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Gantz orders end to soldiers 70 yr culture of dabbling in politics on Army Radio

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Gantz orders end to Army Radio's affiliation with military  
DM says decision to separate long-running station from army made 'to detach the IDF from an independent radio station in which uniformed soldiers dabble in political content'  
Yoav Zitun, Ran Boker | Published: 01.21.21 , 21:20

The IDF-affiliated Army Radio station will no longer be part of Israel's security establishment - this is according to an order by Defense and Communications Minister Benny Gantz, who decided on Thursday to act on the recommendation of IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi.

Army Radio began its broadcast in 1950 and is considered one of Israel's most prominent and important radio stations, among other things, due to being where many of Israel's most noteworthy journalists, artists and creators began their career.

The Defense Ministry stated that "an inter-ministerial team will be set up, headed by Defense Ministry Director-General Maj. Gen. (Res.) Amir Eshel who will devise a plan to privatize or shutter the station."

The ministry's announcement claimed that the decision to separate the long-running station from the army was made "due to the desire to disconnect the defense establishment and the IDF from the activities of an independent radio station... as well as the need to separate between the service of IDF soldiers and the activities of a media outlet in which uniformed soldiers are dabbling in political content."

The decision, which was made on the recommendation of the chief of staff, is a matter of values and not of budget. Free media in Israel is extremely important, and I will continue to defend it and ensure its independence, but the existence of a military station in the IDF is unreasonable at this time," said the defense minister.

"I have decided that uniformed soldiers will not engage in politics in any position. This is unacceptable and contradicts the IDF's values, the [station's] obligatory integrity and its proper conduct. I appreciate the station and its contribution to Israeli media, and to the variety of opinions and voices in the media. It would be right to find another channel for its continued activity," added Gantz.

The decision to go through with the move will be left to the next defense minister, due to the dissolution of the government and the upcoming March elections.

Kochavi, however, is expected to demand the decision be carried out and the station's affiliation with the army removed, reasoning that "the station should not be part of the IDF because it isn't right and borderline immoral."

Kochavi's predecessor, Gadi Eisenkot, also worked to disconnect the station from the military during his time as chief of staff, though his recommendation was vehemently shot down by then-defense minister Avigdor Liberman.

Army Radio issued a response in which it calls to it must be protected as an inalienable asset of the country.

"Army Radio, which marks its 70th anniversary, is an asset to Israeli culture and society. Army Radio is home for soldiers, home for Israeli creation, culture and art, a home for countless excellent journalists. Army Radio is home for Israeli democracy and a protected flower that must be guarded in its entirety."

01.21.21

Earthquake 5.3 Thursday near Cyprus, 140 miles northwest of Israel

01.21.21

Earthquake rattles Cyprus, felt in Israel

Geological Survey says shock's epicenter located 224 kilometers from Nahariya; Ynet users report feeling the tremor across the country, including in Nahariya, Haifa and Jerusalem

Reuters,Ahiya Raved| Published: 01.21.21 , 18:17

An earthquake with an estimated magnitude of 5.3 rattled Cyprus on Thursday, with the shock being felt in Israel.

The Geological Survey stated that the quake occurred at 1427 GMT at 224 kilometers (140 miles) northwest of the northern city of Nahariya.

Users across the country reported through the Ynet Red Mail they felt the tremor, including in Nahariya, Haifa and Jerusalem.

Salim, an X-ray technician from Nahariya told Ynet he felt the shock sitting at his computer desk when both his chair and the computer screen started rattling.

According to reports from the neighboring island, the shock was felt by residents of high-rise buildings in the capital, Nicosia, forcing some to evacuate.

The quake was also felt during a live debate in the Cypriot parliament, dealing with the country's annual budget. Documentation from the parliament plenum shows the camera shaking up and down, after which some of the legislators left the plenum. The discussion resumed shortly.

There were no immediate reports of damage.

Cyprus is an earthquake-prone zone, but strong tremors are not common. The highest registered in recent years was a magnitude of 6.3 in 1996 but it caused little damage.

Last December, many Israelis reported feeling a 5.3-magnitude earthquake that occurred between Turkey and Cyprus, south of Antalya.

01.21.21

Son of Likud founder Begin joins Saar breakaway campaign party

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Benny Begin joins the long list of Likudniks who opted to switch alliances before the election; says state institutions under attack by the government, which we must do everything to replace

Moran Azulay | Published: 01.21.21 , 14:23

Benny Begin, son of Likud founder Menachem Begin, announced Thursday he is joining Gideon Saar's breakaway political party.

Begin joins a long list of fellow former Likudniks who left the party to join Saar, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confidant Ze'ev Elkin, lawmakers Sharen Haskel and Michal Shir, as well as Knesset's coronavirus oversight committee head Yifat Shasha-Biton.

