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CONTROLS

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 01 OF 05 (b)(3):10 USC 424

~~SECRET NOFORN WMINTEL~~

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

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

BODY

COUNTRY: (U) ISRAEL (IS).

SUBJ: (b)(3):10 USC 424 IDF SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN
OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (U)

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

~~SECRET NOFORN WMINTEL~~

- DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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

SOURCE: A. (U)

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

B. (U)

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C. (U) (b)(3):10 USC 424

(b)(3):10 USC 424 (CONF) RECENT NEWS STORIES HAVE HIGHLIGHTED
PROBLEMS AND SUCCESSES OF IDF "UNDERCOVER" SPECIAL
OPERATIONS UNITS. THESE UNITS ARE BECOMING THE IDF'S
PRIMARY MEANS OF COMBATTING ARMED PALESTINIAN GROUPS
IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.
TEXT: 1. (CONF) IDF "UNDERCOVER" SPECIAL OPERATIONS
UNITS OPERATING IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES HAVE

RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY, BOTH FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE, IN RECENT WEEKS. ATTENTION HAS BEEN FOCUSED ON THE UNITS BY A COMBINATION OF OPERATIONAL SUCCESS, ACCIDENTAL DEATHS, AND CRITICISM OF THE UNITS IN THE IDF AND THE KNESSET.

2. ~~(S//NF)~~ THE IDF PUBLICLY ADMITTED THE EXISTENCE OF UNDERCOVER ANTI-TERRORIST UNITS IN JUNE 1991. TWO OF THESE UNITS ARE IDENTIFIED BY NAME IN THE OPEN PRESS: "DUVDEVAN" ("CHERRY") OPERATES IN THE WEST BANK, WHILE "SHIMSHON" ("SAMSON") WORKS IN THE GAZA STRIP. THE PARAMILITARY BORDER GUARDS ALSO HAS AN UNDERCOVER UNIT WHICH WAS RECENTLY PLACED IN THE SPOTLIGHT BY THE DEATH OF ITS COMMANDER (AND FOUNDER) DURING AN ANTI-TERRORIST OPERATION IN JENIN.

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3. (U) THE UNDERCOVER UNITS HAVE BEEN ACCUSED IN THE PAST BY PALESTINIANS AND SOME FOREIGNERS AND ISRAELI HUMAN-RIGHTS ACTIVISTS OF BEING "DEATH SQUADS". HOWEVER, THE LATEST ROUND OF UNFAVORABLE PUBLICITY BEGAN WITH THE ACCIDENTAL KILLING BY DUVDEVAN UNIT SOLDIERS OF ANOTHER UNIT MEMBER DISGUISED AS AN ARAB DURING AN OPERATION ON 8 JULY. AFTER AN INVESTIGATION, THE COMMANDER OF "DUVDEVAN" WAS RELIEVED OF COMMAND FOR "FAILING TO PROPERLY DEPLOY THE FORCE."

4. (U) ON 30 JULY, "HA'ARETZ" REPORTED THAT COL (RESERVE) MOSHE ((GIVA'TI)) HAD CONDUCTED AN INSPECTION OF THE "SPECIAL UNITS OPERATING IN THE WEST BANK, INCLUDING DUVDEVAN". THE INSPECTION WAS CONDUCTED AT THE REQUEST OF THE "CONTROL AND FOLLOW-UP UNIT OF THE OPERATIONS BRANCH" AND WAS MONITORED BY DEPUTY CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF AMNON ((SHAHAK)). COL GIVA'TI OBSERVED THE DAILY ROUTINE AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIAL UNITS FROM 25 MARCH THROUGH 30 APRIL, INCLUDING ACCOMPANYING THE UNITS ON ACTUAL OPERATIONS. THE REPORT NOTED THAT THE UNITS HAD ACHIEVED MANY SUCCESSES AND HAD AN IMPRESSIVE LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION AND USE OF "TOOLS". HOWEVER, THE ARTICLE STATED THAT THE REPORT CRITICIZED THE UNITS FOR POOR DISCIPLINE AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL IN BOTH ROUTINE TASKS AND OPERATIONS. SPECIFIC SHORTCOMINGS INCLUDED POOR PREPARATION FOR ASSIGNMENTS, SOLDIERS ASSIGNED TO TASKS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THEIR INDIVIDUAL SKILLS OR THE UNIT'S MISSION, LAX ENFORCEMENT OF REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO DISCIPLINE AND INDIVIDUAL WELFARE, AND LACK OF REGULAR PHYSICAL TRAINING, MARTIAL-ARTS TRAINING, AND REFRESHER COURSES. THE REPORT RECOMMENDED MORE FREQUENT INSPECTIONS OF THE SPECIAL UNITS BY HIGHER COMMAND ECHELONS. "HA'ARETZ" STATED THAT, ALTHOUGH COL GIVA'TI CONFIRMED THE EXISTENCE OF HIS REPORT, HE REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THE DETAILS.

5. (U) A FOLLOW-UP "HA'ARETZ" ARTICLE ON 31 JULY SAID THAT THE OFFICERS IN THE UNITS COVERED BY THE REPORT WERE REQUIRED TO RESPOND TO THE REPORT'S CONCLUSIONS BY THE FOLLOWING WEEK TO THE CG OF CENTRAL COMMAND, AND THAT HE WAS REQUIRED TO REPORT TO THE GENERAL STAFF. THE ARTICLE SAID THAT, AS A RESULT OF THE REPORT'S CONCLUSIONS, IT WAS DECIDED TO "INSTITUTE CONTROL AND SUPERVISORY MECHANISM'S IN THESE UNITS.

