on TV audiences (TV ratings), and how do these broadcasts influence the political and ethical positions of the viewer?
3. Developing alternative models of media involvement on the battlefield at various stages (planning, operational and reporting stages); pilot programs in which these models are implemented in real battle situations.
4. Are local and foreign media reports regarding the IDF and the Israeli government in emergency situations (such as Operation Defensive Shield) fair? Positive? Negative?
5. Assessment of the extent of IDF credibility at various levels

(chief of staff, spokesman, officers in the field) in the eyes of the local and foreign media, and among the general public.

6. Commissioning an analysis (retroactive) of military decisions in the last decade to close areas to the media and the consequences of doing so.
7. Commissioning a qualitative and quantitative analysis of media coverage of suicide attacks in Arab countries.
8. Commissioning a forecast of technological development in the media arena and how this will affect the media and the IDF.
9. Conducting a public survey on whether public reports of casualties ought to be delayed until families have been notified.
10. Researching the manner in which rumors originate and spread; investigating methods to prevent or contain them.

## PART TWO

### Opening Plenary Session

**Chairman: Lieutenant General Shaul Mofaz**

Chief of Staff

**Moderator: Professor Arye Carmon**

President, The Israel Democracy Institute

**Speakers:**

**Professor Yaron Ezrahi**

Department of Political Science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem;

Senior Fellow, The Israel Democracy Institute, Jerusalem

**Brigadier General Ron Kitry**

IDF Spokesman

■ **Arye Carmon:**

Today's world is smaller and more transparent than ever before; events happening in one place reverberate across the globe. In today's world the exercise of power is subject to two major global forces: the law and the media.

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, international law and mass communications have become main players on the battlefield. And there is a close reciprocal relationship between the two.

Our focus today is on the mass media, and our main question is whether it is possible to triumph on the battlefield while losing on the screen. In other words, what is the meaning of victory on the battlefield if one loses in the TV campaign? This might be rephrased as, "How can we get war to explain itself?"

Since the reality we live in is constantly, swiftly and radically changing its structure, rules and truths, the question is how existing entities such as the military and other decision-making bodies can learn to live with and internalize such changes. We are not here to berate ourselves for our mistakes, but rather to learn from experience in order to formulate principles of policy.

#### ■ **Shaul Mofaz:**

Today's topic, the military and the media, is likely to remain a focus of military reality for a long time to come. I hope that we will come up today with some concrete ideas of practical steps we can take in this area.

First I shall touch upon some trends that indicate the relationship between the military and the media; then I will point out the consequences of this for the relationship between the military and Israeli society.

I could say that this issue is not my problem, since the responsibility of the general staff, myself included, is the security of the State of Israel and the welfare of its inhabitants. The IDF's job is complex as it deals with combating terrorism, meeting ongoing security concerns and preparing for possible war. But

experience has shown that the media helps to shape reality. It is worth remembering that the catalyst for the 1987 *Intifada* was a report that there was a traffic accident in which a Jewish driver deliberately ran over a Palestinian. Similarly, while the current conflict that began in September 2000 was deliberately orchestrated and the result of strategic decisions, the Palestinian leadership used the media to inflame the masses in advance of current Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount.

The media plays a major role in shaping public consciousness, whether that of Palestinians, Israelis or the international community. In some ways, the struggle for consciousness is more important than the military battle. What exactly is this struggle for consciousness? I have already mentioned the context of the origin of the current conflict and the massive incitement mechanism used by the Palestinian Authority within Palestinian society to maintain unity and enlist fighters. A 17-year-old girl does not volunteer to blow herself up amidst babies as a result of simple persuasion; the motivation for such action must have been rooted in her consciousness over the years by blatant incitement via the media. There is also a fierce struggle going on for the Israeli consciousness. The declared goals of the Palestinians are to shake stability and unity in Israeli society and to break the Israeli will. These goals have been attained at least to some extent via the media. No less important is the struggle for international consciousness. Success in this struggle is what gives the actions of one party to the conflict legitimacy in the international arena. The Palestinians often utilize manipulative means to achieve this goal, and they do not hesitate to

transmit false information to world media. One example is the distribution of photographs of a funeral in Jenin that never actually took place.

Although politicians get their information via formal diplomatic channels, they are hardly immune to the influence of public opinion, the opinion of a public that has been exposed to a manipulated and manipulative media. Ultimately, this public opinion does indeed inform political decisions made in the international arena.

The media influences public consciousness, and this consciousness directly impacts upon the ability of the IDF to achieve its goals. In a world brimming with information and mass communications, we must constantly bear in mind the public relations aspect of any event. If we are to achieve legitimacy for our actions, each action must be made to serve not only a military purpose but a positive PR purpose as well. Effective public relations can serve as an additional weapon in our arsenal. As such we must deal with the issue of the media and PR at the national level. We are increasingly asked why the IDF does not address these areas. I usually respond that the IDF is not the national spokesperson; the IDF does, nonetheless, need to explain its actions and to figure out how to utilize the media as an additional channel in the current conflict. To the classic spheres of the political and the military we must add communications and economics to lend us legitimization.

In today's world, often called a global village, we find a growing



trend of international involvement, especially on the part of America—in Iraq, Somalia, Kosovo and Afghanistan. In addition, I must mention the growing role of CNN and its competitors as policy-makers, the development of international legal standards and the application of these principles in the International Court at The Hague. On more than one occasion we have been known to triumph on the battlefield only to be defeated on CNN; that is, we lose in the realm of international opinion since we do not properly explain our positions and actions.

We must begin to invest in our public relations infrastructure, both on a national scale and within the IDF. A central question is that of the division of labor between the PR departments of the IDF, the defense ministry, the foreign ministry and others who deal with public relations. Perhaps the ideal solution would be to combine these PR departments into one organization.

An additional question centers on the lines between the transmission of facts, public relations, propaganda, and manipulation of the media. Can and should the IDF shift from merely supplying information to active propaganda? (In practice this shift has already begun, and on a number of occasions we have explained some of our actions at our own initiative.) At times the presentation seems more important than the content. But as the army of a democratic state, we must bear in mind our primary duty to carry out the mission set for us by the political echelon: the defense of the state and its inhabitants within the boundaries of ethical constraint.

A significant portion of today's discussion will be devoted to more specific issues such as policies relating to reporting particular events, the timing of the release of information, the manner of delivery and credibility of the information. These are issues with which we deal every day at the GHQ (General Headquarters). We attempt to react quickly, while maintaining a high degree of integrity, before the opposing propaganda machine has the opportunity to flood the media with inaccurate information.

The IDF's credibility is more important than the immediate availability of information, but availability is nonetheless quite important, as there is always someone, not necessarily sympathetic to us, waiting to fill the void. We do not permit ourselves to transmit inaccurate data, certainly not false or misleading information, while the opposition misleads deliberately on a regular basis.

Other factors for consideration include our commitment to soldiers and their families to release information regarding casualties to families first. Only subsequently, after the information has been verified, is such information released to the media, that is to the public at large.

An additional question is how best to incorporate the media on the battlefield. On one hand, photographers and reporters need to be permitted access to fighting forces, while on the other certain sensitive information must be protected. Related questions come up in every operation on a daily basis. Despite the media's desire to have access to every breaking story, it is

clear that where media involvement interferes with the success of the mission or endangers soldiers or media personnel, such involvement must be put off until the situation has changed. Our task is to find the proper balance.

The IDF considers the media to be a factor with strategic importance on the modern battlefield, and its policy is to hide nothing. We have come to include the media, public relations, and operational documentation as part of the strategy and goal of each operation and action. This media awareness falls within the scope of responsibility of officers, not of the IDF spokesperson. It is very important that this approach become second-nature to officers both prior to an operation and in their discussion of the operation after the fact.

As the army of the people, we are committed to providing honest information to fathers, mothers and the Israeli population in general, whether of success or failure. Obviously such openness must be subject to security considerations.

■■ **Ron Kitry:**

**The Presence of the Media on the Battlefield: Dilemmas**

I will touch briefly upon several issues, some of which were mentioned by the chief of staff. I approach the public relations question from the perspective of day-to-day experience. I begin with the conception of the IDF's public relations unit as presented in the report entitled *Dovrut 2000* that came out when the PR department was incorporated into the operational

branch of the IDF:

The public relations department is to be embedded in the organizational and operational areas of the IDF and is to impact upon both the IDF's self-image and its public image.

It is important to remember that in summer 2000 there was still talk of a window of opportunity; there was preparation for war but no expectation of imminent conflict. In a certain sense we considered it our main goal to connect the IDF with the public from which it sprang.

Our aim is to be a professional public relations organization—that is, to be open and accessible, credible and swift.

Re openness: our desire to be open has been tempered by the realities of the full-scale armed conflict in which we have been engaged since 29 September 2000. By its very nature, war does not always allow for openness. If one of the aims of a battle plan is to create the impression of strength, by definition a commitment to openness must take a back seat. For the media serves everyone, including the enemy.

Re credibility: the IDF's credibility had never been questioned until small interest groups turned the spotlight on us and began to cast aspersions on the credibility of IDF reports. Their pointed questions forced us to take stock both on the level of the individual episode, and on the level of overall war.

Re accessibility: the chief of staff already mentioned the tension between the need to provide precise information quickly and the pressures of the battlefield. The media demands detailed reports immediately if not sooner, preferably yesterday.

The first issue I wish to address is that of closing an area to the media. Closing an area has a negative ring, since it contradicts the basic principle of openness. But we have to take into account such constraints as operational considerations, the well-being of soldiers and the degree of risk to media personnel. Other countries' militaries tend to implement more rigid restrictions. The media is often simply denied access to a given area. For example, in the Falklands War the British army provided media personnel with a fully-catered meal at the site of the battlefield but closed the communications shelter totally, to be opened only when the British High Command wished to provide information. Similar examples abound. Perhaps the determining factor ought to be whether or not there is active fighting going on. Current IDF policy is that the ranking officers at the scene decide whether or not to allow the foreign and local press onto a battlefield while it is still under fire. Perhaps it would be preferable to adopt a policy whereby an area is opened to the media only once the battle has concluded. This is what occurred in Jenin.

A further question is whether it is possible, in practice, to close an area to the media. Time and time again, foreign media personnel have emerged, tired and dusty but bearing their reports, from areas that have purportedly been closed by the IDF, and even Israeli reporters have had no trouble entering various closed areas at will.

A crucial question is whose authority takes precedence, that of the upper echelons of command, the head of the operational branch and public relations, or the officers in the field. A particularly frustrating situation developed following the battle in Jenin. The chief of staff decided to relax policy and permit reporters and photographers to enter all areas, excluding only the refugee camp in Jenin, the Muqata in Ramallah and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The brigade commanders, however, thought otherwise. As officers in the field they were the ones who would have to live with the reality on the battlefield, and they refused to allow reporters past the checkpoints. The media's resentment of this treatment and the resulting uncomplimentary reports were inevitable.

Another issue that we deal with on a regular basis is that of technology, particularly the development of real-time communication. Real-time communication provides the world with immediate information—almost always incomplete and unverified and often unreliable (possibly by design)—to which we must respond. On the Internet, for example, there is no concept of waiting for a deadline: you simply type and that's that. I assume that most of you here today are aware of the fact that the majority of reporters and photographers working for foreign networks in Judea, Samaria and Gaza are Palestinian. While I do not deny that they have the right to work as reporters, the fact that Palestinian reporters are circulating in the field among Israeli soldiers in wartime poses a complex problem for the IDF.

We don't stand a chance against this type of instant communication; our usual response is that we are still verifying the information. We verify, the Palestinians blow things out of proportion, and the photographers broadcast their pictures. The inevitable result is a distorted and shallow media report. This mechanism lends itself to unfounded accusations. One example was the 'black gas' story in 2001, in which Palestinian Health Minister Riad Za'anun claimed, "Israel is making use of unknown forms of poisonous gas against civilians." The world took the matter seriously. The head of the Israel Medical Association ethics board, Eran Dolev, was asked to help refute the unfounded accusation. At the Government Press Office in Jerusalem, Dolev presented compelling proof to thirty or forty members of the foreign press that the entire accusation was false. The following day we sat expectantly in front of our television sets. Nothing on the black gas story. Yesterday's news was no longer of interest; there were other more compelling stories.

The visual media tends not to cover an event such as a terrorist attack—like a bus that explodes or the suicide bomb at Cafe Moment—because the photographs are too disturbing. On the other hand, an Israeli helicopter and Palestinian homes that have been blown up, their windows shattered by rockets, photograph well. CNN and others are more than ready to broadcast these images.

Reality is manipulated by two factors, the first of which is framing. Photographs show what the photographer, producer or editor

wants them to show. A striking example is the photograph of Mohammed Al-Doura at the Netzarim junction at the beginning of the *Intifada*. The French network that documented the father and son taught us a lesson about the power of focus and close-ups. Go prove afterwards what was happening all around, including Palestinian police shooting in the vicinity and the fact that there was no line of sight between the Israeli position and the father and son!

The second factor is the replay effect. In Kfar Darom in the Gaza Strip, a mortar attack on a bus left several children of the Cohen family without legs. This would seem to be a perfect public relations opportunity. Children were injured, the attack took place in broad daylight and could be photographed easily. In response, the IDF attacked a number of Palestinian targets in Gaza from the air, using fifty rockets. What the world saw was 5,000 rockets because footage of the rockets hitting the Palestinian targets was aired over and over again, and the incident was no longer a story about the Palestinian attack on the children from Kfar Darom with an Israeli air strike in response, but about a demonstration of power by those aggressive Israelis.

Another important question is who coordinates public relations efforts and who says what at any particular time. This is a complex problem. There is no one entity with absolute authority in this area. As we speak, the state comptroller is working on a final draft of a report on the Israeli public relations system. The report started out as a critique of the IDF spokesman, but



the state comptroller soon realized that the real problem was national public relations as a whole. A cursory glance at the draft report reveals a surprising similarity to previous reports—evidently not much has changed in the PR arena. There is no formal determination as to who is responsible for overall public relations policy, how this responsibility is to be divided, or the respective roles of the IDF spokesman, the foreign ministry and the prime minister's office.

A more fundamental question is: Do we actually need a national spokesman? During the Six Day War, Chaim Herzog donned uniform and briefed the nation on radio (there was no TV yet). We all knew what the situation was because the spokesman told us. In this age of technology no public relations system could possibly spread its gospel to the public: neither the Israeli public nor the foreign public. The classic institution of an official spokesman who can inform the public is a bankrupt concept in certain respects. In my opinion it is preferable to have the Gaza Strip's Northern Division commanders or the OC report on events in their sector because they are the source for information and credibility.

We must also keep in mind who our opponents are. We sit here agonizing and debating, but I cannot imagine a similar forum in the Muqata in Ramallah debating appropriate reciprocal relations between PA security forces and the Palestinian media. As I mentioned, many Palestinian reporters work for foreign media agencies, and this neutralizes the impact of Israeli public relations in one way or another. For example, Israeli soldiers

conduct a search for explosive material in a certain location—possibly a school—and this action is filmed. Whether the subsequent scattered mess was caused by our soldiers or not, we are bound to be blamed.

Finally I wish to point out that Israel practices self-restraint in the realm of public relations. For example, the chief of staff decided personally from the outset not to permit the IDF spokesman to use photographs of the bodies of the two Israelis lynched in October 2000 in Ramallah for PR purposes. The photographs were extremely graphic and could have been a real PR asset. But we recognize the limits of pure PR considerations, just as we realize that if the media is present at a happening, the event will be noticed; if the media isn't present, whatever may have happened will have been a wasted event.

### ■ Yaron Ezrahi:

#### **The Civilian Media Perspective**

The traditional role of the military is to maximize the freedom of action of the political echelon. The success of a governmental policy that involves sending troops into battle is measured not by military achievements alone, but also by the treatment of the conflict in the national and international press. In other words, one journalist has the power to undermine the achievements gained on the battlefield by several divisions.

As such, in the analytical sphere it is no longer possible to distinguish definitively between the military and the civilian

perspectives; the two are intertwined and both are intrinsically linked to the political perspective. At the same time, however, distinctions must be maintained in the realm of action and the presentation of military assessments to the public. The problem in this context stems from the fact that in the circumstances of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is difficult to think of an important security-military issue that is not at the same time a key civil-political issue.

One example of this problem is the security fence. For one political faction the fence means reviving the Green Line while leaving the settlements on the other side. A second group sees such a fence as an evasion of our security responsibilities vis-à-vis the settlements, leaving them up for grabs. A third group sees the fence as a means to minimize the infiltration of terrorists without representing a commitment to evacuate settlements or to establish a political border along the Green Line. A fourth group views the fence as a way to achieve the evacuation of the settlements by circumventing disputed political considerations and arguments over relinquishing portions of the Land of Israel and presenting the issue in terms of urgent security needs. Finally, building the fence provides the illusion that the government is tackling a difficult security problem. In the short run this illusion calms the public and does not put the government in the position of being expected to deliver immediate results in either the political or military sphere. The reason for this is that the fence is an enormous undertaking which can never be completed fully, for it can always be improved and perfected. In brief, just as previous governments have been involved in an

interminable peace process, we can initiate an ongoing "fence process."

In these circumstances the military cannot present a professional opinion without appearing to support one of these competing positions and opposing others. Furthermore, the military is forced to take this fact into account in formulating its position. Thus there is no way of avoiding the aforementioned distinction between the analytical stage and the stage in which the IDF's professional position is presented. There are two partial solutions to this dilemma. The first is to follow the example of the Supreme Court; that is, the IDF's professional positions must avoid direct or indirect references to the political. While almost no significant decision of the Supreme Court is devoid of political implication, the printed discussion is limited to the legal aspects. At the same time the military ought to present a variety of professional security evaluations with regard to any proposed political action. This will help to emphasize the pluralistic nature of the political system in a democracy. There is not, nor can there be, a single perspective or policy.

In addition to the internal dimension, we are necessarily concerned with the image of the military and the state in the eyes of the world. In the sphere of global communications, victory on the battlefield must be matched by success in presenting one's view of the conflict to the outside world. Here too we find a distinction between the strategic and the tactical. Tactical concerns relate to the presentation of one event or a brief series of minor events, while strategic issues relate to

the story—or context—within which the totality of individual incidents is understood.

Israel's difficulty in the strategic effort to depict Operation Defensive Shield as part of the West's global fight against terrorism is attributable to at least five factors:

**First:** On the level of what I refer to as strategic framing, Israel is at a clear disadvantage on account of the world's preconceived notion of the conflict as being between oppressor and oppressed, strong versus weak.

**Second:** The visual electronic media tends to spotlight actions without mentioning the causes. Cameras cannot photograph motivation or circumstances; it is possible to photograph an airplane or rocket attack but not the political strategic process that led up to the attack. Even if background information is filled in later, events photographed in a dramatic manner reverse the normal order of cause and effect. Viewers are faced with a clear picture of events to which causes and motivations are then attributed. In this game there are no coincidences or unintended consequences. Moreover, the mass media succeeds in turning ethical public considerations into strategic considerations by molding world opinion. Pictures such as the one of Mohammed Al-Doura, or an urban area turned to rubble, imply almost automatically that both the action and its motivation are by definition unethical. If the public sees a helicopter hovering over a built-up area, it does little good for ten generals to explain that the houses are empty or that this is the most surgical method of

preventing civilian casualties. The picture creates the narrative; the amount of time that viewers devote to the news is drastically less than it has been over the past fifty years. Today pictures are preferred to lengthy stories or explanations.

**Third:** A third problem stems from the fact that there has been a sea change in the structure of war. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict appears to belong to a new category of war that has undergone a process of privatization and civilianization. In contrast to the impact of classic war, most casualties of modern war are civilians. The tendency in these wars, which are largely conducted by militias, is to utilize children as soldiers. Children are especially effective for they have less awareness of the imminence of death and are more obedient. The presence of the media encourages this trend, since pictures of slain children have immediate emotional effect, while the act of sending these children to the front is hard to photograph. In the Israeli context, the Palestinians make the most of the contrast between a regular well-equipped army and a popular militia that includes children. When this is added to the strategic framing of the conflict as between occupiers and occupied, the battle in the media is almost lost from the outset.

**Fourth:** Events of 11 September 2001 encouraged Israeli policy-makers to believe that it would be possible to extricate Operation Defensive Shield from the rubric of occupier versus occupied and to connect it to the global war against terrorism. But this goal was only partially achieved, and here we arrive at the fourth reason for this failure. The difficulty in separating terrorism from occupation is related to the general blurring of distinctions

between terrorist and freedom fighter, or anti-colonialist fighter, that so baffles the West. This connection implies placing at least part of the blame for terrorism on the occupier. It is no coincidence that the push to distinguish between terrorism and fighting occupation has been much more successful in the United States than in Europe. In the United States the colonial tradition has been much less prominent, while the trauma of September 11 is greater and fresher. In Europe feelings of guilt over a colonial past are prevalent, feelings that are magnified by the minority of former colonies that currently participate in the political process.

**Fifth:** Terrorist incidents capture the media's attention for only a few hours, while an operation such as Defensive Shield is ongoing in nature, both in the field and in the media. A military action embodies a familiar framework within which unfolding events are interpreted. Both long-term military operations and long-term political processes are made to fit into a preconceived strategic framework, in this case one that is hostile to Israel.

The above discussion leads us to several conclusions:

1. As in most democracies, in Israel there tends to be competition between political and security perspectives, as well as among the multiplicity of such perspectives within each domain. As such, every political entity is motivated to take advantage of the national status of the IDF and to attempt to include it within his sphere of influence. In such a situation the military must be extremely cautious not to associate itself with any political agenda. Rather, the IDF ought to develop a dialogue of

professional views that remains distanced from any particular political agenda. Whenever senior officers consider placing the weight of their professional opinion behind one agenda as opposed to another, they must be aware of the cumulative damage to the IDF that such direct association with particular political views causes.

2. Because the strategic framing of the conflict is subject to serious internal dissent, the military ought to concentrate to the extent possible on secondary tactical framing. Even if this approach does not save the military entirely from political involvement masquerading as professional opinion, damage can be kept to a minimum.

3. Serious terrorist attacks against civilians and residential targets can turn a tactical viewpoint into strategic framing. The military must therefore be sensitive to the type of incident that can quickly sway world opinion. Such incidents are usually unexpected, but what is the army if not an organization designed to deal with the unexpected?

This issue is important, possibly crucial, with regard to the press as well. One method of dealing with the clash between military needs and media demands is to impose censorship and close certain areas to the media; another is to initiate a series of clandestine actions. In both cases the price must be taken into account—a price which may be heavy at times, the desire to succeed on the international front at the expense of credible communication with the Israeli public and the families of the soldiers.



4. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Palestinians have successfully utilized photographed consequences of the IDF's exercise of power to support the framing story of occupation. Difficulties in equating Operation Defensive Shield with the global war on terrorism demonstrate that manipulation of narratives is not only a matter of media expertise. First of all, the decision to implement a particular policy often creates heavy pressure that cannot easily be withstood. Secondly, understanding the political, psychological and economic forces that support a framing story involves complex multidisciplinary analysis and cannot be left to the intuition of a spokesperson or troubleshooter, however talented. In this area, too, we must prepare comprehensive data and analysis as to the political, social and economic environment in which the media operates, an analysis that will indicate the appropriate direction to take in our presentation of the conflict.

In today's world, war and the mass media are intertwined to an extent that is no less revolutionary than the amazing technological advances that altered the entire structure of war in the past, such as the invention of the tank, the airplane or the cannon. Mass communications, while ostensibly a civilian rather than a military tool, influences all military decisions, as well as the very concepts of time, place and strategy in the conflict, to almost the same extent as the concept of victory itself. As such, it behooves us to draw new battle lines that take into account these dramatic changes.

## DISCUSSION GROUP 1

# The Media as a Strategic Consideration in Preparing for War

**Moderator: Professor Arnon Zuckerman**

Film Department, Tel Aviv University

### Participants:

**Mrs. Elisheva Broun-Lapidot** Spokesperson, Israel President's Office

**Colonel Aviv Cochavy** Paratroop Brigade Commander

**Major General Giora Eiland** Head of Plans and Policy Directorate, IDF

**Brigadier General Eival Gilady**

Head of Strategic Planning Division, IDF

**Mr. Eitan Haber** Editorial Board, Yedioth Aharonoth daily

**Major General Dan Harel** Head of Operations Directorate, IDF

**Brigadier General Ariel Heiman** OC Reserves

**Professor Baruch Nevo** Dept. of Psychology, University of Haifa;

Project Director of The Army and Society Forum,

The Israel Democracy Institute

**Mr. Amir Oren** Military correspondent, Ha'aretz daily

**Brigadier General Eyal Shlein** Division Commander

**Major General Rafael Vardi** Retired

**Major General Moshe Ya'alon** Chief of Staff designate

**Mr. Ehud Ya'ari** Political Commentator, Channel Two News

**Brigadier General Ruth Yaron** IDF Spokesperson designate

■ **Arnon Zuckerman:** Today's topic—the media as a strategic consideration in battle preparation—can be restated as follows: If the media is indeed to be regarded as a weapon, how can we best incorporate it into our planning, operational and educational processes? I begin with a number of generally accepted statements:

1. In an age of global communications and significant technological advances it may be possible to falsify information, but it is impossible to block the dissemination of information completely, certainly in the long run.
2. Today's battles are fought in the media as well as on the battlefield, and the modern media, like the modern weapon, strikes with strength, speed, and precision even at long range.
3. In a democratic society the military's ability to control the media is limited; the tool of censorship has long since been blunted, and the concept of propaganda does not sit well with the Western democratic audience. The media resents supervision, especially manipulation by an official spokesperson.
4. With the advent of new communications technologies we must constantly reevaluate the military's relationship with the media. In addition to hundreds of broadcast networks, we must take into account cellular telephones, the Internet, laptops, fax machines and personal video cameras. One video clip that favors a particular side may, if presented by a popular reporter, settle the matter conclusively in the public mind. In the near future it may be possible to take

real-time satellite photographs of an ongoing battle and broadcast them over news networks. The ability to control the broad spectrum of media is swiftly approaching zero. On the other hand, these ever faster and more sophisticated communications methods may present new opportunities to transmit individually tailored messages to particular target groups. Both the media and public opinion in Western democracies, especially in Europe, are sensitive to civil rights, oppression, imperialism and repression of freedom. It does not take much for the foreign press to label us opponents of Western humanitarian values.

5. There are significant differences in relations between the military and the press in times of peace, all-out war, and limited conflict such as the fight against terrorism. Naturally, today's discussion will focus on issues relating to limited conflict and combating terrorism.

Taking these statements as my starting points, I wish to raise the following questions:

1. If everyone agrees that the media is indeed a weapon, why has it not been incorporated into our military moves? I refer to taking formal binding steps. The perfunctory placement of the IDF spokesperson at GHQ is not an answer, nor is the suggestion made by the chief of staff that the ranking officer in the field, rather than an official spokesperson, should engage the media. The officer is not trained for this duty, and just as he has a personnel officer and an intelligence officer, he needs a media officer.

2. A legitimate Israeli goal is to maintain a positive image in the Western media, and with the battle being waged in populated areas, it is inevitable that our military decisions are affected by media considerations. How do we deal with this?
3. Is the press—and this will indicate how seriously we take media relations—actually included in our planning sessions, when a massive terrorist attack has taken place for example?
4. The Palestinians and Arab countries certainly utilize aggressive misdirection against us, from gross lies such as the claim that the Mossad attacked the Twin Towers, to stories of poisoned candy. The question is whether we ought to fight the enemy with its own weapon, that is with false information—not what we refer to as public relations, but with outright propaganda.
5. Perhaps the military is not built to see the media as a weapon. Perhaps it should ignore this issue completely and concentrate on its real job: fighting.

■ **Dan Harel:** In this war that has been forced upon us, every member of our society is viewed by the enemy as a legitimate target. We must present our abilities such that the Palestinians' confidence is shaken and the Israeli will strengthened. As opposed to classic military conflicts, the current conflict is far-reaching and encompasses all spheres: economic, military, political, public relations and legal. The media is not a weapon, but it is one forum in which the battle is conducted.

At the national level there is no coordinated formulation of media relations policies. Therefore, as is the case in various other

areas of governmental inaction (soldier-teachers, evacuation of wounded, firefighting, etc.), the army has attempted to fill the void in the sphere of public relations. We must admit, however, that we have not been particularly successful.

It turns out that on the national level there is no clear cut delineation of areas of responsibility and authority, no coordination other than that which we began quite recently, prior to Operation Defensive Shield. Even if it is true that "we are in the right and all we need to do is explain the situation," it turns out that we have failed to explain convincingly. We are justified in our own eyes but not in the eyes of the world. The narratives conflict; our narrative is war against terrorism, and theirs is war against occupation, illustrated by civilian casualties. This is our main problem.

IDF public relations is conducted on several fronts: the official IDF spokesperson, foreign contacts who hold briefings for ambassadors and other personnel responsible for public relations abroad, information missions to various governments, etc. In the final analysis we are quite weak in the European street, but quite strong with the U.S. government. A few of our public relations campaigns have succeeded: the unmasking of the 'Karine A' caused an about-face in the American attitude; our presentation of Operation Defensive Shield succeeded in altering even Europe's attitude vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority, such that it is perceived as a terrorist organization; Arafat himself has been largely discredited.

Today's media has the most impact on IDF fighting in Nablus, Bethlehem and similar areas. It influences our designation of

targets; we delayed entering Bethlehem several times because of the connections associated with Bethlehem and Jenin. It influences the manner of fighting—our decision whether to go in with tanks or to endanger our soldiers by leaving it to the infantry. Our insistence on our not wishing to conquer Bethlehem lacks credibility when anyone who turns on their TV sees a tank flattening everything in its path. Furthermore, the time difference between Israel and the United States has influenced on more than one occasion the timing of an operation, duration of stay in a particular place, etc.

Spokesmen on various levels are incorporated into the operational process. For example, an IDF spokesperson sits in on my 'Operations and Sorties' meetings and we coordinate with him during operations and attacks or attempts to thwart attacks. There is certainly media relevance in ordering a military operation. The first time we worked with the media in a systematic manner on the institutional level was during Operation Defensive Shield. We held joint forums that included representatives of the IDF, the foreign ministry, the prime minister's office, the defense ministry, and various spokespersons. The public relations forum met each day of the operation and was certainly useful. There was a media center, military and political media liaisons, response teams, etc.

Thus the media is not a weapon, but rather serves as an additional arena for the battle. We embed journalists within the fighting forces when operational considerations permit. I am in favor of public relations but not false propaganda, for we

cannot afford to be manipulative. We can certainly emphasize that which most favors us but we must always play according to the rules. At least while I have been in office, the IDF has not knowingly lied even once; if erroneous information was given out, an apology always followed. We shall never adopt the Palestinian method that can be summed up as “lie and forget about it.”

An army has no choice but to deal with the media. The media today is indeed part of the battle and if we neglect this area we cannot possibly win.

■ **Rafael Vardi:** Since we are fighting in populated areas, we must realize that we start off at a distinct disadvantage in the public relations arena. This does not mean that we should not bother to engage in public relations, that there is no need to use the media. I was happy to hear that the media is included in the IDF's operational orders, but this is not enough. We must make media considerations part of every evaluation preceding an operation, and they must be recognized at every level of command. Moreover, the decision to give a green light to an operation must include the media factor.

Throughout the duration of every battle and/or operation we must constantly reassess media impact. In this context we must consider the possibility of enlisting the media as our secret partner before the operation, even if the media's involvement in the details of the operation must be limited. The very knowledge of what is happening in real time allows a timely media response



to preempt the enemy's statements. On the other hand, if the media shows our soldiers sabotaging property or harming people, we've lost before we begin.

■ **Dan Harel:** In Israel it is impossible to tell a journalist what to photograph.

■ **Rafael Vardi:** You have to know how to direct them to appropriate places at appropriate times. Often we have no choice but to initiate a particular operation; at that point you must decide whether or not to include a reporter. As such it is important that the evaluation be ongoing.

An IDF spokesperson is a professional and must do his job, but circumstances dictate that officers in the field become spokesmen and they ought to be prepared for this task—not only do they need to know what to say and how to say it, but also what general relationship they should develop with the media.

■ **Eitan Haber:** I hope I will not be considered arrogant if I say that forty years ago I participated in a similar forum, and little has changed since then. These types of discussion will continue for many years to come, mainly because by definition the media and the military will never be able to coexist peacefully. There is an essential structural contradiction between the military and the media, and on the day this conflict ceases to exist at least one of these entities will cease to carry out its role. The military is meant to fight and win, and the military, like the government and other security forces, often requires secrecy to achieve its

goals. An army whose resources and plans are accessible to all cannot win; it will be decimated.

As opposed to the military, the media's role is to expose, reveal and know all; as the motto of the *New York Times* puts it, "everything that's fit to print." In recent years, the media has not always given much weight to security considerations and certainly does not allow the military to decide what to keep secret and what to disclose. The right the media arrogates to itself to decide what to publish has already caused damage to state security.

At the same time, it is not truly the case that the media in Israel knows everything and exposes everything. As one who has been on the other side of the fence, the governmental side, I can state with certainty that the Israeli media, while it has printed much in recent years, is still far from knowing everything about what goes on in the military, various security institutions, and even the government. The important state secrets have not been revealed (and I do not mean to imply that I know them), and I hope that they never will be.

It remains for me to suggest that the military and the media try to work together to portray an accurate picture of the army to the public.

It seems to me that the IDF has been doing precisely what it cannot afford to do: parading its high-ranking officers on television every night or in the morning papers and radio programs, explaining to the nation of Israel the political issues at stake in the conflict

with the Palestinians. This is fine and dandy for politicians but a disaster for the army. This is a total mixing of spheres and an infringement of the very essence of democracy. Yitzhak Rabin, for example, during the first *Intifada*, appeared almost nightly on the screen, explaining and offering interpretations like the lowliest of reporters. He did not allow officers to appear. Chief of Staff Dan Shomron was almost entirely absent from the media, brigade commanders did not speak. The military has a central role—to triumph in battle—and a secondary public relations role: to present the facts and nothing else. The army cannot afford to be at the service of politicians and lecture me and others like me on its opinion of Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. How does it look when a week before the Oslo Accords an IDF general denounces the "evil empire" and two days after Oslo has to project the exact opposite?

The IDF deals with topics that are the province of the political echelon alone. But as has always been the case, the IDF enters the vacuum left by the political sphere. When no others step forward to claim responsibility, the IDF takes upon itself roles for which it is ill fitted and becomes enmeshed in politics.

Incidentally, or perhaps not so incidentally, the IDF is not built to deal with the media. The institution of IDF spokesman, with which I was somewhat familiar in the wake of the Sinai Campaign, may have grown in status and scope, but it has not changed fundamentally in the definition of its role or methodology. The tools that it uses are inappropriate. I once suggested that the institution of IDF spokesman operate according to the structure

of a newspaper, with reporters, editors and photographers. If you wish I can elaborate.

To conclude, an IDF involved in matters that are not within its domain will get more and more bogged down.

■ **Arnon Zuckerman:** The previous speakers have failed to take into account the drastic change in global communications. Thirty years ago we had one TV channel, there were no global channels; everything was under our control. We let the media in only if we wanted to. With the advent of cellular phones and satellite broadcasts from all over the world, that era has ended.

■ **Eyal Shlein:** In this type of conflict we must teach people not to talk, but to think media. As is the case with regard to safety measures, you cannot make anything risk free, but you can try to avoid serious mistakes. On the assumption that we are viewed as the occupiers in this conflict, that there is natural sympathy for the underdog, that we do not control air time and that what seems right to us does not speak to the other side, we must focus on the significance of the media as a tool and even as part of our arsenal. In this conflict it is important to encourage this type of thinking at all levels and to implement risk management strategies. Wherever we identify a vulnerable point we must find an appropriate person to address the issue.

Similarly, we must understand that since we are also engaged in a war of ideas, we must highlight the negative side of the Palestinians and their lies—call it public relations or propaganda.

Our overriding goal in this context is to be capable of influencing, both as the IDF and as the State of Israel, what is broadcast on CNN and other networks. One example would be to arrange a battlefield tour for reporters, making sure that two-thirds of them are objective. This would provide a broader perspective than briefings by the IDF spokesman.

■ **Amir Oren:** There are three distinct groups of reporters with whom the IDF must contend. The IDF deals well with the first group and will be able to deal with the last group effectively once there is a new IDF spokesperson, but it has no success at all in dealing with the middle group. The first group consists of broadcasters, reporters and military analysts who cover the army on a regular basis and who tend to be referred to derogatorily as IDF mouthpieces, since they believe the army and its side of the story implicitly. The last group consists of foreign reporters. The most problematic group consists of those who mold public opinion in Israeli newspapers but who are not part of the first group; they write in the same papers and appear on the same television programs, but in essence base their analysis on second-hand reports. They do not want to be in the field, they do not want to meet the people; it is almost impossible to reach them. Even without having any basis in fact, their opinions appear to have significant impact on public opinion.

■ **Aviv Cochavy:** I wish to present a number of principles and practical recommendations. I speak simply as a platoon commander. First, the sun will continue to set in the west. That is, the physics of communications and the media will remain

the same, and we must learn to act within these parameters. I refuse to succumb to the frustration of the IDF spokesperson shamed into silence by the replay of IDF rockets. Instead of giving up, we must come up with a way to educate the press so that next time there will be no replay. The best lie is the truth. Military correspondents visited me two weeks ago and asked if my platoon had been involved in any instances of pillage. I described two incidents of which I was aware.

Second, I must assume that ultimately information will reach everyone. I cannot know who is or is not filming me as I fight in the alleys. All I can do is to try to influence the angle of the story. Third, I increasingly understand that the human angle is the strongest aspect of the story.

■ **Eitan Haber:** You would determine your fighting strategy based on the public angle ... the human story?

■ **Aviv Cochavy:** No, but if the reporter comes to me, he will film the total situation.

■ **Moshe Ya'alon:** But ultimately he brings his own perspective. By the way, how and when to include the media on the battlefield is a function of what we wish to show. We must always show the truth, but no-one has to show the entire truth.

■ **Aviv Cochavy:** As I said, gradually I have come to the realization that the human element, even on a small scale, can be immeasurably strong in long-term public relations. I'll continue

with the rest of the principles. We never know where events will lead. Thus, if we have at the ready a group of authentic personal stories that reflect a certain picture, we may be able to direct media presentation. The fifth principle is that at least some of the media damage incurred by Israel is unnecessary. Our forces enter a refugee camp in a clean action, arriving from twelve directions and successfully locating most of those sought. But this interests no-one, because a CNN reporter broadcasts a photograph of a car destroyed by a tank with the headline, "Israeli Forces Damage Civilian Property." Couldn't the car have been moved before the tank entered? We harm ourselves and must admit this.

The sixth point is my opposition to the idea of the officer as spokesperson. I am not a spokesperson. I am an individual who tells my story from my perspective to the camera and reporter: my truth. Let me explain how this type of initiative is likely to achieve a result counter to the one desired. A written brief is distributed to officers daily, and they read these when they appear before reporters. The result is a news report in which each soldier up the rank repeats the very same sentence, with only slight variations according to each one's ability to express himself. I would stop at one official IDF spokesperson.

A further two principles: the media is still seen by many of us as something to avoid for two reasons: it is tainted with foreignness and it is a minefield. As a citizen of a democratic country, I consider propaganda to be institutional manipulation.

The issues I have raised require attention. Ongoing communication

with a military correspondent is preferable to a concentrated filming session of three to four hours, since in this way the reporter becomes aware of the complexity of the reality. One thing that I still find difficult to explain in an interview of seven seconds are the difficulties involved in fighting in a heavily populated area. A reporter who spends two days with me will understand and be able to portray this. We had teams from CBS and the BBC with us for a week or two, and after only two days they had almost become fighters. They understood that behind the lethal weapons were thinking, deliberating human beings. They saw how soldiers hesitate over whether or not to shoot open a door, in case there might be a room and not a passageway behind it.

■ **Ehud Ya'ari:** A camera is a cannon ... part of the arsenal. The question is in which direction does it point and who is behind it. The ultimate question is how we can ensure that most of these cannons are to our advantage.

There must be a conceptual reevaluation such that our approach to the media in wartime is similar to our approach at the peak of the peace process. We must decide when it is essential to close areas to the press and when a policy of openness is more appropriate; when to flood the arena with information; what approach to take; when we can engineer a leak or direct media presentation.

With regard to these "cannons," as more reporters accompany Brigade 35 their cannons will be on our side. At times, a given story will not flatter us, but the overall picture will be



to our advantage and will bring about change. For example, had we allowed the media—whether represented by the IDF spokesperson, a TV military correspondent or the BBC—into Jenin at an earlier stage, to see the real battle in progress, to see the enemy's actions with his own eyes, the media presentation certainly would have been very different.

If our general approach is to be aggressive, then just as the General Security Service floods the Palestinian Authority with agents, we must flood the area with media of all types. I cite just one example: I simply do not understand why we do not use information that a person is planning a terrorist attack as a media bombshell; rather we tend to wait until after an attack has taken place to mention that a particular party was responsible.

As a state we have failed in two areas in which we ought to be strong. In the realm of electronic communications we are totally outclassed by Arab Internet communications; in the sphere of satellite broadcasts we do not have the ability to reach the Arab world. We do not even have a newspaper directed at the Arab world in general or at the Palestinians. If we were to broadcast aggressive public relations statements, at least the opposition would be forced to defend itself and to relate to some of our claims and accusations. Today our enemies operate with absolute freedom.

Furthermore, the State of Israel has waived its right to demand what every other state demands. A journalist wishing to enter the United States must obtain an A1 visa; otherwise, he is in

violation of the immigration laws. Anyone can come to Israel and broadcast whatever he/she wants. For example, the correspondent from Abu Dhabi who came here, to a country that does not have diplomatic relations with his country, sat in a television studio in west Jerusalem and reported on mass executions in Ramallah. He was not asked to present a work permit or any form of correspondence with the Government Press Office.

While the ultimate outcome will not depend on the screen or written text, a commitment to overall supervision would certainly prove helpful. By supervision I mean daily guidance, not only at later stages of the conflict, and we must make sure that the daily briefings are interesting and worthwhile from the journalists' perspective. By supervision I also mean the decision as to when and where reporters can enter a battle zone.

■ **Baruch Nevo:** About thirty years ago I attended a course while serving as a reservist—the highest command course I have taken in the IDF. We were told that the goal of fighting is to achieve the maximum objective at minimum cost. I don't think this definition has changed fundamentally; what has changed is the scope of objectives and costs. Then the target was a hill, a fortification, an enemy military base, and the cost was measured in terms of casualties, loss of weapons, etc. Today the definition of objective has been expanded to include such intangibles as image and public opinion.

For some time the IDF has been acting in accordance with these changed definitions. The IDF does not ignore the media.

The very fact that the IDF announced publicly that it used light weaponry in Jenin rather than arms such as cannons and planes attests to this fact. While the decision not to use heavier arms was based on ethical considerations, the expected presence of the media and its impact on public opinion was certainly relevant.

An additional step in including media considerations in battle preparation is to incorporate this aspect into our formal protocol. Just as we consult with logistical experts, physicians, and other experts, we must also consult with media experts.

Nonetheless, there are two areas of inherent tension that ought to be kept in mind when it comes to dealing with the media. By definition there is a clash between the IDF's need to deter, and its desire to accrue world approbation. The world's sympathy, even that of politicians, tends to be with the underdog; in order to deter, however, we must both appear and act like Goliath, but as soon as we do so we immediately lose media points. Another conflict is between Israeli public opinion and that of the world community. The Israeli public demands that the government respond sharply to suicide attacks, and it is reasonable to assume that this will continue. On the other hand, the views of the broader public, a group that has no direct stake in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, cannot be ignored without cost. The world is not willing to accept a policy of an eye for an eye, nor will it condone as ethical the destruction of houses of families of suicide bombers. These two conflicts have no good resolutions.

A last point is related to my specific area of expertise, the psychology of human resources. Amir Oren said that the IDF cannot place an unsympathetic character, one who cannot express himself well, at the head of any unit, since he is sure to meet up with the media sooner or later. This is quite true. I foresee a situation, for better or for worse, in which among the considerations for promotion will be the question whether the person being considered for a position in which he will encounter the press is suitable in terms of media image. I do not mean that this will be made a formal requirement for promotion, but rather claim that on the subconscious level this is sure to happen and we must be ready for this.

■ **Elisheva Broun-Lapidot:** The media is not the most important thing, but neither is it the enemy. Moreover we must view it as an additional tool for achieving the military objective. Nowadays it seems that the media focuses only on results, while the job of the IDF spokesperson is to flood the arena with reasons, underlying motives, and basic facts. It is important to provide information on a timely basis, to foster a dependency on the part of the media and not to slam the door in its face. Not long ago a reporter for a foreign network told me that he was ordered not to enter the battle zone. He slipped in, in order to carry out his journalistic duty, and our soldiers shot in his direction. From that time on he has not had anything good to say about Israel.

In order to triumph in an era of up-to-the-minute news flashes, we must create our own. We should have no problem doing

this if we embark on a military operation with the intention of releasing information as we go along.

