The IDF toward the Year 2000
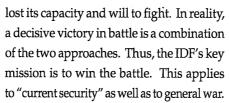
Chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz

*D*uring his military career, Brig. Gen. Aharon Yariv formulated several concepts that we have employed as we analyze the challenges facing the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and plan its force structure toward the year 2000. "War should be the last resort," Yariv said, "and it must have a reasonable chance of success. We must ensure this while coping with current security challenges and basic security threats." His words expressed the IDF's dilemma: How to build a force capable of dealing simultaneously with current missions and future challenges?

Yariv, who headed the IDF's Military Intelligence Branch for many years, was among those who formulated Israel's defense concept, whereby the IDF must be sensitive to as well as understand the changes taking place in its immediate and more distant environment. He believed that the IDF must adhere to the basic principles of its defense doctrine: that it must defend the country and when threatened, make every effort to move the battle quickly into enemy territory. As Yariv saw it, in order to ensure deterrence, the quantity and quality of Israel's defense forces must be increased.

This article presents the key elements of Israel's "national estimate" upon which the IDF's vision for the next millenium is based. It also details the main characteristics of the IDF's force structure and operational concept for the coming years.

The IDF is guided by two basic concepts: The first is that it must emerge victorious from every confrontation with the enemy, both in "current security" contexts as well in a full-scale war. There are different approaches as to what constitutes victory. Some believe that the enemy must lose its military capability while others believe that victory is reached once the enemy concludes that it has lost its capacity and will to fight. In reality, a decisive victory in battle is a combination of the two approaches. Thus, the IDF's key mission is to win the battle. This applies to "current security" as well as to general war.

The second concept concerns resources. The IDF must perform its missions with limited resources. As in every year, the IDF requested this year that its budget would be increased and the request was rejected. This leads to a basic principle: Although the IDF must implement many changes, funding these changes must be made in the framework of the finite resources that will be at the IDF's disposal during the next few years.

The "National Estimate"

Soon after I became Chief of Staff, we analyzed the various factors affecting the IDF's operational environment in the coming years:

- *The era of uncertainty*: There is a great deal of uncertainty regarding the future of the peace process in both the Palestinian and the Syrian tracks. These processes impact directly upon the entire region and upon the manner in which the IDF must structure itself.
- *The threats facing Israel*: When the near and distant threats we face are analyzed, it becomes clear that of the states bordering Israel, Syria presents the central threat. The Syrian armed forces continue to train, develop and expand. But there are no signs that it is preparing to launch a war against us. Yet two points must be remembered: First, Syria is developing a surface-to-surface missile force capable of striking most of Israel's territory. The Syrians define this effort as their primary military project. Israel also faces a surface-to-surface missile threat from more distant countries. The missiles possessed by more

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distant countries like Iran, in addition to the unconventional weapons they seek to acquire, comprise a long-term threat to which the IDF must respond.

• *Changes in military-society relations*: Significant changes are taking place in the relations between the IDF and Israeli society. A recent example was the crisis regarding insurance arrangements for reserve pilots and combat officers. The Israeli society must cultivate those who bear the burden of its defense and compensate them properly. This is true for both enlisted personnel and reserve combat soldiers.

• *The technological realm*: Technologically, Israel is among the world's most advanced countries. I believe that technology will comprise a growing component of the IDF's arsenal. It should be stressed, however, that acquiring advanced technology requires enormous financial resources. In certain parts of the armed forces, computerization and information technologies are at satisfactory levels. Yet in other parts of the force structure, more progress in this realm must be made and greater efforts should be exerted to create a more advanced work environment. This is necessary in order to make the IDF's operations, safety procedures and administration more efficient. In this context it should be remembered that the IDF is the country's largest organization. We must manage all of its systems better and optimize resources as well as the readiness of its systems to enable them perform their ascribed missions.

• *Executing government decisions*: An important principle of our planning is that the IDF must be capable of executing whatever decisions the government makes regarding the implementation of peace agreements. Sometimes we are asked to implement these decisions quickly while in other cases more time is available. Regardless, we must be prepared to implement the agreements the minute the government makes its decision.