6. (U) ON 3 AUGUST, BOTH "HA'ARETZ" AND "THE JERUSALEM POST" FEATURED A STORY ABOUT THE KILLING OF A PALESTINIAN DESCRIBED BY IDF CHIEF OF STAFF LTG EHUD ((BARAK)) AS "ONE OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS TERRORISTS IN THE SOUTHERN GAZA STRIP". THE "SHIMSHON" UNIT WAS PROMINENTLY MENTIONED AS THE IDF UNIT RESPONSIBLE FOR

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THE DEATH OF THE MEMBER OF THE FATAH HAWKS GROUP, LTG BARAK PRAISED THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SOLDIERS UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS, AS WELL AS THE COOPERATION AMONG THE UNDERCOVER UNITS, MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, AND GENERAL SECURITY SERVICE. HE STATED THAT THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE "HARD NUCLEUS" OF TERRORISTS REQUIRED THE FINEST UNITS AND SOLDIERS OF THE IDF.

7. (U) ONLY TWO DAYS AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL "SHIMSHON" OPERATION, THE UNDERCOVER UNITS WERE AGAIN THE SUBJECT OF CONTROVERSY. BOTH "HA'ARETZ" AND "THE JERUSALEM POST" REPORTED ON 5 AUGUST THAT LTG BARAK HAD RESPONDED TO CHARGES THAT THESE UNITS HAD BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION TO FIRE ON PALESTINIAN SUSPECTS WITHOUT REGARD TO THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WHICH CONSTRAINED OTHER IDF UNITS OPERATING IN THE TERRITORIES. DURING AN APPEARANCE BY BARAK BEFORE THE KNESSET DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, MEMBER OF KNESSET (MK) YOSHI ((SARID)), OF THE LEFT-WING MERETZ PARTY (PART OF THE GOVERNING LABOR COALITION), TOLD BARAK THAT HE HAD RECEIVED COMPLAINTS FROM SOLDIERS OF ALL RANKS IN BOTH THE "DUVDEVAN" AND "SHIMSHON" UNITS. SARID SAID THAT SOME HAD CLAIMED THAT THE OPEN-FIRE RULES UNDER WHICH THEY OPERATED WERE TOO LENIENT AND OTHERS COMPLAINED THAT THE RULES WERE TOO STRICT, INDICATING THAT "THERE'S A VERY BIG GRAY AREA" ("HA'ARETZ"). SARID ALSO CHARGED THAT NOT ONE OF THE COMMANDERS OF THESE UNITS HAD ENDED HIS COMMAND TOUR "NORMALLY" (I.E., WITHOUT BEING RELIEVED). THE "POST" QUOTED SARID AS SAYING, "EITHER YOU ARE NOT CHOOSING THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR COMMAND OR YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT PEOPLE AND TURN THEM INTO SACRIFICIAL LAMBS. THE REGULATIONS ARE UNCLEAR...THE SOLDIERS HAVE THE FEELING THAT THE SENIOR COMMANDERS AND THE POLITICIANS ARE AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY." ACCORDING TO "HA'ARETZ", BARAK REPLIED THAT ONLY ONE UNDERCOVER UNIT COMMANDER WHO HAD BEEN APPOINTED BY HIM HAD BEEN RELIEVED. IN AN APPARENTLY HEATED EXCHANGE, BARAK INSISTED, "I AM TELLING YOU IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT THE OPEN-FIRE REGULATIONS OF THE UNDERCOVER UNITS ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE OF ALL OTHER UNITS" (QUOTED IN THE "POST").

8. (U) ALSO ON 5 AUGUST, THE "POST" REPORTED THAT ANOTHER MERETZ PARTY MEMBER, EDUCATION MINISTER SHULAMIT ((ALONI)), HAD PUBLICLY CRITICIZED THE OPERATIONS OF THE UNDERCOVER UNITS. FOLLOWING STRONG CRITICISM OF HER STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE LIKUD PARTY AND THE LEADER OF THE RIGHT-WING TSOMET PARTY, FORMER IDF CHIEF OF STAFF RAFAEL (EITAN), THE "POST" REPORTED THE FOLLOWING DAY THAT ALONI REPLIED "THE IDF IS ONE THING AND AN UNDERCOVER COMMANDO OPERATING IN CIVILIAN AREAS IS SOMETHING ELSE." SHE CLAIMED THAT "YOUNG PEOPLE", UNDER "EXTREME PRESSURE", WERE "ISSUING THE SENTENCE AND THEN CARRYING IT OUT".

9. (U) ON 28 AUGUST, A "SHIMSHON" SOLDIER WAS KILLED IN A TRAINING ACCIDENT WHEN HE FELL DOWN A WELL WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN MARKED BUT WAS NOT. (THE COMPANY EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND PLATOON LEADER OF THE SOLDIER'S UNIT WERE RELIEVED OF DUTY ON 5 SEPTEMBER.) ON 1 SEPTEMBER, BARAK APPEARED BEFORE THE KNESSET DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS TRAINING ACCIDENTS AND SAFETY IN THE ENTIRE IDF (CITE (b)(3):10 USC 424) ACCORDING TO AN ARTICLE IN THE "POST" ON 2 SEPTEMBER, MK HAGGAI ((MEROM)) OF THE LABOR PARTY ASKED BARAK WHETHER DISCIPLINE IN ELITE UNITS WAS MORE LAX THAN IN THE REST OF THE ARMY. BARAK REPLIED THAT THE ELITE UNITS' DISCIPLINE WAS ON THE SAME LEVEL AS IN OTHER IDF UNITS, BUT THAT HE WOULD LIKE IT TO BE HIGHER.

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