Since the "in" thing today is morality, we need to think ahead of time about what angles we should publicize and how we wish to present ourselves. The national spokesperson cannot be an officer, complete with M-16 slung over his shoulder. Side-by-side with our military operations we must make sure we provide humanitarian aid (food, medical supplies, etc.), and these must be given media exposure. I would not dismiss public relations attempts directed at the Palestinian population. If the IDF turns to inhabitants of a refugee camp in Jenin and explains what we want and what we do not want, it could make a big difference. Not all Palestinians turn a deaf ear; some seek common ground and want to create a better reality. We must not give up and say that such an attempt is a lost cause from the outset . . . or that the media as a whole is our enemy.

In order to be able to respond to events in real time, I would appoint someone to listen to Arab and Palestinian propaganda statements about a given military action. I would also suggest incorporating media-related issues into the earliest stages of military training, for every soldier is to some extent an unofficial spokesperson.

■ **Ruth Yaron:** Framing has significance, the picture is the message and determines whether or not there is a story. The picture creates a psychological impact.

The difficulty in formulating the message can be attributed to a number of factors. We live in a complex political world. This is true in any democracy and even more so here in Israel, where debate over the basic narrative is not present only within the public at large and vis-à-vis various foreign audiences, but even within the governing institution. This debate impacts on the manner in which the message is couched. In wartime ever-changing operational needs mandate that the projected message change accordingly. Our message must also be tailored to appeal to different target audiences, both in terms of shifting emphases and subtle alterations required to communicate in different languages.

Because of the fundamental debate over the narrative, ethical issues have much significance. As a citizen who watches television, I see very little of the daily dilemmas faced by the soldier and his commanding officer in the field. These ought to be highlighted as this would create a bond with the citizenry. Nothing garners more sympathy than ethical dilemmas in time of battle; all it would take would be for the media to accompany a unit for forty-eight or seventy-two hours. The reporters would have an opportunity to witness countless operational dilemmas, attempts to choose those actions that will achieve the objective while minimizing civilian damage.

In general I am a great believer in preparing procedures ahead of time such that they can be developed in a relatively calm setting. This is certainly appropriate with regard to media relations, especially those appropriate for wartime. By procedures I mean

daily and weekly briefings as well as preparing a coordinated message that is always available. A good example is the manner in which the American government develops and projects a well thought-out message and transmits it via the entire media spectrum.

I also refer to incorporating the media in our arsenal, not when the signal is given for the tanks to roll but much earlier, while the operation is at planning stage. Ehud Ya'ari called this flooding; I would call it preparing the ground. That is, before entering the Jenin refugee camp, you describe life in the camp, the narrow alleyways, who lives there and how they operate, etc. It has already been said here today that the media, especially the electronic media, has little patience, space or time for anything other than bottom line results. The media does almost nothing to acknowledge such concepts as context or motive, and the way to ensure that these aspects are presented is by preparing the story ahead of time.

Part of planning a military operation includes deciding whether to delay the military response in order to retain control of the media. When a terrorist attack has taken place the pictures on the screen are of that attack. The story changes completely the moment the F-16 is in the air; at that moment our window of opportunity slams shut. The reason for our action is no longer of the slightest interest. We must decide to concentrate our efforts and to extend this window of opportunity, thus ensuring that our target audiences will be receptive to our side of the story.

In every country, and we can take the United States as a model, it is taken as obvious that the media cannot be privy to everything that happens during battle and cannot enter every place at the head of the fighting forces. Nonetheless, we must make it clear that we do not intend to close a given area to the media for the entire duration of an operation. We must say this twice, during the preparation stage and after the operation has commenced; we must officially announce to the press that while the area must be closed temporarily for operational reasons, it will shortly be reopened.

The psychological component has been mentioned, and we must deal with this aspect even within the IDF. Officer consciousness must be presented from the first command course, with the understanding that every officer may one day find himself the ranking officer in the field and that he is one part of a puzzle. The picture the viewer gets in Israel and abroad is limited to one screen, and this screen is part of that same puzzle we wish to broadcast. If one person is unsuccessful in his dealings with the media, he places a green piece where a blue one belongs, and the entire picture is distorted. In other words, tactical events influence even the general framing of our story.

■ **Ariel Heiman:** I have a few comments.

1. The press falls into a unique category. It is at the same time part of the arsenal and an additional battle arena. With its help not only can we defend, but we can attack as well.



2. Some people have said, "Let the officers fight and let the political echelon talk." That is fine if the politicians do speak up, but in many cases they do not wish to do so, even when their refusal to do so is a mistake. Thus, the military has no choice but to speak.
3. You cannot lump all of the media together. We must make clear distinctions between print and electronic media, between different languages, between broadcasts directed at Europe and those aimed at American audiences, between that which is for internal consumption and that intended for use abroad. Only at a later stage can we consider whether a spokesperson should appear in uniform or civilian attire.

■ **Eival Gilady:** In his opening remarks Arye Carmon asked whether we can win the war without conquering the screen, for if in the course of preventing a terrorist attack you accidentally kill two Palestinian children, you must know how to justify this on screen. The answer is hidden in the title of today's discussion: the media as a strategic consideration in battle preparation. I would like to focus on the word 'preparation'. We are not engaged in battles with little or no margin. The conflict with the Palestinians is comprised of an ongoing series of battles; as such we must prepare for an orderly campaign with a constant reevaluation of our goals. We have to create an environment in which our words are favorably received in the fifteen seconds of broadcast time allotted to us.

I agree that it is quite difficult to photograph motives and easy

to photograph results. Difficult, but not impossible. If we take five or six informed people, I am convinced that they will come up with some answers. One example is my proposal that on each tank entering Jenin we place a banner stating: "We Cannot Pass Over" both in the sense of to ignore and as a reference to Passover. The cameras would focus on these signs instead of on the tanks themselves. We must connect the motive to the action, for even if something embarrassing to us is photographed, it will include not only the result but the motive too. I reiterate: we cannot view this as a process with ups and downs, but have to see it as an ongoing struggle for which we must allocate resources and set a daily agenda.

It is legal, ethical and right to use the media as a tool in this conflict as long as we do not use manipulation and false propaganda. It is customary for us to think in defensive terms, in terms of how to protect ourselves from the other side's accusations. But it is possible to influence the enemy's media content not only by explanations and defensiveness, but also by introducing issues that balance the picture in our favor.

■ **Giora Eiland:** It is easy to say what has to be done with regard to the media, but the costs are heavy, and I would like to discuss three distinct sacrifices we must be willing to make if we are to succeed in our dealings with the foreign press: one that must be made by the political or civilian sphere; one that the military must make, and one that the Israeli media must make.

With regard to the first sacrifice—the political one—over the last

twenty months, whether there has been a terrorist attack or not, if CNN or the BBC want an Israeli response they call an Israeli politician and interview him. At that point everything depends on the quality of the speaker: his proficiency in English, whether he represents the government, whether he knows the facts, whether what he says is consistent with what others have said. We are talking about a no holds barred contest, and the State of Israel has no real spokesperson. When are things different? Only in times of real crisis. During the events in Jenin two professional spokespersons were designated, Mark Sofer and Dore Gold, who coordinated with the military at least in terms of facts. In every other case anarchy has reigned. Not every Israeli spokesperson represents Israel properly; some cause more harm than good.

As for the second sacrifice, in order for the army to perform better it must first and foremost show more willingness to be exposed to the media and stop shunning it.

■ **Moshe Ya'alon:** The media is indeed a strategic consideration both in preparing for battle and during and after battle. It must be a consideration within the military from the chief of staff to the last soldier. It must be clear that ultimately every war is decided on the conceptual plane since one side must surrender. The difficulties inherent in fighting in a populated area are not represented adequately in either the journalistic or the legal lexicon. In this type of fighting we are judged according to Second World War terminology—occupation, the Geneva Convention, colonialism. This is the terminology in vogue

in Europe. In post-September 11<sup>th</sup> America, the language is different since terrorism is the main threat there.

The Palestinians do not have the ability to conquer Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip with military might, nor do they intend to do so. They plan to triumph on the screen by capturing hearts and minds, by influencing world and Israeli public opinion as well as that of the Arab and Palestinian street.

Their message to Israel is, "You will not have security until you give in to our demands; we will continue to spill your blood in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Netanya."

The message to the world is, "We are the poor victims, the occupied; this is the only occupied area in the post-Second World War world."

The message to the Arab world is, "You, Mubarak and Abdullah, cannot live in peace, for we control your street. We have the matches to ignite the fire, and if you do not work to achieve Israel's surrender, you too will fall."

The message to the Palestinians is, "The development of the ethos of the war of Palestinian liberation is at stake; enlist in this cause in any way that is demanded of you."

This is first and foremost a war of ideology, and as such the media factor, the psychological impact of our actions, is critical. If we understand that a photograph of a tank speaks against

us on CNN, we can take this into account in our decision as to whether or not to send in the tank. We schedule helicopter operations for after dark so they cannot be photographed easily and make sure the operation is over within fifteen minutes so the photographers do not have a chance to begin filming. Such considerations are already second nature to us.

Officers, certainly on the level of platoon commander, must understand that there are strategic media considerations. The tension between the need to destroy a particular building or to use a tank or helicopter, and the manner in which the world perceives these actions, can affect the ultimate success or failure of the campaign. Even if we triumph in battle, we can lose in the media and consequently on the ideological plane.

Since the media is so important, it must be taken into consideration at every level, and needs to be treated differently at each level. It is clear that it is the right and duty of the chief of Military Intelligence to express his opinion of Arafat. On the other hand, platoon or unit commanders should confine themselves to commenting on the situation in the field and avoid issues regarding the Palestinian Authority or Arafat.

The strategy is dictated by the political echelon; when this political echelon insisted that we not de-legitimize Arafat, we did not publicize "white papers" even though we viewed them as a significant public relations asset even at the outset of the conflict. Only after a year-and-a-half of fighting did the government embark on de-legitimizing Arafat. The army did not need

documents from Ramallah to know that Arafat had initiated a strategic process for which he was directly responsible.

One of our most serious problems is the dissent over the basic narrative, even at the political level. There is no agreement as to the analysis: Are we dealing with an event that got out of control (an *Intifada*) or with a deliberate Palestinian initiative that utilizes terrorism, popular violence, etc.? Some prominent Israelis actually espouse the Palestinian "occupation" narrative and believe that Arafat truly intended to reach an agreement with Israel but lost control. They consider it our job to help him back on track. If I have personal inside knowledge of the Palestinian frame of reference and strategy, am I truly required to be politically correct? What about my professional responsibility to call it as I see it?

Another problem is that of coordination. The military is disciplined and carries out decisions of the cabinet. The army is a "civil servant" within the democratic system. At the same time, we are at the focus of a debate regarding strategy and are frequently faced with embarrassing situations. Our various representatives abroad tell different stories. This makes things quite difficult.

The official spokesperson is as much a professional as is the artillery officer. The commander directs the battle relying on information he receives; so too must he know how to involve

the media and project his perspective; he must introduce what is happening on the battlefield. An officer who has carried out an operation must understand the media ramifications of his action. He must know how to dash off an initial report as quickly as possible. At times this will require subsequent correction, and this will be forthcoming, but if the media has to wait a day for our response because the commander of the unit has not yet been debriefed, our story will lose its relevance; furthermore, the enemy has proven quite successful in running to the foreign media with their story at their fingertips.

An additional area that requires improvement is our flexibility in turning to different target audiences. For example, terrorists need to hear of targeted killings, but it is preferable that neither the world, nor even the general Israeli public, hear much about this. We must learn to work intelligently vis-à-vis different target audiences; we must understand them and develop appropriate strategies directed at different audiences and utilizing different tools.

## DISCUSSION GROUP 2

# The IDF's Approach to the Media

**Moderator: Dr. Yoram Peri**

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### Participants:

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■ **Yoram Peri:** In 1968, a new era opened in the history of the relationship between the military and the press when American TV revealed to the public that the stories it had been relaying about the [Vietnam] war did not reflect what was happening in the field. During the Tet Offensive, Walter Cronkite, Mr. Television, said: "The pictures that we have presented to you so far do not really reflect what happened on the battlefield. The war is much more shocking, the situation is totally different, and the time has come for us to ask ourselves what we are doing in Vietnam."

The change that came about during the Tet Offensive didn't occur simply because the press felt that it was not reporting the truth about the war, but because of a comprehensive change in approach by the American press. Until that time, journalists adhered to the objective journalism model, the assumption being that the job of the press was first and foremost to cover what was happening. From that point on, the press understood that what it had considered objective was not in fact objective, since it came from sources in Washington. In other words, the press had been reflecting a picture of the war determined by the president and the Pentagon. In the wake of this affair, the American press became an investigative press, refusing to accept the official Washington line.

This dramatic change in perspective began filtering down to other countries. It came to us, in some respects, five years later—in 1973, when the press said *mea culpa* for not having asked questions before the Yom Kippur War, and for in essence having served the prevailing conceptual paradigm.

The second international revolution in journalism developed much later, and got to Israel only in part. Yaron Ezrahi spoke about it and I intend to add a few sentences.

In the context of the issues we are discussing today, human society is characterized by three main things:

**1. A multimedia society**—there are continual live broadcasts; the broadcasts are on many channels; and most importantly, the visuals have hegemony. People who do not understand the production principles of the new media will not succeed in dealing with it.

**2. The influence of technological change**—every war is characterized by technological change. In the war in Afghanistan, for instance, the videophone had a dramatic influence on the character of coverage.

**3. Change in the character of politics and society**—in Israel since the early '90s, in Europe since the early '80s, and in the United States since the early '70s. A new kind of democracy was created in which the press takes center stage. This doesn't mean that the mediating press has become more important, but that the substantive character of democracy has changed. Benjamin Netanyahu was the first to understand this turning point and to play the politics of the new age. Following him, others in the political realm did so too. The conclusion is not that we must get used to the press as a new player in an old game, but that we must get used to the idea of a new game. War

is different from the wars we knew. For example, understanding the logic of the press means you have to set the agenda and not react to it. Benjamin Netanyahu was the first prime minister to set the agenda by deciding in advance what he was going to say to the media that day. For the purposes of this discussion, I would like to suggest something extreme and say that even in war you have to ask what picture you wish to appear on the evening news, and not how to explain *a posteriori* the military actions of the day. That is how modern politics works today in the democratic world.

**4. Modern wars** are not wars between states but wars within states. They are wars that have totally changed the character of the relationship between politics and war. The modern, sub-conventional wars are political wars; it is thus impossible to distinguish between the political and the military.

There are five issues before us: a closed military area—advantages and disadvantages; handling the Palestinian and foreign press; during hostilities—IDF spokesman or national spokesman; the public's right to know vs. field security considerations; the IDF's reports to the press—the issue of credibility.

The first three issues are more tangible and specific, and it is worth giving them in-depth consideration.

■ **Tali Lipkin-Shahak:** Before we begin any discussion, two questions that concern the meeting point of the press and the army need to be clarified: what are the army's expectations of

the press; and are we talking about propaganda or information, since it is the public's right to know and the job of the army to provide the public with information and not to be a vehicle for dissembling and manipulation.

■ **Uri Dromi:** Concerning the closed military area, one should not think in terms of expediency but in terms of the possible. That is the only consideration. In the Falklands it was possible; in the Gulf War it was possible for the Americans, partly because of the domination of the Pentagon spokesperson and the "lap dog attitude" of the American press, which at the moment of truth caved in to the government and simply played by its rules, with few exceptions.

For us, it's impossible except on very limited fronts. To illustrate, when I was the head of the Government Press Office, the OC decided to close the Hebron front to the press because of the "mess," in his words. I told him that the media with its cameras was already in Hebron, and that the only thing to be achieved would be pictures of soldiers at roadblocks chasing journalists.

In principle, I'm not against closing a military area. If it's important to close an area from an operational point of view, we can take what the media dishes out. Not everything has to be shown in real time; the test is whether it's possible or impossible. We're talking about the public's right to know, and from findings of the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, it turns out that the public actually says that at certain times it's willing to compromise on the right to know.

In my opinion, we need to define what we could call media mines or press traps. People who experienced the Kafr Kana affair in Lebanon in 1996 or Jenin in 2002 know that any idea of openness can be wiped out in a minute through an error by an artilleryman or a case of bad luck resulting in the death of thirteen people by a landmine. You have to be mentally and emotionally prepared for these kinds of incidents, and you have to deploy differently the minute they happen. For example, in Kana they blamed us for deliberately shelling the town. CNN broadcast a shot of an unmanned plane after the chief of staff claimed to the UN investigator—correctly—that there had been no unmanned plane. In such a case, the right thing would have been to forego field security considerations *a priori* in order to nip the crisis in the bud and to demonstrate that the unmanned plane was in Tzur or Sidon at the time. It took three days to convince the army that the way we appear to the international media is more important than field security.

■ **Mordechai Kremnitzer:** When the fighting is not between armies, it is very difficult to make the case for a closed military area; it raises suspicion and creates enmity. I don't accept the reasoning that an area should be closed in order to prevent reporters and photographers from a situation of mortal danger; they should sign a statement to the effect that they take responsibility for themselves and should then be allowed in. With regard to handling the Palestinian and foreign press, the term "kid gloves" is neither gentle nor delicate enough to express my meaning. They should be afforded the very best treatment

because people are people, and your attitude towards them will influence what they write.

Another comment in the context of what Uri Dromi said. The top brass of the army can aim towards 100% credibility, but you must not forget that the army gets reports from the field. I have yet to meet a person who is willing to take responsibility for a state of chaos. Items coming from the field are always colored by the need for self-defense.

In my opinion, it's not possible to win this media war because of the overall framework. In reality the balance of power between the two sides is not in dispute. You have to acknowledge this in order not to raise illusory hopes. The conditions are so tough from the viewpoint of the media that it is only possible to work on minimizing damage. The only "consolation" is the horrendous behavior of the other side. So in estimating the chances of winning the war, the army must take into consideration the media war and give it its due weight in the modern world and say something that goes against the grain of army, whose goal is to win on the battlefield. The chances of winning this campaign are minimal, in my opinion, because of the inability to achieve critical successes on the media front.

With regard to the public's right to know versus field security considerations, there are two possible conclusions: either I misunderstood the High Court of Justice's determination in the Schnitzer appeal, which held that the censor's job is to deal with materials that have a 'near certainty' of causing serious harm to

security, or the judgment that was given was problematic. Out of consideration for the security of our forces, if one soldier alone is in harm's way, the prevention of publication in real time is totally justified, even if there is no 'near certainty'. For example: a battle develops between soldiers and a terrorist who has entered a settlement, and Israeli TV broadcasts the progress of the battle live—our forces are here, our forces are there, etc. Even if there is only a 10% chance that the terrorist can see the TV or hear the radio, the broadcast is unjustified.

On the question of IDF spokesperson versus national spokesperson, I am unequivocally in favor of a national spokesperson, because no matter who speaks on behalf of the army, the IDF's credibility will be compromised, and it must be safeguarded at all costs. If the state is unable to appoint a national spokesperson here, as in other spheres, the IDF may be dragged against its will into an existing national vacuum.

■ **Yosef Coopervasser:** What has been said here suggests that the main concern of the press is the public's right to know. I'm not actually sure that the media has set itself a hierarchy of goals. The impression given is that this is not always the media's main consideration, and that many journalists have interests of their own that they wish to promote.

The media is an instrument for transferring information to the public according to the public's right to know, but it usually has a spin. You always have to take the other side's spin into account because it's a battle over consciousness, especially the

consciousness of the Israeli public, even if most of the examples today concern our attitude towards international perception.

■ **Arye Carmon:** Israel's interest is also to influence world perception.

■ **Yosef Coopervasser:** That interest is clear. I'm saying that the representatives of the press here currently have no influence on the consciousness of the residents of New Orleans. I disagree with what was said about the ineffectiveness of the struggle over perception, but in order to understand what's possible and what's not, the media battlefield must be well-defined and the objectives analyzed.

In the current confrontation we are running four campaigns:

**1. The campaign concerning Israeli society's ability to stand fast**—this struggle is carried on as terrorists commit bombings while we must provide society with emotional fortitude and stamina. Steadfastness is achieved if the IDF is depicted as an organization that knows what it is doing and has solutions; if it is seen to be able to reduce the extent of terror through operations like Defensive Shield. On the other hand, if media interests demean the importance of the army's actions ("So they were in Ramallah, but what did they do there? Found a gun and two rounds of ammunition?"), the public will get the feeling that the army has no solution, that the terrorists will continue the bombings. And by the way, an area that is closed to us and hard to break through is the steadfastness of Palestinian society.



**2. The campaign for the legitimacy of the mode of action**—this is an extensive campaign, and it is carried on first and foremost through the media. We have had tremendous successes in this campaign; to wit—the IDF entered Nablus and spent time there, with no negative reactions. Part of the legitimization for this was the terrorist bombings themselves; good media policy might have played a role too. Despite this, we aren't doing enough to deal with the problem of the de-legitimization of Palestinian terrorism. In practice, the Palestinians have been successful in gaining legitimization for a kind of terrorism: terrorism against the settlers. A terrorist incident in the settlement of Itamar in the West Bank does not get the same attention as one in Petach Tikvah within the Green Line.

**3. The campaign for the legitimacy of leadership**—the IDF certainly does not deal with the legitimacy of the Israeli leadership, but that's not true concerning the legitimacy of the Palestinian leadership; whether by choice or by force, the army is quite involved with this.

We are near to winning this campaign. Arafat's credibility in Europe is practically nil, both because of our pronouncements and his errors.

**4. The struggle over the basic narrative**—Professor Ezrahi presented this as a victory of the conqueror-conquered narrative. In his opinion, two narratives are at odds here; the conqueror-conquered narrative on one side, and on the other the narrative that says that certain Palestinians, Arafat among

them, are not satisfied with 100%. These are two narratives that can live together, and the question is which of them scores the most points. This is the real battle. This is where the war will be determined. Does the army need to deal with this campaign? First, the army has no choice but to link up with the national spokesperson. The IDF knows what it wants, and the state knows what it wants. There are many disagreements about the political horizon, but there are many areas of consensus concerning how to arrive at that horizon.

In these areas, I think the army can and should supply the materials that it has to support the struggle. Suppose that the army found materials in the Muqata [Yasser Arafat's compound] that demonstrate Arafat's involvement with terrorism. The IDF should certainly make this public.

■ **Rachel Dolev:** Every side acts as if it sets the agenda. In practice, there is the matter of balance of interests and the matter of circumstances, and it is the circumstances that set the agenda and not one side or the other. In the context of our discussion today, the question is whether field security considerations prevail or whether it is impossible to close an area under any circumstances, since the media will always get there and will set the agenda.

The response is an intermediate answer. You shouldn't make a determination on the basis of recent incidents, Jenin or Gaza for instance, but should judge each incident on its own merits according to the objective and the task.

