



Is Israel's Chief of Staff Calling for a Preventive War with Hezbollah?

Kochavi conveyed that Israel now possesses new technologies that enable the IDF to hit Hezbollah across Lebanon effectively, rapidly, and in a widespread manner.

by [Zaki Shalom](#) [Jacob Aaron Collier](#) / Feb. 8, 2021

During his speech at the INSS Annual Conference, January 28, 2021, Israeli Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Aviv Kochavi raised several points that garnered broad public attention. Perhaps most notable of these was his comprehensive survey of the threats that Israel faces from “terror armies,” especially Hezbollah, and how Israel should handle these threats. In this regard, his remarks have rightly been interpreted as an implicit call for an Israeli preventive strike against Hezbollah in Lebanon or, at least, an intensive attempt to put the idea of a preventive strike in Lebanon high on the national agenda. In a similar vein, Kochavi also announced that he had ordered the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to prepare a few operative plans vis-à-vis Iran; however, Kochavi was not as concrete or detailed on this issue as he was about the prospective strike on Hezbollah.

Many in Israel quickly connected Kochavi's speech to the upcoming Israeli election set for March 23, 2021. Some claimed that by talking about the disadvantages of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and the potential preventive strike against Hezbollah, Kochavi meant to enhance Netanyahu's position in the election. Some said that Kochavi was laying the ground for his own entry into Israeli politics after leaving the position of Chief of General Staff. There are also claims that the speech should be viewed against the backdrop of reports of intensive, covert dialogues the Biden administration is conducting with Iran regarding the renewal of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Indeed, the speech could be seen as a message to the new U.S. administration: the United States should carefully consider before attempting to carry out any initiative with Iran without consulting Israel.

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