



Top investigator told IDF colleagues: Designated Mossad chief lied in probe

Yaniv Kubovich

A senior military official told colleagues that Roman Gofman, the designated Mossad director, lied to him during an internal military probe into an operation that recruited an Israeli teenager, army officers told Haaretz.

The official is expected to submit an affidavit which will likely play a central role as the High Court of Justice holds hearings on petitions challenging Gofman's appointment.

The petitions prominently focus on the affair, first revealed by Haaretz in 2024.

Ori Elmakayes, who was recruited at age 17 by soldiers under Gofman for an influence operation, was interrogated by the Shin Bet security service and spent over a year in jail after Gofman denied involvement in the internal military investigation in May 2022.

In the past year and a half, the official in charge of the investigation, then-Military Intelligence's operations division chief Brig. Gen. G., told other senior officials that Gofman lied in his question-

ing, Israel Defense Forces officers told Haaretz. Some of the officials he spoke to have retired and others are still in service.

Brig. Gen. G.'s talks with his colleagues did not lead to the investigation re-opening, sources familiar with the details of the affair say.

IDF officers are calling for a reexamination of Gofman's actions, arguing that the case warrants renewed scrutiny. One of the reasons is that the original internal investigation was narrow in

scope from the outset, senior officers told Haaretz. The probe fell under the information security department's authority and focused solely on whether classified material that could harm state security had been leaked.

"They didn't care if an agent was deployed, how old he was or if his usage was appropriate," one of the officers said. "They also didn't thoroughly examine whether Gofman told the truth or if he ignored Elmakayes' arrest, whom he used."

According to the officers, Gofman and his lawyers, who present the probe as supporting his account, made significant efforts to prevent Brig. Gen. G. from testifying before the relevant authorities reviewing his appointment as incoming Mossad chief, including the Senior Appointments Advisory Committee.

"If Gofman is so confident in his version, it's unclear why he prevented the central figure who investigated the affair from presenting his full position," one officer said.

"This whole thing appears to be a prolonged attempt to make the debate only about the information security issue, instead of addressing the broader question of how a young teenager, handled by the defense establishment, was abandoned, and what Gofman's role was in that."

On Tuesday, the High Court of Justice heard petitions demanding the cancellation of Gofman's appointment as head of the Mossad. Lack of clarity regarding Gofman's involvement in the

affair led the justices to order that an affidavit be submitted by Brig. Gen. G. concerning his questioning of Gofman on the matter. As Brig. Gen. G. did not testify before the Senior Appointments Advisory Committee, the justices clarified that his testimony was required.

Gofman was picked by Prime Minister Netanyahu, who had hired him as military secretary. Former Supreme Court President Asher Grunis, Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara and outgoing Mossad chief David Barnea have each voiced opposition to the appointment.

Should a senior Israel Defense Forces officer who allegedly authorized, without authority, the use of an underage blogger for influence operations against the enemy – and who allegedly lied about it when questioned – be fit to head the Mossad, an agency where deception, impersonation and manipulation are part of the job description?

That is the question now facing the three High Court justices who on Tuesday heard petitions against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's appointment of his top military aide, Roman Gofman, to head Israel's spy agency.

An unlikely alliance has emerged against the nomination, bringing together former Supreme Court President and senior appointments committee chair Asher Grunis, Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara and outgoing Mossad chief David Barnea.

The partnership is far from natural. Grunis, while chairing the committee tasked with selecting an attorney general, was the only member to oppose Baharav-Miara's appointment. Barnea, for his part, remained largely silent throughout the judicial overhaul, said little as the government and Netanyahu publicly turned on Shin Bet security service chief Ronen Bar, and only recently claimed that the employment of Netanyahu associates by Qatar during wartime did not harm national security.

It paid off. Barnea is the only head of a major security agency to survive Netanyahu's post-October 7 purge. His parting shot now amounts to an open challenge to the prime minister. Gofman's appointment, he warned, could cause "enormous damage" to both the Mossad and the state. Netanyahu's poison machine, which until recently

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In Lebanon, soldiers know they have no chance against drones

Bar Peleg

LEBANON — The trip to Khiam, a Shi'ite town that on the eve of the war with Iran was home to 20,000 people, is led by Capt. B. He was born and bred in Kiryat Shmona, but like many people of his northern town, he, too, decided to leave. His family

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had returned between the rounds of fighting over the past two and a half years, but he's decided that the situation there has become too difficult.

"There's no one there – even the local newspaper no longer comes out," he says with a half-hearted laugh.

B., a disabled army driver, said that life on the northern border has become impossible. "My 5-year-old nephew can't go to the bathroom because of all the booms,"

he says while driving on the winding road to Khiam. "The media should make TV reports and tell the residents of Kiryat Shmona, 'Wow, look at how the army controls Khiam.' Maybe that way they'll come back."