One basic fact is that the press is an intermediary in the environment in which we act. If things are presented thus, it's not a question of our victory over the press or our victory through the instrument of the media, but a recognition that the army acts within a media environment and that the media has advanced greatly in terms of technology, making it difficult to conceal things. According this recognition weight will prevent the army from rash reactions such as, "Yesterday they wrote something bad about me, so today I'll open the entire front." Do we really think that the massacre in Jenin story was born simply because we didn't let the media into the area? Weren't there claims of a massacre in Ramallah and the murder of thirty people, despite the fact that journalists could come up with a picture of only five bodies in real time?

You have to be aware that the media is a player in this game, but that it nevertheless doesn't run it. On the other hand, the army cannot operate in a closed space or declare an area a closed military area or determine that Operation Defensive Shield be a veiled operation. Veiled operations are determined by field security and not by the censor. The name of an operation, like the operational plan, is by nature concealed until the operation is actualized.

I became military censor on May 24, 2000, when Israel pulled out of Lebanon and was on the way to the Camp David talks. In accordance with those circumstances, my objective was to make military censorship more open, timely and credible. When the *Intifada* broke out and the military conflict became more severe,

we had to regroup according to the new actuality; i.e., to raise the closed military area parameters without harming the public's right to know, without infringing on freedom of speech, etc.

■ **Arye Carmon:** In the context of our discussion as to whether or not it is possible to deal successfully with the media, it is worth pointing out that media policies are strongly influenced by a factor that is not necessarily consistent with military and national responsibility. I refer to basic economic considerations. Tomorrow's headline is not dictated solely by the editor's commitment to the public's right to know. Of at least equal weight is the question of what will encourage newspaper sales or television audiences.

We are not talking about the public's right to know, for the public knows. The main question faced by our policy-makers is whether we can impact on the ideological plane. Ideology is not monolithic, nor are we talking only about the split between public opinion within Israel, the world community and the enemy camp. The range of norms and values that have psychological impact is large. Trends in any society, and certainly within Israeli society, can change overnight.

The question is this: when we try to formulate media policy, is it not appropriate to think in terms of a range of tools to match the range of ideologies? One example is the Israeli public's recent display of strength and stamina. I am not sure that the public will be capable of such strength over the course of many months, when unemployment reaches 16-18% and the economic crisis

is more severe. The political-security reality has economic ramifications, and eventually we'll find ourselves in a different conceptual world; at that point, how will we look at the things we said today? Are we prepared for that eventuality?

■ **Gal Heersht:** During and after Operation Defensive Shield we were harshly criticized by the media, which called the IDF hostile to international journalism, a designation that originated in the number of casualties accrued among foreign journalists.

Getting down to the issue at hand, the army has a job, and we have two obligations vis-à-vis Israeli society: the ethical obligation to provide the public with relevant information and the obligation to influence public opinion in a restrained manner, to implement checks and balances. We cannot cross the line into propaganda, but we must design slogans such as, "We are the nation's army", "We protect the nation of Israel", "The fight is for our home", "We are the nation's shield for young and old alike", "We are here to protect you". This is what I mean by subtle influence.

A more explicit type of influence is to be found in public relations messages transmitted via the media, aimed at the international community and the enemy. World opinion affects the military outcome; my professional and ethical obligations demand that I provide honest information. I must provide this information in a timely fashion, but it has to be checked for accuracy. Controlling the microphone is an extremely important challenge for the IDF,

and it must be included as an official objective. Our operational policies must be aggressive; I must be prepared to grab any microphone and broadcast what I think should be heard.

■ **Ilana Dayan:** When the head of a research division, Yosef Coopervasser, says that it is possible to win this war, I am far from certain that I wish to triumph on all four of the fronts he enumerates. Do I really wish to win the battle for the stamina of Israeli society? Perhaps I would prefer to weaken this stamina? Indeed, I want to force Israeli society to reconsider fundamental questions. Do I really want to grant legitimacy to the methods employed by the IDF? No. I wish to challenge systematically and consistently the legitimacy of both the methods and the leadership, and question operations such as "Soon by You", "Defensive Shield", "High Tide and Ebb Tide". I also wish to argue the basic narrative—the narrative of occupier and occupied—as perceived by the foreign press. I want the Israeli public to take a step back and ask itself if this is indeed the paradigm by which it wishes to be understood. The way it became accepted abroad caused me—as an Israeli, not as a journalist—shock and dismay.

■ **Yosef Coopervasser:** You must provide the public with the tools to deal with these matters.

■ **Ilana Dayan:** How do we provide the public with such tools? Not simply by subjecting them to a stream of information, but by presenting alternative understandings, by providing interpretations that you consider illegitimate. Some specific

areas in which I would apply these principles include deciding to close or keep areas open, and balancing the right of the public to know and security concerns. Fundamentally I have to be hostile to your interests. Any area you wish to close I have to want open; if you favor security concerns I have to favor the right to know; where you attempt to manipulate I must expose your attempt.

Obviously I am exaggerating, but in short the journalist must be hostile to the military establishment, even in the absence of inappropriate manipulation. In this sense, and again I overstate in order to make my point, we are at our best when you look your worst. No matter how bad this sounds, a journalist is at his peak when he exposes the establishment engaged in evil.

■ **Yoram Peri:** The tension you describe characterizes democracy but there must be a sensitivity to military needs, to the need to coordinate between the political realm and the military mission.

■ **Yosef Coopervasser:** There is a big difference between challenging for the sake of challenging and providing an opportunity for objective analysis.

■ **Ilana Dayan:** There is no difference, because the way to sustain and foster consciousness is by challenging, by presenting an interview with Arafat in the Muqata, by giving expression to marginal forces in Israeli society. This can be contrasted with what happened in America: the closing of ranks, the universal

appearance of the American flag on lapels, the fact that not a single official's position was shaken.

■ **Yoram Peri:** And what led an Israeli journalist to call his report, "The Time of the Armored Personnel Carrier and the Bulletproof Vest"?

■ **Ilana Dayan:** This can be attributed to fear and populism and the desire to be liked. During the terrorist attacks of February and March 1996, I challenged the then chief of staff: "Perhaps you are not fit to be chief of staff. Perhaps we need a chief of staff who is not so calm, one of blood, sweat and tears, a chief of staff who will say, 'Let me at them'."

What made me say this? My fear as an Israeli and some iota of populism embedded in all of us. Why did we never write the things we write now during the euphoria of Oslo? Were we blind to all of Oslo's risks? Did someone block our ability to think? This is analogous with the fact that we now write "The Time of the Armored Personnel Carrier and the Bulletproof Vest". It is the same phenomenon of populism. It is a type of conformity and conceptual adaptability.

There is a fundamental hostility between us, but even given this hostility and the fact that I do not intend to be enlisted in your fight for the microphones, I do fear a situation in which the political echelon, in its desire to create a psychological impact, decides to place you, the officer, in front of the cameras—you, not the official IDF spokesperson, and certainly not the head



of the Government Press Office. Such a situation is dangerous for you as a senior IDF officer, for if they offered to put you in my studio tonight, I would accept; I would jump at the chance to join you for a night of operational maneuvers. But these methods succeed only in the short-term, for you take upon yourself the representation of interests that may not coincide with the national interest.

■ **Yoram Peri:** Is there such a thing as a patriotic press?

■ **Ilana Dayan:** There shouldn't be; otherwise we are talking about a mouthpiece and not the media.

■ **Arye Carmon:** Can't we formulate media objectives for the long-term when the target audience is the West? We have a democratic entity fighting for survival and aware of the tension between journalistic ethics and military responsibility; how can we turn this into an asset?

■ **Ilana Dayan:** I will answer with a question. In light of the report on the Friday night TV news magazine in which a Nahal soldier asks, "What is a Jewish soldier doing so far from home?", can the foreign press—shallow, flashy and dynamic—in the absence of any exposure to the broader context, possibly understand that such a statement is indicative of a democratic country in which there exists the sort of tension we have described? I fear not. Thus we have to live with the tension, but we cannot market it, we cannot turn it into a public relations asset. This is our reality, and I think it is for the best.

■ **Doron Almog:** First I wish to second what Ilana Dayan said; a soldier is also a citizen, and all of the questions you raised are relevant to our persona as citizens. The one minor difference is that as a journalist you can allow yourself to ask any question and perhaps even to say anything you want, while we must confine ourselves to statements that further military and security aims.

The issue of the relationship between the physical and the conceptual planes, and which takes precedence, can be approached in two different ways. On the one hand, Marxism insists that it is not perception and ideology that define reality, but reality that defines perception; that is, the action in the field defines perception. On the other hand, a media person such as Marshall McLuhan said that the medium is the message. In practice we live in a world in which reality does indeed determine experience to a large extent, but at the same time perceptions of reality are greatly affected by television programs and news broadcasts that reach every home in every corner of the world.

As to the question at the center of our discussion, the IDF's approach to the media, the IDF is an operational entity, the organization charged with ensuring our security. I wish to distinguish between the physical and the virtual environments. The IDF is committed first and foremost to acting in the physical plane, and it is in this plane that it must achieve victory.

The IDF is committed to real-world achievements and must bear

in mind that its fundamental commitment is not to the virtual world, but to the physical world. At the same time the IDF must also project a particular image; it is indeed a participant in the story of the State of Israel and the Zionist story. The message projected by the IDF impacts upon reserve soldiers and, in the context of the current conflict, regular army units serving in the Northern Command who do not share the experiences of those in the Central and Southern Commands. This message is transmitted in the virtual environment, the media. Surely we have an interest in influencing their perceptions and presenting our story such that our ability to triumph is enhanced.

The army's main focus is first and foremost to act; it must choose how to act in order to be effective in the physical realm. I refer not only to the exercise of force but to utilizing the media as well. The military perspective must be translated to clearly defined audiences, and it may well be that we err by leaving broad undefined areas. The army is committed first of all to its basic outlook and not to an agenda. For agendas tend to take on lives of their own, while the army must ensure that its actions serve the greater good.

Thus there is an explicit preference for the mission-oriented focus in the physical plane over the conceptual, and the commitment to create a psychological impact is secondary. Another question is how the military views the media—as a tool or as a partner. In the past the media was only a tool. Today we must understand that the media can be a strategic partner. What about the military press? The military must explain the principles governing its

exercise of power, mainly to its own soldiers including reservists. The army must influence their attitudes while at the same time being receptive to their psychological and ideological needs. In addition to IDF soldiers, the military must take into account other audiences—the Israeli population and our strategic partner, the United States, as well as the American people.

■ **Amos Harel:** In my opinion the army still does not perform well in front of the camera. Much has been said here about the importance of photographs in forming perceptions, and I would like to question this assertion. Mohammed Al-Doura and images of this type certainly exert influence. But to state that a picture is worth a thousand words puts the army under excessive pressure. Ilana Dayan mentioned the Jewish soldier far from home, but no-one mentioned that he was in a refugee camp five kilometers from his home in the Ramot neighborhood of Jerusalem. No-one mentioned the hundreds of reservists who were more than anxious to be interviewed and to say how happy they were to enlist. This sort of one-sided media presentation became the final excuse for restricting media access at the beginning of Operation Defensive Shield. But the policy of closing an area first and then deciding what to do no longer works. As one who has seen things in the field, I think that there is a huge gap between the nice words spoken here and what happens in practice.

■ **Gal Heersht:** I don't see how you can say such a thing. We have been fighting for two years and the media is always present.

■ **Amos Harel:** Not always. The media always has to fight for its right to be in the field. The situation indeed improved greatly in the final weeks of Defensive Shield, but there is still delay, hesitation, and lack of interest on the part of officers in the field who are busy with problems and unaware of the media's sharp gaze. Often the matter is dealt with by some deputy from the IDF's public relations department, and the end result is loss of valuable time from the military and political perspective, and sometimes even a real setback in the media war; if too much time goes by, the incident is no longer of interest to anyone.

■ **Gal Heersht:** Do you think that the media should be present when terrorists are hiding in civilian Palestinian homes and these civilians have to be chased off?

■ **Amos Harel:** Whether they are present or not, this will look bad.

■ **Gal Heersht:** The question is how to minimize the negative image. One hundred soldiers might be acting properly and one improperly, and he is the one filmed.

■ **Amos Harel:** In my experience the army tends to focus only on the negative aspects of the media. The picture portrayed may not be ideal from your point of view, but reality itself is not ideal. Golani soldiers do not arrive with flowers and shower the Palestinians with rice. We simply have to avoid a situation in which the area is closed completely for several days.

Since in principle we believe in what we do, we have nothing to hide. Experience has demonstrated that sometimes we pay a high price when journalists are present, while at other times we pay for their absence. There are no clear-cut solutions. A journalist does not necessarily have to be on the leading tank. There are many possibilities. The army must recognize that it does not always come out looking good and that sometimes reality itself is far from ideal. We cannot leave the matter to case-by-case decision-making—today they can come in, tomorrow they cannot. Just look at the precious time wasted in Jenin. The attempt to not only minimize risk, but eliminate it completely by distancing the media was misplaced.

■ **Miri Regev:** Over the last four years the army has become quite open to the media. Never before have military and political reporters been allowed to wander among the fighters during an operation. On the other hand, the media and the military see things from very different perspectives.

■ **Tali Lipkin-Shahak:** Sooner or later you have to say what you expect from the media.

■ **Miri Regev:** The media must present things as they are, and it does not always do so. Why did we decide it is better for officers to speak rather than an official spokesperson? Because there is more empathy for officers, they are more credible. When two soldiers are present in the studio and one says, "I don't understand what a Jewish soldier is doing so far from home," and the second says something totally different, both

need to be shown! Otherwise I get reactions from irate officers saying, "We let the media in and see what they broadcast. Is this really representative of Golani?"

The discussion about closed military zones is not really relevant because it occurs so rarely.

■ **Rachel Dolev:** The army's job is to act according to mission requirements, and media policies are developed accordingly. Matters are not black and white; we are not talking about closed or open military zones because taking unilateral steps tends to provoke harsh reactions.

■ **Ariella Ringel-Hoffman:** In recent years the army has been almost completely accessible. Reporters can easily arrange background interviews, join patrols and access an endless stream of information. Nonetheless, there seems to be a general consensus here today that the army does not adequately present itself.

In this context I would like to reiterate what Professor Kremnitzer said, that we must classify expectations. Our biggest problem was and is the narrative; whatever public relations campaign we develop, as long as the story is couched in terms of occupier and occupied, an issue open to debate in 2002, it is hard to come out smelling of roses. It simply isn't possible to point to each negative photograph and explain that this was our response to the explosion in Petach Tikva, for example, because that explosion itself is part of the much broader context.

In such a problematic and complex context the military cannot be expected to serve as the national spokesperson, but it can always stand to improve its relationship with the media.

■ **Amos Yadlin:** Tali Lipkin-Shahak asked what we expect of the media. In a democracy today there are four authorities: the three traditional ones— executive, legislative, and judicial— and the fourth, the media. In the modern world the traditional balance between authorities has been upset. To the extent that the military is part of the executive and has a role defined in law and practice, I certainly expect the exposing authority to be as diligent in carrying out its role as the other three. I also expect the media to be professional and to act with a degree of ethical integrity and responsibility. A columnist who acts as the weapon of a particular person or institution, of which there are many, is not demonstrating professionalism. When a journalist errs and is shown to have erred and offers only a half-hearted or no apology, I consider this to be arbitrary abuse of journalistic power. I want the journalist to be responsible, not patriotic.

Ilana Dayan said something harsh: "When you fail, we are at our best." If she really acts on this principle, she serves the interests of the enemy. The media presents the Palestinian narrative of occupiers and occupied with devotion. It grabs every opportunity to reinforce the enemy's narrative at the expense of our national narrative, consistently and gleefully preventing the public from reaching an unbiased conclusion. You can criticize politicians and expose their corruption, for there are more that will take their place. You can and should expose the corruption



of a given economic entity, because it too can be replaced. But there is only one IDF. The media's job is to expose failure and corruption, but to act responsibly. There is serious asymmetry here. The media is accountable to no-one; we are accountable to our commanders and to the political echelon. The power of the pen and the television screen today is indeed as great as that of tanks and planes. We need to find out who owns various media, for motivation is not always purely journalistic but often involves commercial considerations.

On the other hand, we know that the media is an integral part of this fight and we must learn to use the channels that are placed before us. We do not appear on the screen to explain our narrative often enough. We are fighting the just fight and must present it to parents of soldiers as well as to the soldiers themselves, for what they see on television or read in *Yedioth Aharonoth* influences them more than their commanding officers' speeches. When the chief of staff speaks on television he reaches many more soldiers than he does at a general staff meeting. This is the reason the IDF public relations office is open to journalists and why we are willing to give so many background interviews.

■ **Shaul Mofaz:** The context and background of our present conflict with the Palestinians is complex and difficult to explain. On the one hand we are dealing with the use of terror and violence to achieve objectives while on the other, as has been mentioned several times already, the Palestinians have succeeded in presenting the image of occupier and occupied

with implications of civilian suffering, of David and Goliath, of terrorists as freedom fighters. We exercise military might and no one can do so without being labeled powerful. The Palestinians cling to two different processes at the same time: negotiations over a political settlement and the use of terrorism. In the hope of spurring an international investigation they manipulate the truth to an extent hard to imagine, from strewing dead animals in the streets of Jenin to putting up tents without roofs to suggest the IDF has bulldozed their homes. Their advantage in the international media is the fact that they are a civilian population, some of whom, at least, are innocent, fighting against an army.

In such a context a picture is indeed worth a thousand words. They have only to broadcast one picture of a tank blocking the passage of two ambulances, and we can shout until we are blue in the face without being able to explain this to the world's satisfaction. In a different type of battle, if, God forbid, we were to find ourselves in conflict with a regular army on the Syrian front, the tools and methods at our disposal to explain a given military action would be very different, from both the physical and psychological perspective. In a battle of the sort in which we are engaged, however, the realm of public relations is fundamentally difficult.

I realize that we must treat the foreign press with kid gloves, and this is the IDF's general policy. Unfortunately, what we hear about is those few cases when the IDF has not done so, and criticism has been swift in coming.

As for the IDF's position vis-à-vis the media, overall we have lived up to the policies we set for ourselves. I refer to the new openness, in contrast to the situation in previous decades, as well as to the issue of credibility and timeliness. When we delay our response or explanation, it is due to concerns over accuracy. If we were to draft hasty responses for immediate publication, in due time we would find ourselves in the uncomfortable position of having to explain our errors. Just as we demand accuracy from ourselves, so too we expect it of the media.

To my dismay there have been tens of cases in which the media has described a virtual reality that simply does not exist, resulting in significant damage to many of us. Credibility is crucial. The Israeli public expects us to be honest. If we offered this public immediate information at the expense of credibility, if we asked what they prefer—quick answers that have not been verified or accurate information after a short delay—we know what the answer would be. Each of our citizens deserves a reliable account, for his son, his brother and even he himself serves in the army.

Nonetheless we have made our share of mistakes. We erred in our approach that favored closed military areas at all costs, and one of the conclusions of Operation Defensive Shield is that as a rule battle areas must remain open. I have established three conditions that would compel us to prevent the press, at a given time, from entering a battle zone. First, when it conflicts with the ultimate mission at hand. Thus, if the commanding officer feels that the presence of the media seriously jeopardizes the success

of his mission, he must say, "Gentlemen, you will be able to enter at a later stage." Second, when soldiers' lives would be endangered. Third, when the journalists themselves would be in danger. We are held responsible even if a journalist has signed a document releasing us from liability for his exposure to enemy fire. There have been cases when reporters have signed such a document and then been harmed accidentally by IDF fire and held us to account. I am referring here to foreign reporters; this is, however, even more valid with regard to Israelis who are employed by foreign networks.

It has been asked what the military expects of the media, and my answer is, first and foremost, honesty. A previous speaker referred to the Nahal soldier who said, "What is a Jewish boy doing so far from home?" We need not fear one such comment for there are one hundred other soldiers who feel differently, but who were not filmed or taped. The same principle holds with regard to those who refuse to serve. Let's assume that 150 soldiers and 50 officers sign a refusal letter. I say why get so excited? We will afford them proper dignity for they have fought and contributed to the security of Israel. They represent a drop in the ocean; indeed, Operation Defensive Shield basically put an end to their movement.

Our further expectation of the media relates to the balance between the right of the public to know—one of the principles of democracy the journalist must protect—and the natural tendency to boost ratings. The media has an obligation to stick to the truth, to provide the public with objective information, even to

criticize and point out mistakes, as long as the motivating factor is to rectify injustice, not to be sensational in order to increase sales.

To the same extent that I expect the media to be balanced in its portrayal of the IDF, I expect IDF officers to maintain a balanced attitude with regard to the media. Officers have been known to place greater importance on how they or their units appear in the press than on their missions. The officer must remember that his first duty is to carry out the military objective; if he is also capable of defending his action in the press, so much the better.

I wish to comment on another matter. The IDF cannot be the national spokesman. It is not the job of the chief of staff to appear each morning on television and justify his actions to the world on CNN. His job is to lead the military battle against the enemy and from time to time explain the army's stance or how the army works. On the other hand, there are times when he must express his opinion explicitly in his professional capacity, as an expert on national security. The chief of staff or his deputy cannot sit silent at the cabinet meeting and refrain from expressing his opinion on the leadership of the enemy as it relates to security. With regard to Arafat, a bitter enemy of the State of Israel, what further proof do we need after he led and financed incitement to murder for almost two years? When in February 2001 I said that the Palestinian Authority is a terrorist organization, I was told that this was a political statement. I responded, "This Authority incites and orchestrates the very terrorism that we are charged

with battling. This is a security matter, and the public has the right to hear this explicitly from me for I am entrusted with their security and well-being."

In the eyes of the Israeli citizen, the IDF has very high credibility; even when we make mistakes, it is clear to the public that these are mistakes, not deliberate lies. Since the level of the public's trust in the IDF is so high, we have the ability and the responsibility to influence public opinion. Our statements regarding Operation Defensive Shield—that we had no choice and were fighting for our home—these were facts that could not be disputed and that accounted for the amazing attendance record in reserve units. Despite the media reports of a shattered consensus, the citizens voted with their feet.

## DISCUSSION GROUP 3

# The Media's Stance towards the IDF

**Moderator: Professor Gabi Weimann**

Head of the Communications Dept., Haifa University

## Participants:

**Ms Nili Amir** Editor, Voice of Israel Radio

**Professor Asher Arian** Political Science Dept., Haifa University;  
Senior Fellow, The Israel Democracy Institute

**Major General Gabi Ashkenazy** Deputy Chief of Staff

**Major General Yishai Bar** Chief of the Military Court of Appeals

**Brigadier General Udi Dekel** Chief of the IDF's External Relations

**Major General Yitzhak Eitan** OC Central Command

**Professor Yaron Ezrahi** Political Science Dept., Hebrew University;  
Senior Fellow, The Israel Democracy Institute

**Brigadier General Yitzhak Gershon**

OC Judea and Samaria Division

**Mr. Yisrael Harel**

Head of the Religious Zionist Center, Hartman Institute

**Brigadier General Ron Kitry** IDF Spokesman

**Ms. Meirav Michaeli** Journalist

**Mr. Ofer Shelach** Journalist, Yedioth Aharonoth daily

**Attorney Haim Zadok** Former Minister of Justice

■ **Gabi Weimann:** The issue being discussed today is the stance of the media towards the IDF. We are not talking about propaganda—neither Israeli nor Palestinian—nor are we talking about army information or the attitude of the army towards the media or the improvement of the army's image in the media. The topic of our discussion is how the media relates to the IDF, especially during times of emergency and war.

