

NEGEV 2015

News

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Be a Part of Building a Stronger Israel

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The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Turns towards the Negev

An interview with

**Colonel Pini Liberman,
Director of the Directorate for Relocating IDF bases to the Negev**

Why is the IDF heading “south”?

The IDF is relocating its bases to the Negev for two principal reasons: first, it is part of the National Strategic Plan for the Development of the Negev and fulfillment of David Ben Gurion’s vision. Second, this is a one-time opportunity for the IDF to upgrade military infrastructure and to meet current and future needs. Financing for the plan to relocate IDF bases to the Negev will be, to a large extent, realized from the yield on property that IDF bases currently occupy in the center of the country. This will become available

as economic leverage after the relocation. In this manner, the IDF will be “parted” from the “temporary” infrastructure built by the British Army more than 60 years ago.

What are the principles of the plan?

The first move will be the transfer of the Israel Air Force transportation squadrons base from the Ben Gurion National Airport area to Nevatim in the Negev. This 1.6 billion NIS project has already begun and is expected to be completed by December 2009. Transport planes will be able to land at the base as early as 2008.

Through the Eyes of the Strategic Plan / Haim Blumenblatt, CEO Daroma

The strategic plan for the development of the Negev has received a tremendous boost as a result of the government decision to relocate IDF bases to the Negev, and the progress the IDF has made in implementing this decision.

The arrival of thousands of soldiers to four centers: the Omer-Likit region northeast of Beersheva, the Science Park near the Ben Gurion University, the Nevatim base between Beersheva and Arad, and the central training camp in the "Negev Junction," will serve as a growth engine for the Negev. This is due to outsourcing, job creation and new sources of income for the Negev, in addition to the high quality manpower within the IDF bases themselves.

Some of the permanent military personnel staff will choose to bring their families with them to the Negev, a process which will contribute to increasing settlement in the Negev and to population growth. IDF soldiers and their families will enjoy the quality of life the Negev has to offer and the developments which are result of implementation of the strategic plan. They will be the pioneers and models for additional families from the center who wish to change to a different life: a quality life in the Negev full of new opportunities.

The IDF today, in the 21th century, as it was during the founding of the State, is a pioneer in advancing the national goals of the State of Israel.



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Hercules, Israel Air Force, Courtesy of IDF Spokesperson's Unit

The second cluster will be the building of the IDF "Training Base City", which will include the transfer of seven training bases mostly from the Tzrifin area in the center of the country, to the "Negev Junction". It is important to note that the Ministry of Defense and the IDF served as an important trigger in the provision of environmental treatment for the factories in the Ramat Hovav industrial region (see related article). This removed one of the main stumbling blocks for the project and paved the way for the government decision on the 1st of April, 2007 on the relocation of IDF training bases to "Negev Junction". Ground work is slated to begin this October with the intention of populating the city in 2011 with 11,000 people. Establishment of the IDF Training Base City at the "Negev Junction" will require extending transportation infrastructure to the region, both road and rail, and will in this manner advance the Negev. The establishment of the IDF Training City and its need for supportive services will result in the

creation and establishment of new businesses in the region.

The Directorate for Relocating IDF bases to the Negev

The Directorate for Moving IDF bases to the Negev was established at the end of 2006 as a joint administration of the Ministry of Defense and the IDF. The Directorate is headed by Colonel Pini Liberman. The mission of the Directorate is to act upon all of the elements of the plan to transfer the IDF bases to the Negev, in accordance with the decision of the government, the Ministry of Defense and the IDF. The Directorate is involved in management, coordination and supervision of all of the activities involved in the plan. The work of the Directorate will be completed when the IDF completes the transfer to the Negev, which is expected to occur by the year 2015.

The third step will be the transfer of the intelligence units with their abundant technology to the region of Omer - Likit (2-3 Km northeast of Beersheva) to an area which sprawls over 2000 dunam. This involves the transfer of thousands of soldiers and permanent military personnel, most of whom hold bachelors and masters degrees in engineering and the exact sciences. Work in the field is expected to begin at the end of 2008, with completion planned for 2012.



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Three dimensional model of the IDF "Training Base City"

The last segment will be the transfer of the IDF central computer units, with their thousands of soldiers, officers and civilians to facilities in the Science Park across from Ben Gurion University. This transfer is intended to promote cooperation with the University in both research and academic studies for army personnel as well as with civilian companies in the Park; the technological units rely on ongoing contacts with the business sector in the field of technology to the tune of tens of millions of shekels a month.

