

(b)(3):10 USC 424;
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CONTROLS

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 01 OF 05

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SERIAL: (U) (b)(3):10 USC 424

/***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****/

BODY

COUNTRY: (U) ISRAEL (IS); LEBANON (LE).

SUBJ:

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WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT
FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE. REPORT CLASSIFIED

~~SECRET - NOFORN~~

- DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

- DOI: (U) 941102-941107.

- REQS: (U) (b)(3):10 USC 424

- SOURCE: A. (U)

(b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)

B. (U)

(b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)

C. (U/NF)

(b)(1); (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i); Sec. 1.4(c)

(b)(1); (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i); Sec. 1.4(c)

SUMMARY: (C)

(b)(1); (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i); Sec. 1.4(c)

TEXT: 1. (C) ISRAELI MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE 29 OCTOBER ATTACK BY HIZBALLAH ON AN IDF POSITION MANNED BY "GIVATI" INFANTRY BRIGADE TROOPS (b)(3):10 USC 424

IS FUELING A PUBLIC DEBATE OVER THE STATE OF MORALE, TRAINING, AND COMMAND PERFORMANCE IN THE IDF IN GENERAL. THE INCIDENT IS ALSO BEING EXPLOITED BY POLITICAL OPPONENTS OF THE RABIN GOVERNMENT WHO CHARGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S AND IDF'S PREOCCUPATION WITH THE PEACE PROCESS HAS LED TO A DETERIORATION IN COMBAT READINESS.

2. (C) PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF THE BATTLE WERE ESSENTIALLY

(b)(1); (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i); Sec. 1.4(c)
REPORTING THAT HIZBALLAH FIGHTERS, SUPPORTED BY ARTILLERY FIRE, BRIEFLY OCCUPIED AN ABANDONED RAMPART OR BUNKER ON THE PERIMETER OF THE IDF POSITION. HOWEVER, THE ISRAELI PUBLIC WAS ESPECIALLY SHOCKED BY THE FACT THAT HIZBALLAH WAS ABLE TO VIDEOTAPE ONE OF THEIR FIGHTERS PLANTING A FLAG ON THE EARTH BERM, A VIDEO WHICH WAS LATER SHOWN ON ISRAELI TV. IDF CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF EHUD ((BARAK)) ORDERED AN IMMEDIATE AND COMPREHENSIVE INVESTIGATION BY SENIOR OFFICERS WHICH RESULTED IN UNUSUALLY SWIFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST AT LEAST TWO OFFICERS AND FIVE SOLDIERS IN THE POSITION. TWO OF THE SOLDIERS, WHO WERE FROM AN "AFFILIATED UNIT"

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WERE ALREADY COURT-MARTIALLED ON 1 NOV AND SENTENCED TO JAIL (14 AND 28 DAYS) FOR ABANDONING THEIR POSTS. THE TRIAL OF THE FIVE GIVATI PERSONNEL WAS DELAYED UNTIL 6 NOV, THE END OF THE 7-DAY JEWISH MOURNING PERIOD (FOR THE SGT KILLED IN THE MORTAR BARRAGE).

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FOLLOWING THE TRIAL ON 6 NOV, THE COMMANDER OF THE POSITION, A DEPUTY COMPANY COMMANDER (1LT), WAS RELIEVED OF DUTY AND A 2LT WAS REPRIMANDED. ONE OF THE SOLDIERS WAS SENT TO JAIL FOR 60 DAYS, ANOTHER WAS REPRIMANDED AND A THIRD WAS ACQUITTED. THE GIVATI BDE COMMANDER PRESIDED OVER THE COURT-MARTIAL (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)

(b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)

3. (U) (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i) AN IDF SPOKESMAN'S ACCOUNT LISTING "FOUR MAIN FAILURES" IN THE REACTION OF TROOPS MANNING THE POST TO THE ATTACK: 1) SOME SOLDIERS ABANDONED THEIR POSTS UNDER FIRE; 2) SOME COMMANDERS EXHIBITED COMMAND AND CONTROL DEFICIENCIES; 3) IDF TROOPS FAILED TO IMMEDIATELY ASSAULT GUERRILLAS WHO WERE OBSERVED APPROACHING THE POST; 4) NO PURSUIT OF THE RETREATING HIZBALLAH FORCE WAS ATTEMPTED. MG YITZHAK ((MORDECHAI)), CG OF NORTHERN COMMAND, WHILE SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE PERSONNEL MANNING THE POSITION, PUBLICLY PRAISED THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE GIVATI BDE IN THE PAST AND THAT OF THE ARMOR CREWS SUPPORTING THE POSITION IN THE DABSHA BATTLE, SAYING THAT QUICK ACTION BY THE TANKS HAD CAUSED HIZBALLAH TO RETREAT. HE ALSO COMMENDED THE SERGEANT WHO WAS LATER KILLED BY MORTAR FIRE (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)

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 (b)(6)