This is undoubtedly a very complicated subject, and part of its difficulty is that we tend to treat it one-dimensionally. In the material that we received prior to today's seminar, there was a journalism journal called *The Seventh Eye*, whose cover posed the question, "Is the Press Evading Its Duty?" That encapsulates the problem of dealing with this question. First of all, what exactly is meant by "its duty?" Does the press have only one function? Has there ever been a definition of the job of the press by which we could measure whether or not it had fulfilled or evaded it? Second, is there "media" in Israel? That is, is the press or the media in Israel all of a piece? Is there media that is entirely at fault or that is entirely non-credible? Surely there are great differences between newspapers, and sometimes within one medium itself! Is the media monolithic? Here, in a single headline, we have an example of superficiality and one-dimensionality.

The second problem is that we are not talking about a sphere that works according to documentation and cold, exact, objective analysis. It is subject to external and foreign influences.



There are at least three factors involved. The first factor is personal ideology and personal political baggage. The participants in this discourse are not devoid of political and ideological influences, and these definitely contribute to the way in which they relate to the function of the media during times of emergency. Another factor is their profession: the participants come from journalism or from the IDF Spokesman's Office or the army, from academia or the political establishment—and as such they represent interests that necessarily spill into public debate. The third factor is sensitivity. It is very difficult to carry on a discussion like this without emotion entering into the debate.

Added to these three factors is a further issue: the fact that there is almost no research on the subject of the military and the media, despite the fact that this issue is at the heart of ongoing debate. One study carried out by the behavioral science department of the IDF looked at coverage of the IDF during Operation Defensive Shield, but unfortunately its findings cannot be disclosed. Yet, even without data from a systematic study, one can discern that the Israeli media was very sympathetic to the IDF during Operation Defensive Shield. The IDF was depicted as an apolitical organization, there was a great deal of support for a "reservists' war," and much was written about the morality of the army. The following question thus becomes particularly apt: isn't this siding with the army during times of emergency injurious to the functioning of the media, a functioning that is expected of all media in any democratic society? In other words, is the price we pay for national security freedom of expression and freedom of the press?

It turns out that both Right and Left decry the media as "bootlickers", "the blue-and-white army chorus", "partisan press", etc., while during the same war, in the same country, the press were also decried as "running dogs of the enemy", "traitors", "knife in the nation's back", etc.

In my opinion this reflects the core journalistic dilemmas in covering war and emergency situations. Ordinary journalistic dilemmas are exacerbated during emergency situations. One of the most difficult is the juxtaposition of national security vs. patriotism, the journalist as a professional vs. the journalist as a citizen and sometimes even as a soldier or a fighter defending his home.

The first question I'd like to pose to this discussion group is how conscious the army is of these journalistic dilemmas; i.e., how aware is the army of journalists' quandaries, of their professional conflicts, of these dilemmas?

■ **Ofer Shelach:** I do not agree with any of the versions presented here. It's not a question of freedom of the press vs. patriotism; it's a question of patriotism. The patriotism of people who opposed the war in Lebanon was not any less than that of people who cried, "Quiet! Shooting is going on!"

My opening point is that every journalist does what he considers is good for the Israeli public, no less than every army officer. The problem of military people is that they don't understand the forces at work in the media. The headline that *Ma'ariv* came out

with the morning after the suicide bombing at the Park Hotel [on Passover eve, 2002]—"With a strong hand and an outstretched arm"—had a tremendous influence on the maneuvers the army was asked to carry out. This headline didn't spring from a decision to send Israel to war, or from intense discussion; it derived from fear. This is the main factor guiding the media: the fear of misjudging what they believe to be the collective wish of their readers, thereby losing in the ratings war. You must understand these forces; they are the only thing journalists consider important. The discussion on patriotism is, in my opinion, completely misguided.

■ **Nili Amir:** There is no room to speak about patriotism in the context of the media. Is there anyone in Israel who is not a patriot? It's the media's job to reveal the truth, to bring complete and credible raw material. The question in this matter is whether the public is inclined to accept the raw material that we bring it.

In 1973, the prime minister, minister of defense, and chief of staff asked the Press Council not to report that the Syrians and the Egyptians were gathered on the borders, in order not to affect morale—and it was not reported. Was the media right in not reporting this? When the press reports that the IDF is expecting terrorists to arrive via hang-gliders, is it doing the right thing? We can't take into consideration what the army wants or thinks. We have the censor to determine what may harm state security. It's simply not the press's job.

At a certain stage in the war in Lebanon, the press began to sound the alarm. This alarm may have harmed morale, but it also opened up public discourse. This may very well have been exactly what prevented our going into Beirut. The same is true in the debate about going into Gaza in Operation Defensive Shield; it may be that the debate that started before the decision to go into Gaza is what prevented it. The media must do its job, on the condition that it is credible and clear. It must bring information to the public, and the public can do what it likes.

■ **Ron Kitry:** Nowadays, since it is not possible to hide what's happening on the battlefield, the media's main job is the dialogue with the public and not with the army; i.e., to try to arouse public interest. The media can do what no one else can do: it can and must ask questions; it must ask public questions concerning principles. As a citizen, I invite the media to a dialogue.

■ **Yisrael Harel:** In this context, I would like to mention that the media chooses what, how and when to present something. Sometimes the media asks questions in an obsessive way as a result of personal trauma, from when they served in the army. It's no coincidence that graduates of *Galei Tzahal* [the army radio station] lead all the discussions on the network, including several well-publicized days of follow-up on the soldiers who refuse to serve [in the territories].

■ **Udi Dekel:** Concerning morale, if we all agree that the current conflict between us and the Palestinians is about Israeli

society's stamina vs. that of the Palestinians, it is the press's job to contribute to morale. Contributing to morale means presenting the positive side, things that reinforce us. For example, when the reserves were called up for Operation Defensive Shield, the first reports were mostly about how the IDF was not prepared—how there was a lack of food and how people didn't know what to do. The very first act was to criticize.

The army has a well-defined procedure: we get guidelines from the political echelon and translate them into what the army needs to do in order to fulfill those political guidelines. We call this a strategic aim. While we are occupied with the strategic aim, it often happens that we have to go back to the political echelon and request clarification of certain points. Despite the clarification, there is still internal debate until we understand exactly what the aim we are trying to achieve is. What do you think about a situation in which the media participates in crystallizing the strategic aim to the same extent that it influences the aim and later attempts to achieve that aim?

■ **Ofer Shelach:** Assuming that there is a single agreed-upon strategic aim to which everyone is committed.

■ **Meirav Michaeli:** In anticipation of today's discussion I met with a friend who had worked in GHQ, and I asked him his opinion on the media's current attitude towards the IDF. According to him, there is great willingness to show the positive side of the army, there is understanding for the IDF's goals,

sympathy with its failures, synergy with its aims and method. I couldn't believe my ears!

The media's patriotism stems from the fact that we all want the good of the state. For precisely this reason, the media should not take the army's reasoning into consideration, not even from an operational point of view. After I've been warned that my life is in danger if I enter a specific military area, the army must not bar me from it. What right does it have to keep me from seeing with my own eyes what it is doing in my name? Who authorized it to decide what's good for me?

The moment the chief of staff says, "This is necessary," no-one opens his mouth. Just as there are too many lacunae in Israeli law, we also have holes in other spheres, and the army steps into them, gains power and influence, and the media falls into a trap when it goes along with this. We're concentrating on the military solutions and strategies and are forgetting to step back and look at the overall framework, which is thirty-five years of conquest, during which our side never made a reasonable attempt at making ending the conquest a goal in and of itself, but only as a way of looking good in the eyes of the world press.

Another thing: have you noticed who is invited to this forum? That there are no representatives of the Russian-language press, of the ultra-Orthodox press, of the Arabic press, and (heaven forbid even mentioning) whoever has not served in the army and is thus not trustworthy.... This says some tough things and indicates the connection that the army has with certain media,

which creates a kind of obligation. The great majority of people who cover the army today served in fairly high positions in the army, so how can one expect them to cast a critical eye on things the army does? Many journalists sprang not only from within military frameworks, but from military propaganda frameworks, and some of them do their reserve duty at the IDF Spokesman's Office or the army radio, *Galei Tzahal*. It turns out that the world of those who cover the army is usually the military world. They are almost totally identified with the IDF, they understand its considerations, attend its investigations, and sometimes know how to explain the army better than the army itself does. They thus lack the spiritual-psychological capability and perspective for showing the big picture.

■ **Haim Zadok:** I would like to turn this discussion to the influence of internal and international law on the media. In other words, is it possible, for reasons of patriotism, to demand that the media not publish classified items out of fear that they might lead to a criminal suit against an Israeli leader or a former army officer? I have some serious doubts concerning this matter, so I was very happy that the attempt to bring a UN investigation team here was thwarted. We do not need outside investigators, and if in the future a well-founded suspicion that there was an excessive use of force is raised, or that there was an infringement of international law, we can and should initiate our own investigation. We have a military investigator; a military investigations committee in accordance with military jurisprudence that is appointed by the minister of defense or the chief of staff; we have a national investigations committee;

we can hold disciplinary, military and criminal trials; and we have the press. Because I am confident of these various means and of their implementation should it be necessary, I reject any attempt to bring in outsiders to investigate what is happening here.

■ **Yitzhak Gershon:** For generations, politicians, the business community and the army shaped reality. In the last century, a new creature—the media—came into being and now attempts to help us shape reality. I don't expect the media to be national cheerleader, but I expect it to voice different opinions. The conflict is not necessarily between the media and the military, but about questions of civil society that touch upon shaping the character of our society and state; a struggle over the image and character of the state is underway. The tension is not between the media and the army, but between the media and society in general and between what the army represents in particular. What's important is not what kind of [military] action was taken or whether the soldiers behaved acceptably. Instead of concerning ourselves with the question of how can we co-opt the media in favor of army action, we need to look at ourselves from a viewpoint beyond and outside of ourselves. This obligates us to be much more critical towards what we do and the way in which we look at what we do.

In this context, the question arises whether it is possible to initiate a real debate on issues such as the real goals of war and peace. That this is necessary is clear; the question is when should such a debate be carried on—before the guns roar, at the height of the



war, or afterwards? I contend that the debate should be carried on in all three situations, since we are ruled by human beings who do not necessarily have a monopoly on common sense. At the same time, we are subject to the standards that unite this society and knit it together. The media has the job of raising basic questions and offering critical comment.

■ **Gabi Weimann:** Where would you like to take this discussion of principle? Do you see the army carrying on a discourse on matters of peace, security and long-range policy? Would the discussion be carried out behind closed doors or in public forums?

■ **Yitzhak Gershon:** Saying, for example, "Arafat should be exiled" indicates that it's impossible to distinguish between the strategic levels of security operations and political deeds. The suggestion to exile Arafat is both military and political. Whether you like it or not, through its actions, the top echelon of the army reflects political policy of one sort or another. So much the more so in a conflict such as today's, when some of the top brass believes that this is an existential matter.

■ **Ron Kitry:** Most of the public does not make analyses, but reads the headlines, watches TV, and listens to news updates. When it is reported that the IDF kills children, the public says, "But it was written in the paper, they said it on the radio, they said it on TV!" The media only deals with the tip of the iceberg—the bizarre, the episodic, the bad, the disreputable. Generally, what needs to be dealt with is dealt with, but this is where the question

of balance comes in. If we are not looking for objectivity, I am at least looking for balance. The impression is that the media thinks that the public is not interested in what soldiers are doing who aren't beating up Palestinian kids, looting, or damaging Palestinian cars.

Since we are a society of extremes, I would expect the media to try to be a middle ground, not from a political perspective, but from a situation in which it is less dominant and less noisy, but in which the subjective truth is found along with an essential truth. It bothers me that our media, not some foreign media, arrogates to itself the right to be the judge on issues of our conflict with the Palestinians.

Another thing that bothers me are ratings. I ask myself if the citizens of Israel really decide whether or not to buy *Ma'ariv* or *Yedioth Aharonoth* because of the headlines.

■ **Ofer Shelach:** That is a definite consideration of those who write the headlines. Go to the editor of *Ha'aretz* and see whether existential considerations influence the editorial staff.

■ **Ron Kitry:** A final question concerns the media's public responsibility, and in this context I touch on a very painful and unpopular issue—the rumor mill on the day that thirteen soldiers were killed in Jenin.

In my opinion, it was the media's job to tell the public to restrain itself and wait for official information.

■ **Ofer Shelach:** The panic ensued precisely because the media knew the truth and didn't publish it. Did you expect to hear an announcement during Nili Amir's afternoon [radio] program to the effect "Friends, don't panic. Official information is on the way!"

■ **Ron Kitry:** I meant some sort of responsibility for making things clear to the public. This wasn't a one-off episode. Some media kept silent and some didn't. In Israel, we didn't know the truth until 3:30 in the afternoon. Even worse, the families still didn't know the truth.

■ **Yitzhak Eitan:** There is a measure of anachronism in the concept of the IDF Spokesman being the first to break the news. If I want to know, I connect to the Voice of Israel's beeper and I know what's happening in the field before my division commanders do, before everybody. That's the reality today, and it shouldn't be ignored. That means we should know when to confirm and when to deny.

The problem with regard to the incident in Jenin is that there were dead; otherwise they would have made an announcement early in the morning. This is a special matter for which we don't always have the right answer.

■ **Yisrael Harel:** I'm worried that GHQ attributes too much importance to the media issue. There are at least three officers here today whom I have chided about their excessive sensitivity to the media. Out of some sort of dedication to the media, they

expressed opinions which it is doubtful they were permitted to express, and I'm not certain that they didn't say what they said simply because they thought that the media wanted to hear things expressed like that.

The same may be said of the obsession with the issue of the army and the media. In order to get a truer perspective, let's look at the foreign media—at CNN's slant for example. They didn't film the yellow school bus from Kfar Darom [that was blown up]—the children whose legs were torn off. They also forgot to note that some people were killed in the incident. On the other hand, they did film the IDF's reaction [to this terrorist incident]—the helicopters that fired. Another example is the debate about the IDF's actions: CNN presented two Palestinians—one of whom was Mustafa Barghouti—and two Israelis, Ruhama Marton (president of Physicians for Human Rights) and a lady from B'Tselem [the Israeli human rights organization]. Similar things happen in the Israeli media, which has gone a long way towards justifying Palestinian objectives by virtue of the fact that they all use the term 'occupation'. Another slant that also indicates some sort of conscious psychological construct is using the enemy name for the war—the Al-Aksa Intifada. Both the media and the IDF Spokesman have adopted this term. In so doing, we become servile to them, to their propaganda.

■ **Gabi Weimann:** In your opinion, is it the media's outlook that leads to this slant?

■ **Yisrael Harel:** It is, because it is presented out of a political

bias. I'll give some examples from academia. Yaron Ezrahi said the following thing today: "Offering professional advice on policy matters is foolish." I assume he meant the foolish professional attempt of the current chief of staff to consider Arafat an enemy and exile him. This is no academic pronouncement, but it is definitely his right to say these things in a discussion such as ours. I also thought at the time that the war in Lebanon was a stupid war. But when the media presented pastoral pictures of Amnon Shahak sitting under an umbrella at Sharm el-Sheikh talking about peace—did the media think then, too, that these were stupid things or did it use terms like "enlightened commanders" and "an army that understands the times and does not lag behind"? I imagine that today the media would hide its eyes in shame when reminded of these words. In other words, we live in a biased world, and not only does the army need to maneuver in order to appease the media's opinion, but if it invests too much in doing so, in many instances it would not be able to fulfill its function.

The army must not follow popular opinion polls or a press that tells it what to do, but must protect its impeccable record. If it does, the media will have no choice but to respect it.

With regard to ratings—the economic consideration definitely dictates the media's tone. For example, *Ha'aretz* is aimed at a specific audience, so it employs Amira Hass and Gidon Levy [left-wing journalists covering the Palestinian Authority areas]. If it's legitimate for *Ha'aretz* to do this, why is it not legitimate for *Ma'ariv* to write "With a strong hand and an outstretched arm"?

■ **Asher Arian:** Since in a democratic state you would expect pluralistic voices, meaning a profusion of subjective approaches, the degree of cooperation that the media has demonstrated towards the army in the last few months is very surprising. Despite the political situation, it turns out that there is a consensus. What we find is a desire for the average, perhaps the commonplace. It's very surprising that we have mechanisms that make it possible to create this consensus during times of conflict.

What I find lacking is precisely the absence of heterogeneity in the press, heterogeneity that would preclude consensus. There is a fascinating phenomenon here of rifts in politics and homogeneity in media consumption.

■ **Yaron Ezrahi:** Nothing is more dangerous than a press that cannot put an end to rumors. I remember that during the Yom Kippur War I would hear the same newscasts at 6 a.m. and at 2 a.m. the following morning. It was a very patriotic press, and the rumors ran rampant and caused great harm. So a true patriot should be interested in a credible press that can stop dangerous rumors. What is a credible press and how is one created? I would not expect our journalists to describe what the army should look like, but what they see with their own eyes, what they think they see, leaving the commentary to the public. We call this 'honest subjectivity', and it is a worthy alternative to the term 'objectivity', which is nothing but a God's eye view of the world, or a type of commentary.

For the same reason that the word 'objectivity' in its conventional sense is not relevant in these contexts, neither is the word 'bias' that Yisrael Harel uses. There is no such thing as bias in a pluralistic system. There are tremendous differences in the diagnosis of reality; using the word 'biased' infers that there is an accepted norm, compared with which something is biased.

In my opinion we miss the mark completely on the issue of the relationship between the army and the press when we neglect to take into account the political echelon's part in this story. First, it's clear that the army is subordinate to the political echelon. The army does not do what the public tells it, but what the political echelon tells it to do, and the political echelon is subordinate to the public. The media is not subordinate to anything, but a professional press should serve the public in its entirety. In other words, the press should inform the public in a way that enables it to evaluate and assess the political echelon and appraise the instruments the political echelon dispatches to mobilize the power of the public. The army is the public's force that the political echelon is legally and politically authorized to activate.

What does 'the relationship between the army and the press' mean? What is 'a patriotic press'? The meaning is first and foremost that the press enables the public to criticize the state. In a democratic regime, a press that tries to raise the morale of the public is liable to impair it in the long-run, because the credibility of the IDF Spokesperson is not established from one day to the next but cumulatively when facts that were concealed

or not presented in a proper and timely manner become evident (or are not revealed). A true patriot would thus want a credible press that can earn the trust of the public in times of crisis, even when it makes mistakes.

■ **Yishai Bar:** There is an asymmetry between the army and the media, and if we understand it, our discussion can progress more easily. This asymmetry is expressed in that despite the fact that pluralism generally exists within the army, there's no real way to express it outside. Moreover, military ethics has significant implications for the behavior of officers who work within a hierarchical military organization.

In the media, on the other hand, pluralism is not generally limited to within the organization but is externalized—sometimes in an exaggerated manner—while professional ethics are not always on a commendable level. A plain soldier's actions in Jenin today have enormous strategic implications, while on the other hand the army is a hierarchical body that is subordinate to and serves the political echelon. This is the function of an army in a democracy, and this is where the asymmetry between the army and the press stands out. Pluralism within the army means the obligation of an IDF officer to hold to his opinion even if it runs counter to that of his commanders. In relation to the public, there is no pluralism in the army—colonel so-and-so cannot say something contrary to the opinion of the chief of staff, whereas the chief of staff is subordinate to the political echelon. If the media could maintain that basic pluralism along with the addition of ethics, most of today's issues would be solved.



■ **Yitzhak Eitan:** Everyone wants to present the truth, but everyone wants to present his own truth. The army wants to present the 90% good-news truth, whereas the media is generally interested in presenting the 10% bad-news truth. When you present the bad 10%, it creates the impression that all 100% is bad. When you present the good 90%, you withhold the bad 10%. Within this tension lies the source of the inability of the army and the press to maintain good relations.

Simultaneous with the action in Jenin was the action in Shechem, and the damage done to the city and its inhabitants was no less destructive than in the refugee camp in Jenin. Nobody talks about Shechem, while the impression of Jenin was of massacre and destruction.

One of the lessons learned from this situation was that the army must develop ways to transfer information and commentary that can keep up with the civilian agencies, which—thanks to their connections and sources—know what's happening as well as, or better than, the army. At the same time, it must be kept in mind that the friction between the press and army is rooted in the fact that we aren't always dealing with professional journalists, and their reports are not always reliable, and sometimes even deliberately fallacious. There are tens of examples of journalists who publish whatever comes into their heads, despite having received the factual truth from us.

With regard to commentary by the press—it's usually a totally subjective point of view, almost a personal opinion that has nothing in common with the strategic plan according to which we act and interpret actions; and furthermore, it is presented

as if it were an imperative public position, a kind of national consensus. There is a group of people who state their positions in the newspaper while we are prohibited from saying what we think or responding to what was written. This is one of the sources of tension between the press and the army that we are trying to bridge. Sometimes the tension is healthy. Amira Hass is not loathed by the Judea and Samaria Command; she has come before us and pointed out deviations from the norm and unacceptable behavior, and we have accepted the criticism. On the other hand, there is the picture of the soldier lying on the bed in a Bethlehem hotel despite the known fact that soldiers were ordered to sleep on the floor and despite our great effort to bring in mattresses so as not to touch the furniture in the building. Even so, the photographer who accompanied the patrol set up this picture, and it was published in the paper. If this is the truth and it is presented as such, it's hard to expect us to be dispassionate towards the press. These kinds of things happen frequently, and this is a gross deviation from the standards of fairness. I am running this campaign, and personally, I am not in favor of press exposure because every time we allow the press into the field, we get clobbered.

Yet, the army is becoming more and more open to the press. The press is a weapon that we can no longer ignore; it's always here, its rhythm is faster than ours, and we have to find the proper tools for dealing it.