Khiam is ruined and desolate. It looks like not a single structure is standing. When one of the soldiers speaks of the "destruction of homes," his commander corrects him – "destruction of infrastructure." The tractors and bulldozers are parked in a corner of the town after a long day of work. Along the way to the town, one can spot Defense Ministry contract workers, who are civilians. While getting off the vehicles, two soldiers climb up a mound of rubble. These are stargazers of sorts: They are looking for drones. Within a few minutes, an "Air hammer!" call is heard, a heads up that there may be a drone in the area. What do the soldiers do? Not very different from what they did in wars a century ago. They look for cover

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A vehicle targeted by an Israeli drone strike on a highway near the town of Jiyeh, south of Beirut, Wednesday.

Mahmoud Zayyat / AFP

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Prime Minister's Office confirms Netanyahu made wartime UAE visit



UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in London in 2021.

Frank Augstein/AP

Jonathan Lis and Liza Rozovsky

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the United Arab Emirates during the war with Iran and met with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Prime Minister's Office said Wednesday. It described the meeting as a "historic breakthrough" in relations between the two countries.

The announcement was the first official acknowledgment that Netanyahu traveled to the Persian Gulf state during the conflict, which saw Iran launch missile and drone

attacks across the region. The visit came amid growing evidence of expanding security cooperation between Israel and the UAE during the war.

Last month, Axios reported that Israel sent an Iron Dome air defense system to the UAE early in the conflict, along with dozens of IDF soldiers to operate it. According to the report, which cited two Israeli officials and one U.S. official, Netanyahu ordered the deployment after a phone call with Mohammed bin Zayed as the Gulf state came under sustained Iranian missile and drone fire.

Israeli officials told

Axios the system intercepted dozens of Iranian missiles during the war. A senior Israeli official described the deployment as the first time Israel stationed an Iron Dome battery in another country, and the first operational use of the system outside Israel and the United States.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee publicly confirmed the deployment Tuesday in unusually direct remarks about Israeli-Emirati defense coordination.

Speaking at the Tel Aviv Conference, Huckabee praised the UAE as the first country to join the

Abraham Accords and said the deployment demonstrated the advantages of normalization with Israel.

According to Emirati officials cited by Axios, Iran launched hundreds of missiles and more than 2,000 drones at the UAE during the war, with most intercepted but some striking military and civilian sites.

"I'd like to say a word of appreciation for the United Arab Emirates, the first Abraham Accord member," Huckabee said. "Just look at the benefits. Israel just sent them Iron Dome batteries and personnel to help operate them."

He added that the Arab states of the Persian Gulf understand they must decide whether Israel or Iran poses the greater threat to them.

"Israel is not trying to take over your land, and is not sending missiles to you," Huckabee said.

The UAE established formal diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020 under the Abraham Accords. While relations between the countries have expanded significantly in trade, technology and security matters, defense cooperation has generally remained discreet.

The Emirati government did not immediately comment publicly on Huckabee's remarks or on Netanyahu's visit.

Axios also reported that

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Tomer Appelbaum

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NY authorities recover smuggled treasure

Rare coin showing Temple items to be returned home to Israel

Ruth Schuster

Antiquities detectives in New York have recovered two rare ancient coins smuggled out of Israel, which will be returned home, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced on Wednesday. They aren't on a plane yet but will be at some point thanks to a massive joint effort by the Israel Antiquities Authority with the Antiquities Trafficking Unit at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and Homeland Security.

Grave robbery is the bane of the archaeologist, because artifacts stolen and hidden disappear from the record forevermore. The thieves are not destroying ancient tombs and palaces in order to leer over antiquities in the privacy of their homes. Rather, they aim to sell them on the black market to immoral or ignorant private collectors and incautious museums.

The dimensions of the trade by nature unknowable. A 2023 Cambridge study concluded that press reports claiming that the antiquities black market was the third largest global industry after arms and drugs were mindlessly repeating a false narrative.

Ilan Hadad, head of the antiquities commerce division at the Israel Antiquities Authority's Theft Prevention Unit, agrees –

global antiquities theft is the fourth-biggest industry after arms, drugs and human trafficking, he claims. The fact is that the IAA's theft prevention division is kept extremely busy. Occasionally the guilt-ridden heir of a wealthy collector returns a stolen treasure to the public.

rah that stood in the Second Temple in Jerusalem on one side and the Temple's showbread table on the flip side.

Unlike the prutah, which was stolen and has now reappeared, the Temple's menorah and showbread table vanished forever more. We do know that the Romans



An owl on a silver tetradrachm, left, and a tetradrachm showing the goddess Athena.

Eitan Klein/Israel Antiquities Authority

At times, the police catch the miscreants, justice is done and the stolen artifacts are returned.

One of the recovered coins is a bronze prutah, the lowest known denomination of Judean currency. Its purchasing power was weak: a loaf of bread cost about 10 of these. However, this one had been minted during the reign of the last Hasmonean king, Mattathias Antigonus, who ruled in Jerusalem from 40 to 37 B.C.E. It shows nothing less than the seven-branched men-

proudly boasted of looting them together with the rest of the Temple treasure in the year 70 C.E. Far from trying to conceal their thieving tracks, the Romans built not one but two triumphal arches following the conquest of Jerusalem. One is in ruins, but the surviving Arch of Titus in Rome actually depicts them carting off the sacred artifacts. This coin shows a very early artistic representation of the Temple menorah and is the

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