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ISRAEL'S LEADING DAILY NEWSPAPER

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Amos Harel

## Two Israeli reservists killed in south Lebanon

Round of Israel-Lebanon talks concludes in Rome; IDF refuses to expand 'pilot zones'

Rawan Suleiman  
and Liza Rozovsky

Two Israeli reservists were killed and four were severely wounded in an explosion in southern Lebanon on Wednesday, the Israel Defense Forces announced on Thursday morning.

The fatalities were named as Maj. (res.) Harel Birenstock and Sgt. Maj. (res.) Tamir Vaknin.

Birenstock, aged 34 from the West Bank settlement Nokdim, was a company commander in the 2855th Battalion, 55th Brigade. He was buried on Thursday. Vaknin, 33, from the southern city of Eilat, was a combat soldier in the same unit.

A preliminary IDF report found the explosion was caused by an old device, Channel 12 News reported on Thursday.

Defense Minister Israel Katz expressed his condolences to the families, saying that the two "reported for reserve duty time and time again out of commitment, dedication and a sense of mission, and fell while operating for the security of the State of Israel and the residents of the north."

The two are the first IDF fatalities in Lebanon since the end of June, when Captain David Hazutt was killed in an encounter with a Hezbollah operative.

Following Wednesday's

blast, the IDF announced that it launched a wave of strikes in southern Lebanon in response to Hezbollah's cease-fire violation. The military had issued an evacuation notice to residents of the southern village of Mansouri. Israeli strikes overnight wounded eight people in southern Lebanon, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry. The targets struck included weapons storage facilities and a command center, the military said.

According to Lebanon's news agency, an Israeli drone carried out three strikes on Burj al-Shamali, followed by a fourth airstrike on the same location by warplanes.

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Families and friends mourning at Maj. (res.) Harel Birenstock's funeral, Jerusalem, Thursday.

Olivier Fitoussi

## Deal shaping up to be a win for Iran

The agreement that is now emerging in the Gulf looks like another Iranian success, achieved by the regime in Tehran through a mixture of stubbornness, patience and planned provocations. Although U.S. President Donald Trump continues to threaten to assassinate senior Iranian officials and declare that he'll prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power, a White House spokeswoman said this week that nuclear arms will not be in Iran's possession "on Trump's watch" – meaning only until January 2029. Indeed, the main issue that's been under discussion in the past few weeks is a compromise arrangement in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran may now gain effective control of the waterway through which a large portion of the world's oil exports flow. Trump hopes that this will bring about a gradual calming of the oil markets. But even if understandings will be reached now, the mistrust between the sides will make it difficult to achieve a final and stable agreement in the coming two months.

Under the still-unsigned arrangement, Iran will be able to collect fees from vessels that navigate the northern route at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, and Oman will collect fees from vessels exiting the Gulf on the southern route, near its shores. In other words, as it stands now, Tehran will likely end the war with an accomplishment that wasn't even on the agenda when the United States and Israel went into battle, twice, in hopes of toppling the regime and terminating its nuclear and missile

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## The dangers of Tucker Carlson entering U.S. electoral politics

Ben Samuels

Tucker Carlson and several prominent ideological allies have signaled in recent days that they are considering launching a third party in which Israel's influence over American politics would be at the center.

Carlson this week hosted former U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene and U.S. Rep. Thomas Massie, prominent Republican isolationists who have been pushed to

the party's margins, and Joe Kent, who resigned as the president's counterterrorism chief in March amid concerns about the Iran war.

All four have fallen out with Donald Trump at various points, and Israel has figured prominently in each rupture.

Their grievances range from opposition to Israel's perceived role in drawing the U.S. into war with Iran, to

### Trump, Hegseth clash on missiles

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broader claims that Trump and the American political system are unduly influenced by Israel and its supporters. Carlson and his allies, meanwhile, have long promoted conspiracy theories involving Israel – most notably concerning the Jeffrey Epstein affair.

What binds the emerging

movement is not merely an effort to reclaim the "America First" mantle, but an insistence that Israel and its U.S. supporters represent a central source of the movement's betrayal.

"We said no more foreign wars and we meant it and supported Donald Trump because he made that promise. But he's betrayed us all," Greene posted while sharing a picture of the group at Carlson's Maine compound. "The movement has begun."

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A McDonald's cheeseburger, currently at 23 shekels in Israel.

Kullapong Parcherat/Shutterstock

## Don't let the high price of a Big Mac in Israel bring you down

David Rosenberg

A generous bite of a Big Mac, with its "two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions, on a sesame seed bun" – a combination engineered by the kind of food science and marketing minds only a multibillion-dollar conglomerate could assemble – is a pleasure for millions.

McDonald's claims to sell

550 million of the burgers annually in the United States alone, and it's just one of 100 countries where it's on the menu. That should be enough for nutritionists to count the burger as its own food group.

Taken at face value, The Economist's Big Mac index shows that partaking of a Big Mac in Israel means visiting

let no less than a big appetite. The latest index found that the Israeli Big Mac was the fifth most expensive in the world – that is, if you calculate the price in dollars.

The iconic burger costs 23 shekels in Israel, which with the shekel trading at about 3 to the dollar, comes out to \$7.60 right now. By comparison, it costs \$6.22 in the U.S. In Switzerland, which tops the index, it's 7.30 francs, or just over \$9.

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## Ex-Likud MKs Erdan, Edelstein launch new party

Michael Hauser Tov

Former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations and senior Likud member Gilad Erdan on Thursday announced the formation of a new right-wing party under his leadership.

At a press conference alongside former Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein, who joined the party, Erdan addressed his departure from Likud, saying he was "parting ways with the political home where I grew up for more than 30 years." He added that he "can no longer call it home, because Likud lawmakers no longer represent Likud voters."

According to Erdan, his party will appeal to right-wing voters who supported Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition but oppose the military conscription evasion law, as well as right-wing voters among supporters of the opposition "who don't want a left-wing government."

Erdan added that "we must break the system of narrow

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