• *Peace with Jordan and Egypt*: Peace with these countries fulfills the deepest aspiration of the Israeli people. But these peace treaties also have great strategic value and therefore must be preserved and strengthened.

• *A unipolar world*: There is only one superpower in the world today - the United States. Whether in peace or in war, and certainly in an era of limited resources, the United States is the chief player. Certainly, this is an important factor to consider.

• *Multi-year planning*: During the past two years, the IDF has been operating on the basis of one-year plans. But a large organization like the IDF cannot afford to plan one year at a time. Managing tens of thousands of people and overseeing 5-10 year technological projects requires that the IDF look ahead. This is why we have embarked on a multi-year plan called "IDF 2000" that addresses the next decade and details programs for the next five years. Two defense ministers and the Cabinet approved the five-year plan. Its scope is so broad that we can fulfill most of its principles even when taking into account the possibility for budget changes.

The IDF's Response

■ *Priorities in resource allocations*

Our assessment is that in the next war, Israel is likely to come under a surface-to-surface missile attack. This will complicate the quick mobilization of the reserve forces, as the home front, and certainly army bases and airfields, will be vulnerable to attack by conventional and unconventional missiles. Therefore, we concluded that the standing forces must be strengthened in the air and land as well as in firepower and intelligence. More specifically, the following are the IDF's priorities in building its force-structure for the 21st century:

• *Strengthening the Air Force*: The Israel Air Force (IAF) is the nation's long-range strategic arm as well as its reserve firepower during war. Its ability to shift from one front to the other is crucial to the IDF's strength. Hence, we intend to strengthen the IAF and invest considerable resources in its buildup.

• *Ensuring quality intelligence*: Executing operations far from the country's borders will require high-quality, real-time and accurate target intelligence.

• *Maximizing firepower*: Technologies are being developed in Israel that allow improved utilization of firepower with the main emphasis being on reducing the attrition rate of our forces.

• *Extending the fighting capability of the standing army*: The intention is to change the organization of the present force-structure to increase the combat period of the standing army to a point where the reserve forces have been mobilized and deployed.

■ *Strengthening the combat core*
One of our main objectives is to strengthen

the core of our fighting forces, including the combat support units. In order to achieve this, the following steps must be taken:

• *Formulating an operational concept* suited to the reality in which the IDF operates and to the threats it must address. An operational concept implies the definition of the end-state that must be reached at every front and against any threat. This step has been completed; we defined the end-state for every front and deduced its implications for the required force-structure.

• *Formulating a combat doctrine to reach the required end-state.* Next year, we will complete the formulation of the operational concept by defining the IDF's combat doctrine for the coming years. Clearly, the IDF's doctrine and force structure would need to be updated every few years to account for changing circumstances.

• *Developing technologies in various areas,* such as space, information systems, improved firepower and smart weapons. We will invest in advanced technologies in order to save manpower and reduce attrition rates in combat.

■ *Organizational culture*

To fulfill these missions and implement these reforms, the IDF must improve its organizational culture. An organizational culture is the method applied by the organization to achieve its objectives. Improvements in this sphere should emphasize the IDF's capabilities as a *learning organization.* The IDF must learn from its mistakes. It must learn the lessons

of past experience by self-examination. The process must be led by the commanders, but others must contribute as well.

In addition, we must create information systems that will also support the IDF's *organizational memory* in order to support its operational, administrative and organizational systems. These should enable the quick retrieval of information and allow the IDF to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. We must take care that these means will be at the disposal of the combat units in order to allow them to properly implement these lessons while taking into account operational, safety, and administrative-organizational aspects.

Over the past 5-10 years, the IDF's force structure has decreased by nearly 30 percent, while its headquarters personnel have increased by a similar percentage. Since the core of the IDF should be its fighting forces, this anomaly must be corrected. For this purpose we decided to diminish the size of the General Staff headquarters in all branches and all corps. As we wished to avoid damaging morale in this process, we decided to implement organizational changes that *would result* in a decrease in manpower.