## Closing Plenary Session

**Moderator: Professor Arye Carmon**

President, The Israel Democracy Institute

### Participants:

**Mr. Philip J. Crowley** United States Defense Dept.

**Dr. Ilana Dayan** Media journalist, Channel Two

**Major General Giora Eiland** Chief of Plans and Policy Directorate, IDF

**Major General Menachem Finkelstein** Military Advocate General

**Brigadier General Eival Gilady** Head of Strategy Section, IDF

**Mr. Eitan Haber** Editorial Board Member, Yedioth Aharonoth daily

**Mr. David Halberstam** Journalist (USA)

**Mr. Yisrael Harel** The Hartman Institute

**Colonel Gal Heersht** Operations Officer, Central Command

**Professor Mordechai Kremnitzer** Law Faculty, Hebrew University;  
Senior Fellow, The Israel Democracy Institute

**Ms. Meirav Michaeli** Journalist

**Lieutenant General Shaul Mofaz** Chief of Staff

**Mr. Amir Oren** Military Correspondent, Ha'aretz daily

**Dr. Yoram Peri** Communications Dept., Hebrew University

**Major General Gil Regev** Head of Personnel Directorate, IDF

**Mr. Ofer Shelakh, Journalist** Yedioth Aharonoth daily

**Mr. George Shultz** The Hoover Institute; former US Secretary of State

**Major General Rafael Vardi** Retired

**Professor Gabi Weimann**  
Head of Communications Dept., Haifa University

**Major General Moshe Ya'alon** Chief of Staff designate

**Professor Arnon Zuckerman** Film Dept., Tel Aviv University

■ **Arye Carmon:** The Army and Society Forum that has convened here today brings together many ranking officers of the Israel Defense Forces: the current and incoming chiefs-of-staff, the deputy chief of staff, and the commanders of the various fronts, all of whom carry the burden of security for the State of Israel in these times. Members of academia and the press are also present in the plenary. We have gathered here for a day of deliberation on a most sensitive issue: the function of the press during hostilities.

Mr. P. J. Crowley is a retired Colonel in the U.S. Air Force. During the Clinton Administration, he served as the spokesman of the National Security Council.

■ **P. J. Crowley:** During the time I served at the White House, I had the honor and privilege of dealing with topics relating to the military and the press. In the course of my official functions at the Pentagon, I hosted the former IDF spokesman, Amos Gil'ad, and I renewed my acquaintance with him at the Wye talks. While working at the White House, I was among the Camp David staff appointed by President Clinton, and I was also party to the attempt to reach a peace agreement at Sharm el-Sheikh and other venues.

I have great appreciation for the importance that the media has in our society today. I salute you for coming together to try to wrestle with the question of the relationship between military and media. I joined the air force in 1973, when the United

States was in the midst of both withdrawal from Vietnam and the Watergate crisis. The public discourse at the time revolved around the fundamental relationships between the American people and the government, and confidence in the honesty and integrity of our leaders.

The operational context within which the United States military operates is fundamentally different than the context in which the IDF finds itself. When the United States military deploys, it tends to deploy to the far reaches of the world; Afghanistan is a perfect example. Certainly we are not as appreciative of the kind of operating environment that you have, where the conflict is there, in your backyard, and which has existed for virtually your entire history. Nonetheless, I think it is important to understand that both the United States and Israel operate in the same media environment that now exists on a twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, never-ending international news cycle. I think there are lessons I can impart to you regarding the Pentagon's approach to this issue over the past twenty years and the evolution of our relationship institutionally in building a stronger military/media relationship.

The Vietnam conflict was for us a very devastating event in terms of the relationship between the military and the media. During the course of the Vietnam conflict there were daily briefings in Saigon that we called "The Five O'Clock Follies." It turned out that a great deal of information that was imparted at those briefings was either exaggerated or "improved." When we came to what was the cataclysmic event in the history of the

conflict, the Tet Offensive—which was in fact a striking military victory for the United States—it was recorded as a striking military defeat because the sight of Vietcong combatants inside the city limits of Saigon was such a startling contrast to the rosy picture that the military had presented to the American people up to that point. From the Tet Offensive on, despite its being a military victory, public support for the conflict in Vietnam evaporated and ultimately led to our withdrawal in the mid-70s.

This loss of public support had a profound effect on the military leadership's perspective of the media. For a long time our military leaders felt, wrongly, that the media was responsible for the defeat of the United States military in Vietnam. It wasn't until the Gulf War fifteen years later that we were finally able to stitch that relationship between the military and the media back together. Those years were a devastating period for the United States military, because during much of the 1980s there was not the level of public support for the military that any of us would have desired. This lack of public support made it difficult for us to recruit personnel and to work through the critical issues that we faced during the course of the 1980s.

We did have a couple of lesser operations that had a profound long-term impact on that military/media relationship. The first was the invasion of Grenada, and the military developed what on their part was a very artful way of operating within this new context. They put United States soldiers on Grenada, and put all the news media on a different island. While at the time

this might have seemed a wonderful concept, it had a startling and very negative impact in terms of media coverage of that operation.

In the aftermath, a formal military commission developed some guiding principles that since 1985 have been the foundation of the formal relationship between the military and the media. Those principles basically state that it is the responsibility of the United States military to make sure from the outset of any major military campaign that the media has the opportunity to cover that campaign, and that it is the obligation of the United States military to provide the necessary support for that to occur.

At the heart of this guideline is the understanding that in order to build and sustain public understanding and support for U.S. military operations, it is critically important to show the American people how we are employing the United States forces and what they are there to accomplish, and to bring some transparency to the battlefield. The first critical test of that concept came later in the '80s in Panama. The formal mechanisms were put into place whereby U.S. forces were deployed to Panama and media representatives were formed into a pool in Washington and then transported to cover the campaign. But the operational support on the ground necessary to help the media actually do their jobs was not provided.

So from that adaptation came a requirement that in any operational plan developed by the United States military, it is the operational commander's responsibility and imperative to

develop and devote the resources necessary to help the media cover the campaign live, if necessary.

In fact, that basically came together in the Gulf War, notwithstanding the differences of opinion between the military and the media in terms of that war's success. Structurally, the Gulf War today is basically the model according to which the media and the military cooperate to make sure that the American people are able to see the United States military in action.

Since 1991 there have been a number of operations other than war. The model has changed and been adapted and in many cases has become closer to the kind of situation that the IDF finds itself in today, where the media exists on the battlefield. We certainly saw this in places like Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia, where in essence when the U.S. forces arrived on the scene the media was already there waiting for them. I recall vividly the arrival of U.S. marines on the beaches of Somalia with lights and cameras rolling. It was actually quite a surreal moment.

The model that I think comes closest to the kind of situation and the kind of adversary that you are dealing with today is the situation that we encountered in Kosovo. There, in Slobodan Milosovic, we had an adversary very well versed in the art of propaganda. He understood that the best that he could hope for was some sort of military stalemate. But he was hoping that he could use the propaganda tools and the control of the media that was available to him in Belgrade to reach some sort of political settlement that achieved his wider objectives.



In fact, in cooperation with NATO we set up a very dynamic press function in Kosovo that made sure that both the American people and the international community understood what this conflict was about and gave Milosovic no room to achieve his political objectives. We were not necessarily as successful in terms of the kind of interaction I would like to have seen between the combatants and the media. Some of the bases that we were using in Italy, for example, were off-limits to the media. I happened to think that was a mistake because in my experience the military combatants are your most effective spokesmen. They are in fact the most effective tool in your arsenal for building and sustaining public understanding and support for your operation.

Still, this ended up being a tremendous military and political victory for NATO in that we were able to articulate steadily over seventy-eight days what our forces were trying to accomplish and what they were doing. Within the military command we set up a cell that was specifically designed to try to control the daily message and to be able to respond very quickly when anomalies on the battlefield took place. Even things we did wrong, and I don't have to tell any of you that not everything goes right during the fog of war. But it is important when something does go wrong to be able to explain as quickly as possible what happened, why and what steps you are taking to try to minimize that kind of event from reoccurring.

We also know that there are adversaries who are very skilled in using the media to build support among their own people

or sympathy within the larger international community and to respond very quickly in those kinds of situations to contradict the facts. To combat this, there are a series of formal and informal things that we in the United States government do. Formally, any time that our forces engage an adversary in conflict, we set up some sort of joint information bureau within the forward military command that allows us to manage interaction between journalists and the combatants. We set up an operational briefing, on a daily basis if necessary, that provides details of what has transpired and whatever operational details can be shared within the context of operational security.

In the Gulf War we had daily briefings both in Riyadh and in Washington. The ability to have a daily means where you are able to tell your side of the story and provide that kind of operational context is critically important. In Israel, that can be done in virtually any location within the capital, for example, as well as in a location where your military forces are deployed.

More generally, within the United States government there is very close coordination among the major agencies that have some role in international affairs. On a daily basis, whether or not there is a conflict, there is very close coordination among the White House, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the U.S. mission at the United Nations, the Central Intelligence Agency. When there is an ongoing conflict, the coordination extends to whatever forward operational command might be engaged in it, in order to make sure that we are all singing from the same sheet of music, so to speak.

That kind of close coordination ensures that from the United States government's standpoint, a strong, consistent message is relayed on a daily basis about what is happening with U.S. forces, the purpose of the operations, and our view of how those operations are being conducted.

In summary, over the course of the last twenty years, the military has worked very hard on its relationship with the media and has developed the formal processes so that all along the chain of command there is responsibility for building interaction and managing the relationship between the military and the media.

■ **Tali Lipkin-Shahak:** Based on your experience and the examples that you have brought, how do you combine credibility and consistency of message with the need to feed, if you will, or react to, the media story at any given moment?

■ **P.J. Crowley:** The credibility of the IDF in this context is critical. I think there is an irony here that for a long time in the United States our military had credibility outside our borders but a credibility problem at home, in terms of both public understanding and support, particularly during the 1980s.

In Israel the situation is reversed. Having served in the military forces, your population has a much stronger understanding of both the challenges that you face and the difficulty of the operational context that you see today. Your challenge is to try to build stronger links and a wider understanding and appreciation of the difficulty of the IDF's mission outside your borders, with

the larger international community. That was the challenge you faced in terms of media coverage in Jenin for example.

You have to give your operational commanders responsibility to contribute to this military/media relationship. The most credible spokesmen that you have are in fact your battalion commanders, your brigade commanders or your senior leaders who have the operational responsibility for conducting a certain campaign. Your ability to put them in front of the media on a regular basis in an institutional way to convey what is happening; to address problems that you had; to acknowledge that you know that occasionally mistakes in the heat of battle will be made but that you are doing everything that you possibly can to achieve the operational objectives that you had been given within a very difficult and dynamic battlefield—that is going to be critically important in building credibility and confidence in the eyes of the media. How do you control the media battlefield? You control it by having an operational briefing, whether it is every day or three times a week, so that if the media picks up on something and is looking for what happened, they know that they have a place to come and that you have given your senior operational commander the responsibility to brief military operations on a regular basis. That is what we have tended to do since the Gulf War—establish an operational commander or a member of the joint staff to be the media spokesperson, and on a regular basis to provide information on the campaign, including whatever footage is available. Your ability to deliver information and a video in a televised war allows you to control the message more broadly and to control the news cycle as a result.

■ **Amir Oren:** What happens when the political leader, including President Clinton, is not in complete agreement with the armed services over the entire approach of the military?

■ **P. J. Crowley:** President Clinton came to office with fewer *bona fides* as commander-in-chief than virtually any of his predecessors, and that did handicap him in his relationship with the military. That actually gave the military a little bit more room to maneuver. Usually Israeli prime ministers come to office with very strong *bona fides* as commander in chief and have to deal with their *bona fides* as strong political leaders. So the situation is somewhat reversed.

The important point is that the responsibility for operations and responsibility for the military/media relationship is invested from the president to the secretary of defense and then through him down the civilian channel to the Pentagon spokesman, and down the military channel through the chairman of the joint chiefs to the operational commander. But in any conflict, as you have seen with Afghanistan, the Pentagon spokesman, the secretary of defense and the chairman of the joint chiefs and whoever is designated as the operational briefer work as a very close team to make sure that there is a strong and consistent message. That is probably easier in our context than it is in yours, where you are dealing with a national unity government, or in any case a coalition. Nonetheless, the minister of defense together with the IDF, personally as well as their press spokesmen, need to work as a team to make sure that there is a strong, consistent message

being communicated through both political and military channels.

Afghanistan is where perhaps for the very first time we have a greater appreciation of the operational context that you have operated in every day. The extraordinary ferocity of the attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center is of course tragically ordinary to the citizens of Israel. Nonetheless I think you have been very effective in defining what the current conflict is about and the responsibility of your adversaries in terms of helping either fight terror or being seen as a part of the problem.

I think that is the context in which President Bush put the war on terrorism last fall: you are either for us or against us, a concept that the American people have understood and appreciated. This parallel has strengthened the relationship between the president and the prime minister and also strengthened the mutual appreciation between the American people and the Israeli people about the true nature of violence in the Middle East.

## Group Reports

### ■ Arnon Zuckerman:

#### **The Media as a Strategic Consideration in Preparation for War**

The main issue discussed by our group was this: if the media is indeed a component of the means for waging war, how can it be integrated in the planning, implementation and lessons-learned stages? The point of departure was that it is impossible to suppress information—certainly not in the long-run—in an era of global communications fed by new technologies, and that new technologies demand a new way of deployment. In addition to hundreds of broadcast networks there are also cell phones, the Internet, laptops, video cameras, and even footage taken by amateur photographers. Soon it will be possible to buy and broadcast satellite photographs that show the battlefield. In other words, the ability to oversee the many channels of communication is practically zero. It was also stressed that the way to handle the military/press relationship during peacetime is different from that in times of all-out war or limited conflict, such as the war against terrorism. Each of these situations requires a different kind of deployment.

After these basic assumptions, the discussion focused on the following question. If there is indeed agreement that the media is an element in the arsenal, why is it not integrated into all the stages of war? Alternately, perhaps the army does not, in essence, consider the media to be part of the arsenal. The function of the

army is to fight and win, and the media is often a hindrance to the military. Another question was: since the Palestinians and the Arab states in general use aggressive propaganda against us—for instance the claim that the Mossad attacked the Twin Towers in order to bring calumny on Islam—should we also use such blatant propaganda?

It turns out that everyone agreed that the media is a strategic consideration during hostilities. Since war is for the world's attention—and that is precisely where the Palestinians hope to win—the media element is critical.

Most reactions were to questions of whether or not the media is part of the arsenal. Responses to this question varied widely, from total opposition to absolute conviction.

Concerning the question of the IDF's part in the information setup, there was no clear-cut answer, even though the majority thought the army should be drafted to support explanation of policy moves. In this context, the participants also deliberated on the question of where the line is between the political and professional aspects of expressions by IDF officers and whether or not it is possible to draw such a line.

There was fairly wide agreement on the need to inculcate some sort of media consciousness at all levels within the IDF, to understand what the media is and how it works. Of course there were some who claimed, on the other hand, that it is the IDF's job to fight to win and that the media is of no concern to the IDF.



A last, strong point that everyone agreed on was that it is possible to win the battle but to lose the war on the TV screen; i.e., there is a sharp awareness of the fact that the media war is no less important than the war on the battlefield.

■ **Yoram Peri:**

**The IDF's Approach to the Media**

A clear distinction was made between some very specific issues and more theoretical questions. While there were two opposing positions on theoretical questions, on the concrete issues there was fairly wide agreement.

I will begin on the practical plane, where lack of agreement was minimal. The discussion focused on three points:

- 1. IDF or national spokespersonship**
- 2. Handling the foreign and Palestinian press**
- 3. Closed military areas**

On the first point, it was stated that the army shouldn't have to manage national spokespersonship itself, but that there is a need for an integrated, comprehensive system, of which the army would be one part. It was also said that the task should not be carried out by the IDF spokesperson from an ivory tower in Tel Aviv, but by officers in the field.

The second point concentrated mostly on the foreign press, and everyone agreed that it should be handled with kid gloves.

There were also some concrete suggestions: for instance, to allow a foreign journalist to accompany a military action in the first armored carrier, and the commander of the carrier should tell him, first-hand, about victims of terrorism.

As to the question of whether a military area should be declared closed or open, there was agreement on the concept that the IDF currently adopts, according to which the area will be open in principle unless opening it sabotages success and endangers the lives of soldiers or journalists.

Despite the broad consensus concerning practical solutions, there was fierce argument on theoretical questions. For example: is it the army's function to help the media do its job, i.e., to fulfill the public's right to know? Or, since the army's job is to win wars, may it use the media and manipulate it? On the other side, there were those who claimed that it is not the media's function to serve the goals of the military. Its job is to shake up the dominant narrative, to question the political leadership's policy in matters of security as well as in other spheres.

In this context, the question was raised concerning which is more important—the physical reality or its representation in the media. Most of the military personnel among us said that it was only natural that the physical environment is more important. Opposing this were those who claimed that in a modern democracy the virtual representation is of no less importance. Backing up this claim was an example taken from the war in Lebanon. President Reagan demanded that Prime Minister Shamir stop the bombing

in Lebanon after a picture reached his desk of a child whose arms had been torn off. In other words, the distinction between physical and virtual in modern society is very thin.

As to the army's expectations of the media—the military participants in the group claimed that the army is unsuccessful in selling itself; furthermore, it is the object of unjust criticism. The army's demands of the media focused on three issues:

- 1. Truthful reporting**
- 2. A balance between the public's right to know and the commercial interests of the media, such as ratings**
- 3. A balance between positive and negative criticism**

The media personnel, on the other hand, feel that the army has no understanding of their work, that it draws conclusions from exceptional incidents that transgress the professional ethics of the media's normative behavior.

The last point, in which I wish to express my personal opinion as well, concerns the question of how well the media is understood by the general public, politicians and the army. I hold that despite knowing the importance of the media, there is still no fundamental understanding of the logic of the media. This misunderstanding of the *modus operandi* of the media causes the media to be branded as superficial and cynical.

On this matter, the electronic media must be differentiated from the written press, which is more cynical. We can understand this

if we look at the work methods of the electronic media.

- 1. Television has no memory: it deals with the here and now**
- 2. Television gives priority to the visual over content**
- 3. The electronic media deal with events, not processes**
- 4. The electronic media prefer the interesting to the important**

Only a fundamental understanding of these and other principles will enable the army to make proper use of the media for its own purposes.

#### ■ **Gabi Weimann:**

#### **The Media's Stance towards the IDF**

At the opening of this discussion we indicated that the discourse on the topic of the army and the press is influenced by a number of external factors that creep into the debate and influence it.

1. The political dimension—no discussion is devoid of people's viewpoints and ideologies. In the context of Operation Defensive Shield [the May 2002 operation to rout out terrorist cells and workshops in the West Bank], that very media was thought to be perfidious or serving the Palestinians—depending on the viewpoint of the speaker.
2. Functional identity—people tend to represent the views of the positions they hold. Needless to say, there is often a conflict of interests between the military and the press, between politicians and academicians, professions which are all represented here

today. In short, the disagreements are not always purely motivated.

3. The emotional dimension—when military personnel sit opposite journalists, the scars in their relations sometimes become apparent. The force of emotions increases because of factors such as fear of terror, grief and pain.

Even though we did not come to much agreement in our discussion group, we did cover many issues: basic concepts of the press such as objectivity, slant, the patriotism of journalists; security censorship; who influences the political and public agenda and is it the job of the media; influence on public morale as a journalistic consideration; journalists in the service of the ratings wars; the influence of international judgment on coverage of the IDF and its officers; is harmony between the army and the press desirable; the authenticity of media reporting; ethics and pluralism in media; etc.

As mentioned, we came to few conclusions, and it may be a good thing that in a democratic society, the military and the media see things differently; it may even indicate society's strength. Still, there were some "islands" of agreement:

1. The first agreement is very general and its main point is that the military/press relations combine a symbiosis of interests with function-based tension, and they do not occupy a permanent place along this continuum. Of course, in times of crisis—Operation Defensive Shield, for instance—the symbiotic end of the continuum is stronger than the organizational tension end.

2. The journalistic dilemmas concerning coverage of the military are greater, more complex and much more difficult than the question that was the focus of the discussion: to what degree must the media demonstrate patriotism?
3. The expectation of harmony between the army and the media is unrealistic. First, there are no permanent common interests; moreover, sometimes they are on a collision course, which is good in a democratic society. Second, if there is no consensus within society on political issues, on relations with other states, on the establishment of a Palestinian state, etc., why should there be a consensus between the army and the media, especially since we are committed to pluralism in both the army and the media?
4. Objective reporting is a concept that is hard to implement in practice. At best, it is possible to hope for 'honest non-subjectivity', i.e., for the willingness of journalists to reveal their open, transparent, fair and professional positions. On the other side, there are those who claim that even if objectivity is not always possible, it should serve as a goal, a professional ideal; otherwise, the concept of 'honest subjectivity' will turn into a dangerous fig leaf for concealing media slants, blunders, and failures.
5. The missing link: the political echelon. It is very difficult to relate in a real and serious manner to the relationship between the media and the army without taking the political echelon into consideration. The political echelon is involved, has influence and is a serious factor; so in every future discussion of the relationship between the media and the army, this third link should be included.

6. Short-term challenges. In our discussion, we agreed on the urgency of certain short-term problems that warrant an ongoing and very practical dialogue between the press and the army. Among them we noted the influence of international jurisprudence on the attitude of the media to the army; whether to allow media coverage of soldiers or officers who are being tried in military tribunals; and gearing up for the various implications of new communications technology, as in the example of the part played by the Internet and cell phones in the rumor mill during the Jenin operation.

7. Understanding the media. The last conclusion we came to concerned the need for the top echelon of officers to appreciate the difficulties and limitations of the media and the pressures that bear on it, as well as the way it works and its considerations.

■ **Arye Carmon:** First, there is an assumption that there is tension, if not contradiction, between the responsibility placed upon the army and the professionalism or responsibility of the media. Second, if we have agreed that it is impossible to report the truth and that we have to be satisfied with credible subjective reporting, we may have created an opening for some sort of accommodation between the army and the press, at least internally. In other words, we often encounter fallacious reporting by the international press, at least from our point of view. Is it possible or necessary to create synchronicity between the professional and economic aims of the press and the goals expected of the army, to which journalists, as citizens, are party?

Another question is whether it is possible to distinguish between

the goals of the army and the wider national goals. Do we need a national spokesperson, and what exactly is that? This question brings to mind an earlier discussion of ours in which it was said that the army is dragged against its will into vacuums created by society but not handled the way they should be. In today's context, are not the issues that the IDF spokesperson deals with those of society as a whole and not just those of this forum?

A last question: in a reality of transparency and global norms, is it possible to separate battle from propaganda; i.e., the purpose of the army is to fight, while propaganda deals with other things?

■ **Yisrael Ziv:** The interesting issue that came up in our group was the use of the vehicle of "the public's right to know" to attack the statement "a closed military area." A much more trenchant question arising from this issue is whether we are not calling into question the right of the IDF to decide in which instances it wishes to protect its privacy, either operational or other. Even the press is particular about which of its activities it wishes to carry out beyond the gaze of the public. In the context of virtual reality versus practical reality, it must be remembered that the army's ventures are carried out under extreme conditions. So the central question here is respecting the right and obligation of the army to maintain certain closures for security reasons, even for reasons of military doctrine. It's impossible to wage war without the element of surprise. It is unreasonable that while the military and political echelons are debating whether or not to go into Gaza, this should be the topic of discussion in coffee houses because of "the public's right to know."