"Over the past few years and particularly the last one, we have bared witness to a strange and dangerous phenomenon," said Begin. "It is the government which is the source of vicious and obscene attacks against the institutions of the State of Israel. This phenomenon must end. The way to do so is by changing the government," he added.

"Therefore, I was happy when my friend Gideon, decided to take this brave step and form a new political party in order to bring about this replacement," he added. "We have an

opportunity to do this in the upcoming election and every one of us is mandated to take part in this endeavor and change the government."

Saar said Begin will be an "important addition to this campaign" for the future of the nation. It is important so that Israel may enjoy his rich experience, insights, logic and the values he represents."

Benny Begin served as a minister in two governments lead by Netanyahu. Six years ago, he was placed at #11 on the Likud's member slate for the 2015 election.

During his tenure, Begin was dismissed from Knesset's Internal Affairs Committee over his objection to support a bill that would have prevented the police from publicizing their recommendations on whether a public figure under investigation should be indicted.

01.20.21

PA-US Congresswoman claims Israel failed to provide vaccine to Palestine

01.20.21

Tlaib calls Israel 'racist' for not supplying virus vaccines to Palestinians

Palestinian-American Congresswoman claims Israel denies Palestinians the vaccine 'due to belief that Palestinians are not equally human' despite PA saying on multiple occasions it is obtaining its own vaccines from Russia

i24NEWS,Reuters| Published: 01.20.21 , 14:53

Democratic Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib again took aim at Israel on Tuesday, calling the Jewish state "racist" for allegedly failing to provide coronavirus vaccines to the Palestinians.

Under the terms of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority is responsible for the healthcare of its own population and has repeatedly said it is obtaining Russia's Sputnik V vaccines via a UN scheme.

In an interview with the "Democracy Now!" TV show, Tlaib pointed at Israel's successful coronavirus vaccination drive, which saw one in every five Israelis inoculated so far, while adding that Israeli government must launch a similar campaign in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Tlaib accused Israel of "denying" the Palestinians "access to a vaccine" due to an alleged belief that Palestinians are not equally human.

"Israel has no intention of ever being caring or allowing equality or freedom for them as their neighbors," Tlaib said, claiming the vaccine situation only proves her point.

The Palestinian Authority officials said Tuesday they expect to receive the first batch of Sputnik V vaccine by the weekend. The PA hopes to administer the vaccine to 50,000 residents by March, after last week granting the drug emergency approval.

Palestinian health officials said the first in line for the vaccines would be medical personnel, the elderly and those with chronic diseases - in Gaza as well as in the West Bank.

12.30.20

Iran tensions deterred by Gulf presence missions of B-52s & nuclear submarine

12.30.20

Air Force B-52s fly from Minot to Persian Gulf in round-trip mission to caution Iran

Robert Burns, The Associated Press

December 30, 2020

A U.S. Air Force B-52H Stratofortress from Minot Air Force Base, N.D., is refueled by a KC-135 Stratotanker in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility Wednesday. The U.S. flew strategic bombers over the Persian Gulf for the second time this month, a show of force meant to deter Iran from attacking American or allied targets in the Middle East. (Senior Airman Roslyn Ward/Air Force via AP)

WASHINGTON — The United States flew strategic bombers over the Persian Gulf on Wednesday for the second time this month, a show of force meant to deter Iran from attacking American or allied targets in the Middle East.

One senior U.S. military officer said the flight by two Air Force B-52 Stratofortresses was in response to signals that Iran may be planning attacks against U.S. allied targets in neighboring Iraq or elsewhere in the region in coming days, even as President-elect Joe Biden prepares to take office. The officer was not authorized to publicly discuss internal assessments based on sensitive intelligence and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The B-52 bomber mission, flown round trip from Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota, reflects growing concern in Washington, in the final weeks of President Donald Trump's administration, that Iran will order further military retaliation for the U.S. killing last Jan. 3 of top Iranian military commander Gen. Qasem Soleimani. Iran's initial response, five days after the deadly U.S. drone strike, was a ballistic missile attack on a military base in Iraq that caused brain concussion injuries to about 100 U.S. troops.

Iran, however, has appeared wary of Trump's intentions in his final weeks in office, given his focus on pressuring Tehran with sanctions and other moves that have further damaged the Islamic Republic's economy.

"Trump will bear full responsibility for any adventurism on his way out," Iran's foreign minister, Javad Zarif, wrote on Twitter Dec. 24.

Adding to the tension was a Dec. 20 rocket attack on the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad by Iranian-supported Shiite militia groups. No one was killed, but the volume of

rockets fired — possibly 21, with about **nine landing on the Embassy compound** — was unusually large. Days later, Trump tweeted that Iran was on notice.