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4. (U) ALTHOUGH THE IDF SENIOR LEADERSHIP AND PRIME MINISTER RABIN TREATED THE INCIDENT AS AN ISOLATED, THOUGH DISGRACEFUL, EXAMPLE OF A LOCALIZED FAILURE BY A SMALL GROUP OF SOLDIERS, SEVERAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL FIGURES, ESPECIALLY THOSE OPPOSED TO CURRENT GOVERNMENT POLICIES, SAW THE INCIDENT AS SYMPTOMATIC OF A SYSTEMIC PROBLEM WITH IDF MORALE AND LEADERSHIP. RAFAEL ((EITAN)), A FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF AND LEADER OF THE "TSOMET" PARTY IN THE KNESSET, SAID THAT MG MORDECHAI WAS "BURNT OUT" AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN REPLACED LONG AGO. HE ALSO BLAMED PRIME MINISTER RABIN, WHO HE SAID "MOONLIGHTS" AS THE DEFENSE MINISTER, FOR NOT PAYING ENOUGH ATTENTION TO MILITARY AFFAIRS. SOME MEDIA REPORTS ASSERTED THAT TALK OF RELINQUISHING TERRITORY FOR PEACE HAD LED TO A "WITHDRAWAL MENTALITY" WHICH WAS SAPPING SOLDIERS' WILLINGNESS TO FIGHT IN LEBANON. OTHERS FAULTED IDF TACTICAL DOCTRINE AND AN ALLEGED RELIANCE ON FIXED POSITIONS TO FIGHT A GUERRILLA WAR, COMPARING THE POSITIONS IN LEBANON TO THE MAGINOT LINE AND SO-CALLED "BAR LEV LINE" OF THE YOM KIPPUR WAR.

5. (C) (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i) ON 3 NOV THAT MG MORDECHAI AND OTHER SENIOR NORTHERN COMMAND OFFICERS HAD RECEIVED A REPORT SEVERAL WEEKS AGO WARNING OF SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE OF MILITARY DUTIES AMONG SOME OF THE SOLDIERS STATIONED IN LEBANON, INCLUDING GIVATI BDE TROOPS. THE ARTICLE STATED THAT SOME OF THE REPORTS CAME FROM THE COMMANDER OF THE "GALILEE DIVISION"

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IDENTIFIED ONLY AS BG "Z.". THE ARTICLE STATED THAT SEVERAL OFFICERS, INCLUDING A PARATROOP BATTALION COMMANDER AND THE "COMMANDER OF A SECTOR IN SOUTH LEBANON" (A FULL COLONEL "A") HAD COMPLAINED ABOUT THE INSPECTIONS, WHICH WERE SOMETIMES HELD ON THE SABBATH. HOWEVER, THE ARTICLE REPORTED THAT NORTHERN COMMAND PLANNED TO EXPAND INSPECTIONS OF COMBAT READINESS IN THE FORWARD POSTS. AT THE SAME TIME, A "SENIOR MILITARY SOURCE" CRITICIZING THE COMBAT READINESS AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE OF THE SOLDIERS IN THE GIVATI POSITION, SAID THAT THE NORTHERN COMMAND WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR A LACK OF COMBAT SKILLS AMONG THE UNITS ROTATING TO DUTY IN SOUTH LEBANON, BECAUSE THE COMMAND "DOES NOT DEAL WITH THEIR PROFESSIONAL SKILL. WE DON'T HAVE THE TOOLS TO PREPARE THE SOLDIERS THAT JOIN US."

6. (U) (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i) THE COMMANDER OF THE GIVATI BDE (COL "M.") VOCIFEROUSLY OPPOSED THE RECOMMENDATION OF OTHER SENIOR OFFICERS TO REPLACE ALL OF THE SOLDIERS SERVING IN THE POSITION, SAYING THAT IT WOULD SHOW A TOTAL LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE TROOPS AND HARM MORALE. HOWEVER, MG MORDECHAI EVENTUALLY DECIDED TO ACCEPT THE RECOMMENDATION AND TRANSFERRED ALL OF TROOPS TO OTHER UNSPECIFIED LOCATIONS. THE ARTICLE SAID THAT THE BRIGADE IS "INFURIATED" BY THE DECISION AND QUOTED A SENIOR GIVATI OFFICER AS SAYING THAT THE ACTION WILL HURT MANY SOLDIERS FOR A LONG TIME. BG "Z.", CG OF THE "GALILEE DIVISION", WAS QUOTED AS CALLING THE SOLDIERS' ACTIONS "SHEER COWARDICE". HE ALSO STRONGLY CRITICIZED SOME OFFICERS FOR CLOAKING COWARDLY ACTIONS IN EUPHEMISTIC "MILITARY JARGON". BG GIORA ((INBAR)), THE NEW COMMANDER OF THE LEBANON LIAISON UNIT, WAS ALSO SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE AS SPEAKING OUT FORCEFULLY AGAINST THE CONDUCT OF THE GIVATI SOLDIERS, CALLING THEIR BEHAVIOR "SHAMEFUL".

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