Respecting the limitations on the army in declaring certain closures is a central issue. In some instances, only the commanding officer knows what the limit is and that if he oversteps it, he will not be able to carry out the operation or will endanger the lives of his soldiers. Such a responsibility placed on an officer cannot be balanced against any of the other issues brought up here. There is a certain dominance here, a very clear dominance of the military obligation by which we are required to safeguard or balance things, and it seems to me that a great part of the discussion is how much this is our right and is it respected?

Maybe the main question really is how to safeguard the limitations. Another question is why the army must constantly "sell" or explain itself. Why doesn't it occur to the media that its job is to contribute to the balance between the overt and covert?

I do not demand of the media that it be patriotic or partisan, but I definitely demand that it be balanced. If it sets itself up as judge, by the same token it must take upon itself some of the obligations.

■ **Mordechai Kremnitzer:** As opposed to the accord of opinion in Gabi Weimann's group concerning exchanging objectivity for 'honest subjectivity', I think that human culture is dependent upon the subjective belief in the existence of objectivity.

Saying that there is such a thing as objectivity does not mean abolishing the right of existence of other narratives or selective commentary or different ways of looking at reality. To exonerate the media from its obligation to be objective is, in my eyes, a distorted social message. Honest subjectivity could be interpreted as an invitation to the press to act in an unprofessional and irresponsible manner. I can't see where in honest subjectivity there is any obligation to obtain the best possible evidence, to cross-reference sources, or to provide the public with credible information.

On the other hand, those who claim that under battle conditions it is much more difficult to distinguish between military and political truth, and that the price the army pays is steeper, are right. The military has no choice but to join in the effort to persuade the public of the justness of the war. This must be done for the good of society's ability to persevere, from the point of view of its willingness to be drafted, because our constitution demands that the army implement government policy, and also, because of recognition of the justness of the path taken by those who put people in harm's way. For all these reasons, the army must be persuaded and persuade others that it is doing the right thing, that there is no alternative, that this is a war for the homeland. However, to some of the Israeli public this sounds like propaganda. Some of the public thinks that there is no truth to the proclamation that "Netzarim is Tel Aviv," that it is untrue that this is a "war of no alternative." This public attitude does not stem from anything that the army does but from government policy. The minute the political controversy comes out into the

open in full force—and this is a matter of months—the picture will be even harsher.

Just as the army has no choice but to do its duty, so too the media has no choice but to fulfill its function and to question whether this war really is as it is presented to us; otherwise the media would be derelict in its duty. A patriotic press must do its job to the best of its ability. The military and the press must each go its own way in accordance with its respective duties.

The military personnel demanded of the media that it be credible—not honestly subjective. They also demanded that there be a connection between what the media describes and reality, that the media be fair, responsible and professional. These are all justified demands at the normative level. But at the level of reality, the media does not completely live up to these requirements or satisfy these standards, and it is difficult to imagine that things are going to change dramatically in this respect. It may improve marginally—a not insignificant development—but it will remain substantially as it is. This is a given that the army must take into account.

There will be no balance in the media with respect to positive and negative. The notion that things that function well and smoothly will be given more weight by the media than mistakes and screw-ups contradicts the logic of all media everywhere.

We should strive for objectivity. A commercial media that wants consumers must be stringent about what it publishes. It would

be a great mistake to base our demands of the media on honest subjectivity.

■ **Yisrael Harel:** The public's ability to provide any sort of criticism of the press obtains in its awareness that the press is not objective. Only this skepticism can bring about balance, just as the press needs to be skeptical towards the military and not accept everything at face value.

■ **Mordechai Kremnitzer:** In the realm of providing information—as opposed to opinions and commentary—the press is obligated to be credible. This does not contradict the fact that as a newspaper reader I invite everyone to be skeptical. I do not propose that the citizens of Israel open their newspapers and say, "What we read is an exact picture of reality."

■ **Arye Carmon:** The objective truth is that in Jenin, for example, according to what finally became known, only a small part of the refugee camp was actually destroyed. Television showed a different picture. What's objective here? Moreover, what mutuality is there between objectivity and credibility? How do we deal with a reality in which the tools that you employ obviate objectivity *a priori*?

■ **Mordechai Kremnitzer:** The example of Jenin only reinforces the claim that one should not be satisfied with honest subjectivity. Presenting a picture of the entire camp is more credible and objective than showing a TV frame with a picture of a small section of the camp that has been destroyed. It's not

true that the instruments of the media obviate all objectivity *a priori*. Those who claimed or deliberately created the impression that the entire camp was destroyed colored the truth and transgressed the standards demanded of journalism. In the name of honest subjectivity they presented a small section of the camp that had been destroyed and created the impression that it reflected what had happened throughout the entire camp. That is a concrete example of the dangers of honest subjectivity.

■ **Menachem Finkelstein:** For our purposes, there is a similarity between the communications and legal worlds; both are seemingly outside the management of a military campaign, but in truth both must increasingly be taken into account.

The press accompanies the campaign, but when you note that within the first month of Operation Defensive Shield there were twenty-five appeals to the High Court of Justice concerning the battle itself, it becomes clear that another front also has to be taken into account.

In this context, the practical questions that I wish to pose are bi-directional: on one side, can members of the judiciary—and I don't mean only judges—adjust to the significance of the fact that we are again at war; and on the other side, can the military personnel accept—as the High Court pointed out—that they must fight with one hand tied behind their backs? This will pay off in the end, it is promised, because considerations of law and morality are an important part of battle standards.

Here are a few examples.

1. Whoever advocates refusal to serve in the IDF commits a crime according to Section 110 of the Israeli Penal Code. Is it conceivable that a journalist would not want to interview a person who advocates refusal to serve in the territories? Can we imagine that s/he would be tried for interviewing the person?
2. A Jerusalem weekly sometimes publishes military investigations word-for-word. The judicial concept is that the investigation should be closed, that a soldier could express himself freely because he knew that his words would not be published. I don't think a soldier or a commander would speak freely in an investigation if he knew his words would be quoted in Friday's newspaper. Would anyone investigate? Or prosecute?
3. Regarding censorship, at the time it was decided that the legal criterion for censoring publication was the near certainty of actual damage to state security. That was the test. The court examines one concrete instance, but what happens when ten or a hundred items are published? Won't this constitute a problem? Will this test be appropriate during hostilities? Do the same criteria apply?
4. The justiciability of battle incidents: we should be proud of the fact that Israel is apparently the only state whose High Court of Justice determines battle incidents in real time. The High Court justices themselves are divided on this question, and on our part—do we all understand, military personnel as well, that this is a front of another sort? Do the generals or the regimental commanders understand that just as they have to make room for the media, they also have to supply answers to

the High Court of Justice in Jerusalem on matters related to the fighting itself—concerning provision of food and water during the dialogue at the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem or during the evacuation of bodies in Jenin?

Another similarity between the High Court of Justice and the media is that these two institutions are required to strive for the truth. However, there are people who have subjective scores, and if that goes for the internal media, it is all the more true with respect to the international media. I remember the foreign minister saying that if we cooperated with the UN committee investigating the incidents in Jenin, we could prove that there was no massacre. I really believe there was no massacre, but when the game is fixed, it's very difficult to cooperate with people whom you know have made their decisions *a priori*. Indeed, as soon as it became known that there would be no committee, two of the three members of the intended committee spoke distinctly of war crimes that the army had supposedly committed.

I'll close with a personal confession. In my first year [as Military Advocate General], I proceeded under the assumption that I should keep as far away as possible from the media. I soon learned that it is impossible to work in isolation from the media. Why? Because the newspapers write that the investigation apparatus does not investigate, while I know of more than a hundred battle incidents being investigated by the military police investigator's office; they write that the Judge Advocate General does not bring cases to trial, while I know that there are

tens of trials. These things must be brought to the attention of the outside world.

■ **Tali Lipkin-Shahak:** Mordechai Kremnitzer rightly said that you can't sell newspapers with positive stories. Military personnel are also consumers; when they pick up a newspaper, how many of them want to read positive stories?

Regarding purely objective decisions, I wish to remind the military personnel that neither appointments nor jobs are made on purely objective grounds.

Yisrael Ziv spoke about the public talk that preceded our going into Gaza, and the dangers of that talk. If we decided not to go into Gaza on account of the debate in the media, that's good. We should, however, acknowledge our shortcomings for all those times that the media didn't know, or knew and didn't report, or knew and didn't discuss the matter in public, and for the military operations that subsequently ensued with the heavy price we paid for them.

Regarding manipulation—the army has learned a lot, and that is a compliment. Some of the officers have become politicians, and they know how to use the media with virtuosity.

With regard to the tension between the military bureaucracy and the media—who better than I knows that it is easier to sit down and write than to make decisions concerning sending people into battle? [Tali Lipkin-Shahak is the wife of former Chief



of Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak.] That's also the reason that demanding of us credibility and accuracy is not only justified, but elementary.

■ **Gil Regev:** We are at a convenient starting point. I assume that it is clear to all that the world is more interested in the fate of the Palestinian people than in terror against us, and that sympathy for the weak creates imbalance between our pain and theirs. Moreover, the world does not think that we are in any existential danger. When we saw on TV what was happening in South Africa—how they were shooting into crowds of blacks—didn't we feel shocked? We didn't immediately think about the prosperity that the whites had brought to Capetown, for instance. It's instructive sometimes to put ourselves on the other side.

The IDF expects a sympathetic internal media. Since it's clear to us that there is little chance of that, we should at least expect a responsible media. Responsible in the sense that if we make operational mistakes, reporting such errors must be done with thought and consideration.

The media and information services are part of the operational plan. Unlike Tali Lipkin-Shahak, I don't think that we should leave to the media the debate about whether or not to go into Gaza. We have to hold a discussion among ourselves about the ramifications of entering Gaza and weigh the course of action carefully. Holding such a discussion as part of planning the operation would surely release the IDF spokesman from a rear-

guard battle in which he has to excuse and explain things that we should have taken into account *a priori*.

■ **Ilana Dayan:** The media, the army, and the state are intertwined and all are ours. A somnolent press, a partisan press, a patriotic press, an indifferent press, a nationalistic press, a press that participates in word-laundering—you, Gil Regev, would not want to be part of a nation shaped by such a press or in which such a press participates. In the same measure that I might absorb shrapnel from your operational error, you would take the flak from a professional error of mine.

The best example in my professional experience of the ability of an officer to see things from my viewpoint and attain his goal in the best possible way was how you faced the press in the case of the helicopter tragedy [when two military helicopters on the way to Lebanon crashed killing seventy-seven soldiers]. I am talking about a specific newscast that we were about to broadcast on the day of the tragedy concerning things that we happened to film in another helicopter squad. Gil Regev simply came to us at the studio and said, "I neither want nor am able to prevent you from broadcasting this filmed material. But I want you to understand a few things." That's the way to manage risks, not what the navy did when it stood on its hind legs and rejected every attempt to investigate the navy special forces tragedy [in which thirteen soldiers on a secret mission were discovered and killed in Lebanon]. After the Kishon River tragedy [when many former frogmen contracted cancer after diving practice in the

polluted waters of the Kishon], the navy's image was totally destroyed. Only then did information on the earlier tragedy suddenly become available.

Another example. When I broadcast a report on the "scars" borne by soldiers of the elite Duvdevan unit because of their service in such a unit, the army took offense. How easy it would have been to manage us if only the army had allowed us, for instance, to accompany a Duvdevan action. Who would have talked about "scars" had we filmed an action by the Mistaravim (units that disguise themselves as Arabs)? Who would have gone into the psychological details of soldiers left with emotional distress on account of the trauma they caused a Palestinian child when they entered his house in the dead of the night and took away his father?

The notion that there is one responsible, professional, patriotic entity and another—the media—that is rampant, confused, and devoid of all national responsibility, will deprive you, the army officer, of the ability to manage risks.

Because of the media's commercialism, the public's addiction to visuals, and because of the media's banality and tendency to entertain at any price, we are subject to a terrible system of limitations on our ability to function as journalists. That is why we lean toward the violent picture, the action-packed picture, the picture with lots of fireworks. It is in this context that you can manage us and use us. I say this for our own censure. The fact that we tell a dramatic story at any price, always look for a

hero and a bad guy—this paradigm blemishes our ability to be objective journalists.

I completely agree with what Professor Kremnitzer said concerning the ideal of objectivity. But to attempt to achieve journalistic objectivity for practical purposes—and I agree with Professor Kremnitzer that one should not give in to the concept of ‘honest subjectivity’ even rhetorically—is delusory from the viewpoint of the journalistic way of thinking.

■ **Arye Carmon:** The issue that this discussion has focused on is the mutual relationship between the responsibility placed on the shoulders of the military forces and the professional and ethical demands that we make of the various media.

I ask our guest, Mr. David Halberstam, the following question: you experienced fighting that took place thousands of miles from home, while in our case we're talking about only a few miles away. Under battle conditions, ours as well as yours, are there ways to create a relationship of credibility between the military and the press?

■ **David Halberstam:** Credibility, along with the right to survive, is about the most precious thing you have in democracy. When I was a young man in Vietnam forty years ago, our military was extremely careless with its credibility. I was stunned by the fact that the generals in Saigon in 1963/64 would lie about conditions in the field when young Americans were being killed. The reason was that they thought it was a war of luxury. They

didn't really care. Because it was partly an American colonial undertaking, it didn't seem real; it was a war of luxury so they could lie.

You don't have that luxury. You are a democracy surrounded by enemies with increasingly sophisticated means of provocation. How do you survive? How do you hold the fabric of your country together? How do you keep the balance between democracy and the strength needed to perpetuate the survival of democracy?

In truth, to my knowledge there has been nothing like this dilemma: the need to ensure your physical and geographical security (given the nature of the enemy surrounding you) while trying not to infringe the rules of democracy. Given our blessed two oceans and our enormous nuclear resources, we (America) should be extremely humble when telling Israel what to do.

■ **Ilana Dayan:** It seems in Vietnam you were granted at most limited access to American forces. Basically you hopped on the chopper and went wherever the chopper went. How should Israeli journalists relate to the army limiting access to where the action is taking place?

■ **David Halberstam:** Whatever happened in Vietnam, it was not over the access of journalists. What brought us down in Vietnam and got us into a war that we couldn't win was not journalists; it was policy that didn't work and the fact that history was against us. Nonetheless, there was still great determination

for both technical and political reasons to control the information coming out of there.

I know that your security situation is infinitely more delicate than ours, but my instinct tells me you need to access those journalists who are serious. The greatest thing you have to sell is your democracy, along with your right to survival.

■ **Ilana Dayan:** Can you recall an instance when you felt that your American sentiment, to say nothing of your patriotic sentiment, conflicted with your journalistic mission, where you felt that you could be either a journalist or an American?

■ **David Halberstam:** There were moments when I knew something but did not write about it because it would have put American special forces and others at danger.

I also thought that I could make what I call common sense adjustments. But you have to remember that I never thought that we Americans as a people were threatened or made vulnerable by losing in Vietnam. I took quite a beating for being pessimistic earlier on; critics of mine in the White House, the Pentagon and other places in the right-wing American press tried to portray me as a radical left-winger, as unpatriotic, which was not true.

I had a clear sense because of my writing in *The New York Times*, that if the Vietcong walked into Saigon my readers would not have been surprised. I was bolstered, I must say, by an inner

sense of strength. I am a second generation Jewish American. My grandfather came to the U.S. around 1880. My father was a medic in World War I. In 1942, at the age of forty-five, he served in World War II as a combat surgeon.

■ **Amir Oren:** Were you concerned at the time, or in retrospect, by the political impact of your stories—the fact that Lyndon Johnson had to withdraw and Nixon was elected and what you got was four more years of war with many more casualties?

■ **David Halberstam:** Well, when I was a young reporter in the sixties, it certainly wasn't an issue. The main issue was trying to get the American people to see that this didn't work and to stop this extraordinary lying machine that had been created, I believe, for political reasons. I don't think a journalist's job is to sit there and think, "Well, I won't tell the truth because it might help Nixon and might hurt Johnson." It is to pursue the truth according to the theory that democratic society, on seeing and hearing the truth, will respond. Richard Nixon was elected in 1968 because the Democrats had fragmented over the war, because of the rise of George Wallace in the South, because Hubert Humphrey didn't separate himself quite clearly or early enough from Lyndon Johnson, and because the convention in 1968 was a disaster.

I really don't think it is a journalist's responsibility to think, "Oh, I'd better temper this because Lyndon is a better guy than Richard Nixon."

■ **Amir Oren:** You were a young reporter covering a politically controversial war and taking an unpopular stand with the government and probably with a lot of the American people. How did that affect your day-to-day reporting as *The New York Times* reporter?

■ **David Halberstam:** We were losing; I had very good sources in the field and there was no doubt that it wasn't being won and I certainly acted on that. I understood that journalism is not about popularity. I had spent five or six years covering civil rights in the South. *The New York Times* was very nervous with my reporting. We were watching the beginning of a huge historic collision, which we did not realize at the time. It was a collision, the end of one aspect of the Cold War in Europe where the West was always right and the communists were always wrong. We were applying Cold War lessons in a former colonial country where everything was upside down because nationalism was on the side of the communists. My editors were from a different generation; they were more World War II and couldn't believe that generals would lie. The *Times* in general did not like the idea of a young correspondent being on a collision course with secretaries of defense, four-star generals and ambassadors. But over a period of time they accepted it. I must tell you, I had contempt for a general who would lie about how we were doing when young men were being killed. I felt he should be court-martialed, and in your army he would have been.

It was suggested that our reporting hurt good and honest officers because they got caught in the middle. That was something we were very sensitive to. I protected any number of my sources



in Vietnam. Their names did not go into my story. But I think the generals roughly knew who they were, and they went out to punish their own people. None of these very accomplished young men who were colonels in the Delta and were really doing very well ever made general. In that area, you made general by going along and in effect to some degree being dishonest. They talked to us because young men who were under their command or under their authority were being killed and it wasn't right to go on lying about it, but it took them until about the fifth month of a twelve-month tour of duty until they would talk.

I just want to say again that what Israel represents in the minds of so many ordinary Americans, even in this very bad time, is that it is a democracy and reflects the idealism of ordinary people in the best sense. I think that advertising that, through allowing access to serious members of the press, is the best thing you can do for your own country.

■ **Meirav Michaeli:** Like Ilana Dayan, I also think managing us is very easy. The reason, among other things—with apologies to Professor Kremnitzer—is the pretension to objectivity, because that is the exact opposite of taking responsibility. There is no objectivity. Objectivity is a pretension to an impartial, external viewpoint that has no emotional, psychological, historical or other tie to what is happening, and therefore not to the facts. If Yisrael Harel and I were asked to describe the same factual situation (for instance, that picture we were talking about of the refugee camp in Jenin), two entirely different pictures would emerge because of our differences in outlook.

All the more so when it comes to covering the army that represents us, fights for us in a conflict to which we are a side, and despite the fact that many of the correspondents covering the military once served in various military campaigns, including propaganda campaigns, identify with the army, sit in on military investigations and know the military jargon—still, they are unable to achieve objectivity.

So what we should aim for (if we set aside honest subjectivity) is fair coverage. In other words, I describe what I can see and what I understand from the information I have.

What has not been said here is that the media does not just report or mediate, but creates. It creates reality for its audience; it creates consciousness. If it pretends to objectivity, it creates a sentiment among the public that there is one truth, that there is some sort of unique norm from which one can lean one way or another. If it creates such a consciousness, anyone who thinks differently is slanted and infected and must be removed from our legitimacy.

■ **Arnon Zuckerman:** First point: there can be no synchronicity between the military and the press, nor would that be good. Second point: whether or not there is any synchronicity, in any case the local media does no harm to the army. There are reports here and there in the media that the army doesn't like, but the majority of coverage of the army is favorable, and some even looks as if it comes from the army itself. What bothers me is the international media. You know the CNN coverage

and you know there is new technology, but the army has no operative plan regarding this. Resources and serious thought must be invested in order to internalize the problems of modern communications for military action.

■ **Yoram Peri:** My first comment concerns objectivity. Professor Kremnitzer's view in analyzing the issue of objectivity was positivistic and therefore mistaken, because post-modernism is the current concept in all fields. Post-modernism says that there is no absolute truth. The post-modern idea does not reject the existence of the facts, but claims that it is not possible to describe the facts. That's the meaning of "the crisis of representation." Nietzsche said that language lies, that the nature of words themselves is to distort reality. I'll give a simple example. When I write an item in the newspaper about something that happened nearby, what do I write? Which words do I use? Is there only one word that describes reality, the facts? No. The words I choose determine my ideological, political and moral stance immediately. So to say that there is objectivity and that there should be objectivity is to misunderstand the claim, because the claim is that there is truth but that it can't be expressed in an absolute manner. Therefore, what should be pursued is not objectivity but fairness, and fairness in American media entails a long list of conditions—getting the other side's reaction, presenting two viewpoints, telling the reader "this is what I think and this is what I believe." In other words, take my words with a grain of salt because I am limited in my ability to describe objective reality, because language is limited in its ability to describe objective reality.

The second point refers to things that Gil Regev said about responsibility, that we must be partners in the army's responsibility because in the final analysis, we are all part of the same collective. There's a problem in principle concerning this matter as well, and it also relates to a universal trend in which the modern citizen no longer grants the government the complete, sole, exclusive and monopolistic responsibility for determining his fate. This relates to the military and security realm as well, and the modern democratic concept says: "I know what is good for Israel's security as well as the prime minister does, and my right to express my opinion is equal to his. He also makes mistakes sometimes; he, too, has a whole complex of additional calculations." Today, one can no longer shut someone up in the name of responsibility. Moreover, it is my duty, in the name of our mutual responsibility, to say what I think.

A few days ago, *Ha'ir* weekly published articles written by journalists during the first week of the Lebanon War [in 1982]. *Ha'ir* asked the reporters what they think now about what they wrote then. Some of the journalists refused to be interviewed. Others said: "We didn't know, and afterwards we changed our minds." I think Dov Goldstein said: "I wrote what the chief of staff said to me. And the chief of staff, it turns out, was very wrong in what he said to me in those days."

The democratic concept is that there is no single truth and that there are many different viewpoints, and what we know today may turn out to have been mistaken tomorrow. So it is the opposition's duty to oppose and it is the press's duty to criticize and ask questions.

■ **Yisrael Harel:** The representatives from the military came here today to examine themselves after the Defensive Shield campaign, and I think that the reporters and broadcasters should examine themselves, too. One of the ills of the media, especially the Israeli media, is that it thinks of itself as a separate entity that wants to be as influential as the government and wants its ideology to be accepted as the prevailing ideology, and sometimes wants to set itself in place of the Supreme Court. In other words, it wants to be the determining body.

