

Israel, the Land of Smoke and Mirrors: IDF Appoints New Commander of Elite Forces

IDF Appoints New Commander of Shayetet 13, Commando Unit Responsible for Mavi Marmara Massacre

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Israel, the land of smoke and mirrors, named a new commander for its elite Shayetet 13 naval commando unit eight months ago. Shayetet 13 is the equivalent of SEAL Team 6, which [allegedly] assassinated Osama bin Laden. The Israeli force was responsible for the murder of nine Turkish activists on the Mavi Marmara.

Out of fear of exposure to the gaze of the International Criminal Court, and to protect their security, Israel refuses to publicly name many of its military commanders or security officials. Eight months ago the Israeli media called him "G." I [called him](#) by his real name, Lt. Col. Gur Schreibman. The officer has been involved with many high profile counter-terror operations including the Mavi Marmara. He also received a special Chief of Staff citation for his service during Operation Cast Lead. One wonders who he had to assassinate to earn that. Peace activists have given him a different type of "honor:" he's ranked 67th out of 200 on a [list of Israeli military commanders involved in Cast Lead](#).

A few days ago, the Israeli Navy [held an official ceremony](#) (Hebrew) handing off responsibility for Shayetet 13 from the current commander to Schreibman. There's even a video documenting the event. But it's one of the strangest videos I've ever seen. When you watch it your first thought is that whoever did the video was four feet tall and didn't aim the camera straight. The entire video shows only the bodies of those filmed. There are no heads. There's even a commander filmed speaking to the audience. He too is headless. One wonders why the IDF even bothered. Does anyone want to watch a video of headless bodies?

I'm tempted to make a crack about this being an allegory for Israel's overall military-security strategy. But I'll let it go at that.

But there is one obvious casualty of Israel's cult of military secrecy: accountability. If you don't know who's responsible for a possible war crime you can't find them culpable. This is what the Israeli security state prefers: anonymity and opacity. And that's precisely what I aim to combat. Transparency, like sunshine, is the best disinfectant for such impunity.

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