The Environmental Achievement for the Negev/ Amnon Ben- Dahan Director Infrastructure and Environmental Quality - Daroma

The Ramat Hovav industrial region, located south of metropolitan Beersheva, is a region which is characterized by heavy chemical industry, which exports a billion and a half dollars a year of chemicals and associated products worldwide. Ramat Hovav industrial region holds 11 factories, which directly employ 2,100 people and indirectly 6,000 people. This region has been considered for many years to be environmentally sensitive, in a manner which would prevent the development of the surrounding region.

The decision to establish the IDF "Training Base City" at the "Negev Junction", 9 km south to Ramat Hovav, created the immediate need to provide suitable environmental solutions for this industrial region. The factories in the region joined the effort, and in partnership with the Office for the Protection of the Environment,

committed to invest millions of dollars to mitigate or eliminate the impact of environmental hazards.

It is important to note, that the mobile air monitoring unit, which has been placed on the planed site for the IDF Training Base City at the "Negev Junction", measured the air quality for more than 20 months and the results showed no deviations from the needed standards.

This process received legal validity and resulted in government approval for establishment of the IDF training Base City at the "Negev Junction" (government decision from the 1st of April, 2007, see related article). This removed a stumbling block for future development of the Negev and the Beersheva metropolitan region.



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Relocating IDF bases to the Negev

In your opinion, will the families of the soldiers join the move to the Negev?

There is a plan that is being lead by the IDF human resources branch in coordination with the Ministry of Defense which deals with the subject of families moving to the Negev in terms of housing, education, welfare, health care, etc. In other words, everything a family needs to create for itself a warm and welcoming environment so that the process of relocating to the Negev will be, to the extent possible, without risks and will provide a quality of life consistent with the Zionist

ideology. In addition, the IDF is actively creating a plan to provide grants, in accordance with government decisions and existing regulations, to ease the transfer of families to the Negev (based on the government decision from the 29th of March, 2007, see related article).

All of this is being done in parallel to the process of implementing the strategic plan which includes work on infrastructure, education, economic development, housing and community, designed to improve the quality of life in the Negev for all

Government Decisions - Highlights

Government decision from the 1st of April 2007, on the topic of relocation of the Amalgamated Military Training Camps (IDF Training Base City) to the "Negev Junction". “As part of the vision of developing the Negev, in accordance with government policy for allocating government resources to meet the need of increasing the scope of quality investment in the Negev” It is hereby decided: “To place responsibility on the Ministry of Defense and the IDF to establish Amalgamated Military Training Camps at the Negev Junction” Likewise, “The Office for the Protection of the Environment and the Industrial Council of Ramat Hovav will continue their monitoring actions-will act to improve air quality in

accordance with the range of activities agreed upon with the Ministry of Health” In addition, “rehabilitation of the hazardous waste site at Ramat Hovav with a scope of 220 million NIS”

Government decision from the 29th of March, 2007 on the topic of Subsidizing the Cost of Developing Permanent Military Personnel as a Result of the Transfer of the IDF Air Force Transport Base to Nevatim in the Negev. Subsidy of lots in Dimona, Arad, Beersheva and Meitar, will be given to permanent military personnel who do not own an apartment in the Negev region. Likewise, provision of rental subsidies for permanent military personnel who move to Beersheva, Dimona and Arad.



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of the region residents including the families of permanent military personnel.

What is the reciprocal relationship with the Strategic Plan?

The concept of cooperating with the strategic plan is one of synergy, allowing for the relocation of the IDF units and leveraging the move is a “win-win” situation. Advancing the strategic plan and its implementation in the different fields of education, community and housing, etc. will assist in preparing the groundwork for arrival of the soldiers and their families, while the relocation of the IDF units will leverage and speed up the advancement of the strategic plan.

What economic opportunities is the IDF creating in the transfer to the Negev?

The decision made by the Ministry of Defense and the IDF is to privatize all activities that are not at the heart of military work, such as maintenance of all buildings and systems, the driving schools, technological college, academy components, airplane maintenance, catering, etc. The scope of influence in job creation is broad, beginning with simple labor and extending to advanced technologies and is likely in the future to create thousands of work places in the Negev.

This process will transform the very nature of the Negev, and then we will finally be able to see real development in the Negev.



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