■ *Organizational changes*

The process of defining the required organizational changes lasted some six months. The effort resulted in the following imperatives:

• *The new Army Headquarters.* The first organizational change is the establishment of the new centralized Army Head-quarters. The question arose as to why this new headquarters should not have

command of the ground forces - in addition to its administrative responsibilities - as is customary in other countries and even in the IDF itself. For example, the commander of the Israeli Air Force serves as both the force builder as well as its commander. The answer is that in the reality Israel faces, where there are several different ground fronts, the regional commands should be the ones operating the ground forces. Unlike the IAF, the command's tasks are multi-tasked - naval, aerial and ground. By contrast, the IAF commander deals with threats that are beyond the reach of the regional commands. Hence, the Army Head-quarters will be responsible for building the ground forces whereas the commands will operate these forces in their respective regions, together with air and naval forces.

It is important to clarify the difference between the planned Army Headquarters and the existing Ground Corps' Command as presently configured. For example, only 40 percent of the authority for manpower is presently entrusted with the Ground Corps' Command. Responsibility for the rest of the personnel is distributed among the other branches of the General Staff. The same is true regarding responsibility for inventories, maintenance, and the readiness of emergency supply units. We intend to transfer all authority to one body, thus reducing the number of commands dealing with the ground forces and improving the utilization of resources. It will take two or three years before this planned headquarters will function smoothly, but the first steps toward its organization have been taken.

- *Consolidating combat-support services*: The second expected organizational change is the consolidation of all the combat support branches into one headquarters - the Technological and Logistical Directorate. This division will integrate four corps while maintaining their professional and administrative links and without impinging on their professional and training authority: i.e. the Ordnance Corps, the Logistics Corps, the Signals, Electronics and Computers Corps, and the Medical Corps. But these corps will be reduced and different headquarters responsible for force-buildup, manpower and other issues will be merged. The army currently contains headquarters that duplicate each other's work; hence their size must be reduced.

According to this concept, the commander's responsibility is comprehensive. Hence, once a commander is entrusted with a mission and responsibility, the resources placed at his disposal must accord with his responsibility and authority.

- *Strengthening the Operations Directorate*: The third organizational change is intended to reinforce the operational channel of the General Staff. For this purpose we have established the Operations Directorate within the General Staff, which will coordinate all operational issues, in "current security" matters as well as in wartime. This directorate will contain all the operational components within the General Staff presently handled by the Chief of Staff and his deputy. The move will increase the effectiveness of the General Staff and enable the Chief of Staff and his deputy to focus on issues that genuinely require their involvement.

- *Quality of career personnel*: In order to ensure that the IDF retains high-quality personnel, we must change some of the military's service programs and liberalize career promotions and benefits. Until now, career soldiers were recruited from the day they ended their mandatory service until age 45. We decided to create a shorter service of 7-10 years. At the end of this service, the soldier can choose to retire and receive a pension according to his track and profession. This change will allow better compensation to regular personnel by caring for those who have pledged their future to the military.

Our main problem is in the technological sphere. The people in this area - engineers, planners, computer personnel - are drawn to service in the standing army because of the professional challenge. After a few years, however, they find that their opportunities for advancement are limited. We have concluded that we must make a greater investment in these people. It is extremely important to cultivate these soldiers to keep them from being lost to the civilian market. Without skilled and high-quality personnel, the military will not be able to maintain an advanced technological system.

- *Reserve forces*: Appropriate resources must be allocated for maintaining the competence of the reserve forces. Currently, this competence is satisfactory. Our goal is very clear: to strengthen the reserve units and improve their capability to fulfill their missions. As of this year, we intend to invest some tens of millions of dollars in order to make the most of reserve service and improve the readiness of and equipment for reserve troops.

Summary

If the programs outlined in this article materialize, the IDF of the 21st century will be very different. It will be more efficient in fulfilling its missions, more professional and better organized, while remaining faithful to its basic principles. The IDF will continue to be the "people's army" that drafts all youth. But we must recognize that the country's resources are limited. Our responsibility is to achieve maximum security for every shekel in our budget. The IDF will continue to cultivate its combatants and regard them as its top priority.