“Some **friendly health advice to Iran**: If one American is killed, I will hold Iran responsible. Think it over,” **Trump wrote** on **Dec. 23**. He added, “We hear chatter of additional attacks against Americans in Iraq.”

Because of the **potential for escalation** that could lead to a wider war, the **U.S.** has sought to **deter Iran from additional attacks**. Strategic calculations on both sides are further complicated by the **political transition in Washington to a Biden** administration that may seek new paths to dealing with Iran. **Biden** has said, for example, that he **hopes to return** the U.S. to a 2015 **agreement** with world powers in **which Iran** agreed to **limit its nuclear activities** **in exchange** for the **lifting** of international **sanctions**.

In announcing **Wednesday’s bomber flight**, the head of U.S. Central Command said it was a **defensive move**.

“The United States continues to deploy combat-ready capabilities into the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility to deter any potential adversary, and make clear that we are ready and able to respond to any aggression directed at Americans or our interests,” said Gen. Frank McKenzie, the commander of Central Command. “We do not seek conflict, but **no one should underestimate our ability** to defend our forces or to act decisively **in response to any attack**.”

He did not mention Iran by name.

In advance of the announcement, the senior U.S. military officer who spoke on condition of anonymity said that U.S. intelligence has detected recent signs of “fairly substantive threats” from Iran, and that included planning for possible rocket attacks against U.S. interests in Iraq in connection with the one-year anniversary of the Soleimani killing.

The U.S. is in the process of **reducing its troop presence in Iraq** from 3,000 to about 2,500. **Trump ordered that the reduction** be achieved by Jan. 15; officials say it is likely to be reached as early as next week.

The United States also has picked up signs that Iran may be considering or planning “more complex” and broader attacks against American targets or interests in the Middle East, the senior U.S. military officer said, adding that it represented the most concerning signs since the days immediately following the Soleimani killing. The officer cited indications that advanced **weaponry has been flowing from Iran into Iraq** recently and that **Shiite militia leaders in Iraq** may have met with officers of Iran’s Quds force, previously commanded by Soleimani.

The U.S. officer said Iran might have its eye on economic targets, noting the September 2019 missile and drone attack on Saudi oil processing facilities. Iran denied involvement but was blamed by the United States for that attack.

In recent weeks the U.S. military has taken a range of steps designed to deter Iran, while publicly emphasizing that it is not planning, and has not been instructed, to take unprovoked action against Iran.

Last week, a U.S. Navy nuclear submarine made an unusual transit of the Strait of Hormuz, the strategic waterway between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula. Earlier in December, a pair of B-52 bombers from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana flew what the military calls a "presence" mission over the Gulf — a demonstration of U.S. force and a signal of U.S. commitment to the region, but not an attack mission. That flight was repeated this week, with two B-52s flying nonstop from Minot and heading home Wednesday after cruising over the western side of the Gulf.

Tensions with Iran escalated with the killing in November of Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, an Iranian scientist named by the West as the leader of the Islamic Republic's disbanded military nuclear program. Iran has blamed Israel for the killing, but U.S. officials are concerned that any Iranian retaliation could hit U.S. interests.

01.20.21

Tiffany Trump announces engagement to Lebanese heir during farewell post

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Michael, 23, is the son of Lebanese business tycoon Massad Boulos, who founded Boulos Enterprises, a conglomerate that does work with vehicles, equipment, retail, and construction worth billions.

By IDAN ZONSHINE JANUARY 20, 2021 12:56

In a farewell post during her final hours in the White House, Tiffany Trump, daughter of outgoing US President Donald Trump, announced that she is engaged to Michael Boulos, son of Lebanese business tycoon Massad Boulos.

In an Instagram post, Tiffany wrote that "It has been an honor to celebrate many milestones, historic occasions and create memories with my family here at the White House, none more special than my engagement to my amazing fiancé Michael! Feeling blessed and excited for the next chapter!"

Boulos posted the same image, writing, "Got engaged to the love of my life! Looking forward to our next chapter together."

Trump and Boulos have been together since late 2018 after the couple met during a vacation in Greece.

Tiffany, 27, is the only child of the US President and his second wife, Marla Maples, and was mainly raised by her mother in California.

Michael, 23, is the son of Lebanese business tycoon Massad Boulos, who founded Boulos Enterprises, a conglomerate that does work with vehicles, equipment, retail, and construction worth billions.

He grew up in Lagos, Nigeria, attending what Page Six described as an “elite international school.”

Congratulations, Tiffany and Michael. May your love and caring for each other grow forever, and may you build a home of righteousness and pe...See more

Michael, is the son of Lebanese business tycoon Massad Boulos, who founded Boulos Enterprises, a conglomerate that deals in corruption worth...See more - yawn