From what Tali Lipkin-Shahak said today, it sounds like it was the media that prevented our going into Gaza. It doesn't matter whether or not that is correct; what annoys me is the arrogance and feeling of accomplishment, the feeling that losses were prevented because of the media. Soldiers may not have been killed because we did not go into Gaza, but more assailants might come out of Gaza and explosives laboratories continue to produce bombs, etc.

This selectivity, according to which the media, after twenty years, demands that the army and the government repent for the Lebanon War—a war that a consensus agrees was mistaken—while those very newspapers would not dream of holding a referendum concerning the Oslo Agreements. Moreover, with regard to the Yom Kippur War, the media admitted that it got carried away under the influence of the military and of politicians and failed in its job. Today, when the destructive results of the Oslo Agreements are clear, does the media repent?

I agree that the media has currently become a strategic element, but at the same time I claim that there is no possibility of opposing it, and certainly not of beating it, as long as it lines up ideologically, one-dimensionally with the other side; as long as its narrative is the narrative of occupation; and as long as the IDF radio station itself uses this language uncontested.

How can one argue against the foreign media when a radio station that is supposed to serve the IDF gives airtime (even more than other stations) to soldiers who refuse to serve, and which uses terminology such as 'occupation', the 'Al-Aksa Intifada', etc.?

■ **Ofer Shelach:** Of all the entities in the State of Israel that are covered, including the media, the IDF has the greatest monopoly on information relevant to coverage. This is somewhat less pronounced in the current conflict, because whoever dares can move around in the territories, and there is also little reporting from the Palestinian side. But take the war in Lebanon, for instance. Whenever there was an event in Lebanon, the IDF held a nearly absolute monopoly on the event. Whoever complains about the coverage and wants a sympathetic press should remember that in the final analysis, the concept of reality in the public discourse is fed by what the public deems to be facts, and these facts are pretty much in the hands of the army. An example of this is the plan to go into Gaza. Prior to the public discussion of the plan, a news item came out of another (not army) security body according to which the suicide bomber who blew himself up in the Sheffield Club in Rishon LeTzion came from Gaza—an item that did no harm to those who

supported going into Gaza. After it was decided not to enter Gaza (the chief of staff claimed that the reason for not going into Gaza was not related to the media, and we believe him), this news item disappeared.

I point this out for two reasons: first, because the army has the capability of controlling information; and second, because the army has a sympathetic press—even where there have been investigations. But there is a difference between being sympathetic to the army and being a fan of the military. When you are a fan of the Tel Aviv Ha'poel soccer team, it means that in your eyes Ha'poel Tel Aviv can do no wrong. But the history of the State of Israel is full of examples about which one can ask: is someone who is truly a fan of the IDF someone who says 'Amen' to everything an army officer says? This reasoning is entirely too dogmatic. I think that what Meirav Michaeli said is perfectly correct: the great majority of journalists who cover the military are fans of the IDF.

You are spoiled in the sense that you are representatives of the most-liked and strongest entity in the State of Israel. The public status of each of you, from the chief of staff down, is mainly the result of Israel's existential threat. Keep in mind your responsibility as the shapers, to a great extent, of world opinion about us.

■ **Rafael Vardi:** I'd like to address two aspects of IDF action in the territories: the IDF's involvement, good and bad, with the media and the meaning and conclusions the IDF must draw from that involvement.

It's not feasible that the IDF would exclude the issue of the media from its operational plans. Since the officers of today and tomorrow are the most available spokespersons and the most credible concerning what's happening in the field, they should be trained for this—from the highest to the lowest levels—either through courses given by the army, study days or comprehensive briefings.

There is another aspect of this. For the last year and a half, nearly the only Israelis that the Palestinians in the territories have come into contact with have been soldiers, and from their point of view, this has been negative contact. It takes place at the roadblocks, and even if a soldier acts decently, does not curse or attack the Palestinian physically or disparage his honor, the Palestinian thinks of the contact as negative. Likewise the searches in Palestinian homes carried out by the soldiers, no matter how crucial they are. There is no need, for instance, for the soldiers themselves to overturn beds and furniture while carrying out searches; the resident himself can do this. If he did, that would reduce complaints about destruction and looting. All this requires appropriate consideration, appropriate commands, pre-operational briefings, oversight and punishment where required. It also requires study and direction given in the military schools.

■ **Eitan Haber:** Before the Yom Kippur War, I wrote a favorable portrait piece about Arik Sharon, but I wrote that, among other things, he was quick to anger. The military censor called me immediately and said that the term 'quick to anger'



couldn't be published. IDF generals are not quick to anger. I asked him if he had two other words that could replace the term, since the piece was already with the printer. He said, "Yes. Write 'good-natured'."

Another story. On that terrible Yom Kippur in 1973, we were with the head of intelligence, Eli Ze'ira, from one to two in the afternoon. At 2 p.m., when panic broke out and Ze'ira's senior office manager began bringing in little notes and everything started moving, my friend Ze'ev Schiff asked the intelligence chief what was happening. At that moment, when the Syrians and Egyptians were already attacking in waves, Ze'ira said, "Nothing, nothing. Stay seated." And then the famous siren sounded.

I relate this story because it seems to me that from the things I heard Yisrael Harel and Gil Regev say here, there is nostalgia for the former patriotic relationship between the media and the army. In this context, Yoram Peri said rightly that no-one in the media thinks they can tell Yisrael Ziv (the commander of the Gaza Division) how to flank to the right or left in entering Gaza (although there are some military commentators who go too far and do this...). But today, after the Yom Kippur War and certainly after the Lebanon War, the media is entitled—and perhaps even obligated—to intervene in the question of whether or not the IDF should go into Gaza given the political conditions and everything that is happening around us. The nation is divided on these questions, so why should we forbid the media from getting involved in these critical questions of war and peace?

■ **Gal Heersht:** There is an understandable conflict of interests around this table. The media, which is anti-organization, very often represents many different interests—commercial and PR, aside from journalistic items themselves. The media has its own way of doing things and its own goals. The army, on the other hand, sees the media as an instrument that can be used to manipulate consciousness. We have the responsibility to stabilize democracy by giving the media the tools to describe what is going on, and the media has the responsibility to be a keen and fair observer. We must manipulate Israeli consciousness with restraint, and we must manipulate the consciousness of the enemy and the international community unequivocally.

The media sees us as the central players on the national stage, in a performance which deals with the security of the state. There is tension here, but the potential is here in this room to come to a set of understandings, such as, for instance, that there is no barrier between the army and policy nor between the general headquarters and the political echelon. The army acts according to strategic guidelines and it is not right to bash it, as we have been bashed. For example, when we operated according to the strategy of containment, we got bashed by various groups and publicists.

■ **Giora Eiland:** Two main characters are missing from our discussion of the military and the media. One is the political echelon. In the kind of conflict we are engaged in, the lines between the army and the political echelon are blurred, and this naturally seeps down to the media. The second is the foreign

press. Our main problem is not the Israeli press but the foreign press.

True, there are four points to the credit of the foreign press that are not exploited properly, and as a result five things are worth doing:

1. The thing the foreign press is most afraid of is being tagged unprofessional. If it is caught reporting inaccurately or unfairly, or without balance between the two sides, its readiness to correct itself is tremendous. On this basis, it could be employed more.
2. The foreign press loves to be bothered—to be called, pestered, to the point of harassment. All approaches are received gratefully. One day I call Mike Hanna from CNN, and afterwards I called again and apologized for calling twice the same day, and he said: "Relax, Hanan Ashrawi calls me eight times a day!"
3. Most of the reporters come here for short periods of 3-6 months. They are pretty much isolated, and they look for some kind of humane treatment. Their main criticism of us is that we don't treat them right; i.e., we only address them when we have complaints. If we appreciated the underlying human aspect, we could use them in a much more positive way.
4. The foreign correspondents may be passive when it comes to ferreting out information, but their preparedness to listen is tremendous. If an IDF general were to go to the foreign press center and mingle with the correspondents, he would find

himself sitting for hours with people who want to hear what he has to say. We just don't do this enough.

As I said, there are five things we should do regarding this matter.

1. Our major weak point is the people who speak with the foreign press, who are mostly from the political echelon. If everyone becomes a representative of the State of Israel, the message put across is not always right—not the right language, incorrect English, and sometimes not even factually correct.
2. Background talks with the foreign press are extremely important, and require a great deal of effort on everyone's part.
3. Despite many misgivings, each instance in which the foreign press accompanied military operations met with complete success. Every instance of exposure, which sometimes seemed frightening, has proven better than expected.
4. Our responses must be in real time. It's not enough to have people sitting in the army spokesperson's office twenty-four hours a day watching CNN and the BBC. Responding in real time requires a much wider level of knowledge, and since the right people are not involved in this, our responses are not in real time, but consist of a random reaction by someone who happens to be watching CNN, gets in touch with the studio and demands that the reporter correct himself.
5. It's impossible to speak with a foreign correspondent about military matters. His next question will always be about things that fall into the gray area between the military and policy—humanitarian issues. If you don't want to talk about these things, don't talk at all.

■ **Amir Oren:** One of the things worth investigating is how responsible certain journalists are for the public's ignorance concerning journalism. Very few journalists who cover the layers of this conflict really know how journalism works, how a reporter in the field gathers facts from conversations, from body language and from documents, etc., but everyone is a media critic. Everyone knows that the army is spoon-feeding information to this poor broadcaster, whom they call an 'army spokesman' and because he was a battalion commander in the reserves, they know he must be prejudiced. Injustice has been committed against a group, albeit small, of the press who do their job faithfully and who are guided by their own knowledge and that of their opposite number in an army that has two taboos: lies and excommunication. Woe unto the source, be it a division commander or the head of a headquarters section, who trips up a reporter by misleading him. The credibility of the organization that this person represents is immediately destroyed, and the reporter will pursue him and hold the organization suspect for years. So it's worth giving a little credit to the reporters.

My second remark concerns the war in Lebanon. If a journalism student wanted to make life easy for himself by choosing to study the behavior of the Israeli press towards the war in Lebanon during the nine months preceding the war, he would find everything printed in the press. Despite the heavy censorship, headlines were printed. But the press merely kicks the ball into the middle of the field. It can't dribble it down the pitch; there are other public sectors whose job that is.

■ **Eival Gilady:** Since tension between the military and the press is fundamental, we should stop complaining about it and try to understand it and live with it.

I don't want to be part of a society in which the press is co-opted, debilitated, etc. On the other hand, I don't accept that the army supposedly enjoys a sympathetic environment because of press protection. The real obstacle to the IDF's current actions is not fear of the press, but our desire to act within the framework of the norms and values of Israeli society, because that is our source of support.

We don't have anything to hide, so there is no reason for not opening everything up to press coverage. The press can go anywhere because what we do is just. We draw our feelings of security, sympathy, and support from this understanding, and if we are careful, they will always be ours.

■ **Moshe Ya'alon:** There has to be tension between the army and the press in a democratic society, just as there has to be tension between officers and lawyers and between military actions and the Supreme Court that examines or adjudicates the army's actions. This tension, within the framework of checks and balances, is democracy's oxygen.

I expect the press to be democracy's watchdog, to be responsible, credible, ethical, fair and critical. The army carries difficult burdens that have been revealed thanks to the press. Various affairs have been exposed by the press despite our attempts to

cover them up. This generation of officers is mature, recognizes the importance of the media as an entity that is supposed to bring things out into the open, and the army itself, accordingly, brings things to light. The army understands that in the present era, nothing can be hidden.

But while we labor under rules of truth-telling, credibility and responsibility, we are sometimes subject to a system that hits below the belt. Because of ratings, some negative phenomena have developed, such as bashing individuals and office-holders, deliberate de-legitimization, eagerness to find the most negative aspect, side-stepping the truth. None of these phenomena are necessary.

One should aim for the truth, even if aiming for objectivity is not practical because every presentation falls into the category of personal commentary. One should aim for truth regarding facts and one can aim for truth regarding fairness. When these rules are broken by hitting below the belt, we have a problem. But the media has a problem too in this situation, since we will then try to manipulate the media.

The army is aware of the importance of the media and of its strategic value. We take the media into account in our preliminary thinking, in situation assessment, and during and after battle. The army's achievements in the realm of the press are insufficient: we do not cover all the target audiences, we are good in Hebrew but not good enough in Arabic, and we have a problem with the international press. Some of this

stems from a lack of tools. For example, the Voice of Israel in Arabic is only partially functional; TV Channel 33, which was intended for the Arabic media, does not serve that purpose. The army is not there to supply answers to the international media. On the other hand, the argument about the diagnosis of the conflict, or about its narrative, drags us into politics against our will.

About the things that Yaron Ezrahi said, personally I am convinced of certain truths concerning the narrative, Palestinian strategy, etc. But Yaron Ezrahi would have me keep quiet and forgo my professional truth since we are talking about public debate and I might be accused of politicking. I find myself in no simple dilemma, because painting the army as political harms its legitimacy, and it is important that the army be legitimate and within the boundaries of consensus. On the other hand, how can I look myself in the mirror in a few years' time if today I refrain from stating my professional position? If the head of intelligence needs to analyze Arafat, is that political? It is professional duty.

The easiest thing is to attack us and de-legitimize us by saying, for example, that the army spokesperson is a liar. The media has crucial functions, but let it not be dragged into debasement by irresponsible reporting. As to what lessons we have learned ourselves—the army must train officers to be the spokespersons themselves, each according to his rank and function.

■ **George Shultz:** To me the fact that a relatively small group



of human beings got together and created a functioning, disciplined state, has always been a miracle. Israel has a flourishing economy with all its ups and downs. It is part of the world economy and is a thriving democracy in a sea of hostility. One of the reasons for this miracle must have to do with the relationship between the armed forces and the general civilian population. It is undoubtedly a much more intimate relationship than in almost any other country, because practically every family in Israel has somebody in the armed forces. A forum like this, which keeps examining that relationship, is the way to keep democracy and the capacity for the state to defend itself strong.

I'd like to read some comments made by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on the Jim Lehrer News Hour. He said, "If you think about it, we have no choice. A terrorist can attack at any time, at any place using a range of techniques. It is physically impossible to defend against, although we try very hard. If your goal is to stop terrorism, you cannot stop it just by defense. You can only stop it by taking the battle to the terrorists where they are and going after them.... Everyone in the world knows that even the UN Charter provides for the right of self-defense. The only self-defense, the only effective way to defend is to take the battle to where the terrorists are. They are planning, they are plotting, they have trained thousands of terrorists very well and we have no choice but to find those people and root them out, as the president said, and stop them from doing what they are doing and stop countries from harboring them."

Polls show that the American people generally agree that that is an apt description under the circumstances of Israel's problem, as well as ours. I think there is an empathy between people in the United States and people in Israel.

At a talk I gave in Washington, I talked about various fronts in the war against terrorism as we see it, and one of them I identified as the front involving the regimes of the Arab and Islamic countries. Over the years, knowing that many of the terrorists seek their overthrow above all else, these regimes have each in their own way made deals with the terrorists. They paid them off and propagandized them to focus on external enemies. They thought to use them to build up the religious legitimacy of those regimes. They have created a monster. They may have bought some time for themselves, but they are feeding their own doom if they keep on this path.

Since September 11, some have come to their senses. These regimes have to take responsibility as states and be held accountable. They have to stop playing a double game. They should be encouraged and supported if they work seriously to put their states and societies on the right track. But I have to say, when money is collected to reward the families of suicide bombers, that is support for terrorism.

Terrorist extremists have their hands around the throat of the Palestinian movement. Those hands need to be prized off so that constructive attitudes can emerge to take over leadership in a restructured Palestinian Authority.

When negotiators gather around a table, they must recognize that they represent but the tip of the iceberg. The most important negotiations go on within the constituencies being represented at the table.

As a negotiator you look at your opposite number and ask yourself: "Does that person have the capacity to take yes for an answer? Does that person have the capacity to carry through a tough commitment that may be made in the give and take of negotiations?" If the answer to that is no, then you say, "I may or may not have to deal with that person, but if I do I am not going to make any consequential concessions, because the give and take will not lead to anything."

In your negotiations you don't deal with probabilities, you deal with possibilities, and you need possibilities to see if you can make them probable. It seems to me that the "Saudi Initiative" can be interpreted as a statement from Saudi Arabia that it can imagine circumstances under which it could have a normal relationship with Israel.

To have Saudi Arabia say it can imagine circumstances under which it could have normalized relations is important, and I think President Bush and Secretary Powell have been right to welcome that, because Israel has not had a state to deal with when it comes to the Palestinians. This represents a negotiating partner with greater capacity to make a commitment. Obviously Palestinian representation is essential, but the present Palestinian Authority just doesn't have the capacity to govern. A declaration doesn't

create a state. A state gets created, a functioning state, when it develops legitimacy of leadership. There is a lot of work to do if there is to be Palestinian representation of any real consequence.

In the meantime the war on terrorism goes on, and it is up to the IDF and Israeli society to carry on. Sooner or later there will be some sort of a settling down and some sort of a peace—maybe a cold peace, but nevertheless something. What happens when a country that has been in a wartime state for a long while suddenly finds itself in a different state? What tends to happen in democracies is that people say; "Well hurray it is over, so let us have a peace dividend." A peace dividend means less spending on defense. That is something that would not be wise for Israel. If you ask yourself why it is that other countries want to negotiate with Israel, the answer is because they conclude that there isn't a military option for them. When they see there is a military option, then things go awry.

In order to maintain peace, Israel will need to remain strong. In order to maintain drive and morale, the relationship between the people in the armed forces and the civil society around them needs to be close and understanding.

■ **Shaul Mofaz:** Some of the conclusions that we have come to here concerning the military/media relationship are in essence insights that we ourselves have come to over the years. When I was deputy chief of staff, I wrote a document regarding the IDF and the media, and I remember a discussion we held on the issue when I was OC Southern Command. In short, the very

same issues that were relevant then are relevant now and are relevant in every reality. I refer to issues such as the right of the public to know, the primacy of credibility, IDF officers as army spokespersons, the IDF's self-revelation initiatives to the press, the media as an element to be considered in the IDF's situation assessments. Even though we have made progress on these things, we still have a long way to go.

Recently we have been especially concerned with the issue of the media during hostilities, and we are talking about a war against terrorism that is unlike any other war. It is not inconceivable that we would have arrived at different insights and conclusions today had the character of the fighting been different.

The insights, conclusions and information that we take with us from today's deliberations have been and will continue to be the linchpins of our relationship with the media, and it is important for us to carry on with them and reinforce them from a procedural perspective, since conclusions can be internalized by the officer ranks only through an ongoing process.

The problematic basis of this conflict is the framework. It is very hard to explain and does not consist of a single narrative. The conqueror/conquered story is only one of many aspects. The Palestinian side presents the reality of the suffering of the civilian population and presents the conflict as a legitimate struggle to attain national goals, thus turning terrorists into freedom fighters.

The Palestinians wave two banners simultaneously: the banner of the diplomatic channel for attaining political goals, and the terrorism banner. We act according to a totally different moral code. They act with unrestrained incitement and carry out unthinkable deeds: in anticipation of an international investigation of the Jenin events, they strewed dead animals around, put up tents for the homeless whose homes had supposedly been destroyed, and carried out fake burials.

While the population in the midst of which the IDF operates is mostly innocent, it is immersed in incitement. We are not fighting against the Palestinian population but against Palestinian terror that has set itself the goal of drenching the citizens of Israel in blood.

In such a complex reality, we are certainly not free of errors. Despite the complications that this reality presents to the officers and soldiers of the IDF, we must still act within the army's codes and spirit. All of the army's actions, including in the media, influence public consciousness. We must therefore give priority to openness towards the press. We must also safeguard our credibility. The Israeli public believes in the IDF as an organization, believes in its officers and soldiers—and if we lose credibility, this public will no longer place in our hands either national security or their sons.

We must include the media as an element in our situation assessments; we must train our officers to do this. In the past we made mistakes, and I can't promise that we will not make

any in the future. However, the IDF never purposely put out a fallacious report.

Yes, we erred in that we drummed into the heads of our officers the concept of a closed military area where the press was concerned. From now on, it will be an open military area unless such openness gets in the way of carrying out an action or endangers IDF soldiers or correspondents. The right or obligation of the public to know is not in question as long as it does not go beyond the limits of field security.

What do we ask of the media? We ask for fairness, but also the very same credibility that obligates us vis-à-vis the public and the press. To our regret, an unfounded media report is often created that causes harm to IDF soldiers and officers when they are risking their lives for the security of the State of Israel. Moreover, it's the media's job to stand watch, and if they identify a snag or problems within the army, they should sound the alert. The army will deal with the problem and find the proper solution to it, so that it does not recur in the future.

Along with the fairness and credibility that we demand of the press, it should also keep a proper balance between its duty to the public's right to know and the commercial interests of ratings and marketing.

Concerning the foreign press, I totally accept what has been said here, including Professor Kremnitzer's stand that all ranks of the army must treat the press with kid gloves—officers and soldiers

alike. With a few exceptions, this is the policy of the IDF, but what is latched onto are the exceptions, and they are presented in stark colors, as a result of which the international press has the impression that the IDF is trying to hide things.

With regard to internal consumption, the IDF is not the national information spokesman. We can assist as an additional channel for presenting materials and information that can be divulged, and we are obligated to inform the public of security activities. This adds to the sense of security and explains the scope of the prevention of terrorist incidents.

As to freedom of expression within the ranks of the IDF, it does not stand to reason that officers cannot express their professional opinions if they are not in agreement with those of their commanders. Overall weighting of a variety of opinions will be carried out on a professional basis within the GHQ and will later be brought to the attention of the political echelon.

The media is definitely a player on the battlefield, but we mustn't get confused. It is our job to explain the gaps that the cameras can't show. The camera can't be everywhere; the camera can't shoot reasoning and motives—only pictures and results, and it usually focuses on events and not processes. We are focused on processes and less on isolated incidents, and we must therefore fill in what the cameras don't show.

Since this conflict is won on points, it is important for the information service to be an ongoing process. We should



not be panicked by criticism, but accept it with a sense of proportion and take it for granted. We should not panic and say that from now on, cameras will not be allowed in the field, or that since a brigadier general didn't express himself cogently, we will not allow any brigadier generals to be interviewed. Quite the opposite—the right policy is to teach them how to be interviewed.

We should not complain about the press's attitude towards us and certainly not that of the Israeli press. Their intentions are generally good, and with regard to Operation Defensive Shield—a war over our home that enjoyed a consensus—the IDF was seen by the Israeli public and press as a very credible organization. The exception is when they base reports on erroneous facts and de-legitimize the whole army or some of its officers. Any expectation of harmony and consensus between the IDF and the press is unrealistic, but it is right and proper to expect credibility as the leading principle—in the same measure as you expect credibility of us, we expect it of you.

