

EZ – אקטואליה

Olmert confers on Halutz replacement

By Amos Harel, Aluf Benn and Mazal Mualem

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met yesterday with former prime ministers and defense ministers for consultations on selecting a replacement for Chief of Staff Dan Halutz, who tendered his resignation earlier this week. Olmert has already said that the candidates for the position are Gabi Ashkenazi, Moshe Kaplinsky and Benny Gantz.

Olmert's decision to hold a series of consultations on the new chief of staff has further damaged his deteriorating relations with Defense Minister Amir Peretz. Sources close to the prime minister said he referred to Peretz in very strong language.

Outgoing Chief of Staff Dan Halutz offered his resignation to the prime minister on Sunday, but did so without informing the defense minister. Halutz also asked Olmert to keep the resignation under wraps for two days - and Peretz learned that his chief of staff had decided to step down from the media. By law, the defense minister is the official in charge of the army and is the chief of staff's immediate superior.

Meanwhile, sources close to Peretz said yesterday that his likely choice for chief of staff is the current director general at the Defense Ministry, Major General (res.) Ashkenazi.

Peretz, who does not communicate very often with Olmert because of their poor relations, has not been told by the prime minister which candidate he prefers.

Vice Premier Shimon Peres, in consultations with Olmert, said he should not rush into making an appointment. "If it takes another week, does it matter?" Peres said.

Opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, a Likud MK, also suggested Olmert should not hurry his decision, and urged him to consider candidates outside the army. particularly among generals who retired in recent years. Netanyahu said the right candidate should exhibit leadership abilities, and have proven management capabilities.

The candidate, Netanyahu said, "will have to straighten the army out, rebuild Israel's deterrence and prepare the defenses against threats, first and foremost, against Iran."

Minister of National Infrastructures Benjamin Ben-Eliezer openly favours Ashkenazi. He says Deputy Chief of Staff Kaplinsky, and the commander of the Ground Forces, Gantz, are younger and can wait their turn.

Contrary to Peres and Netanyahu, Ben-Eliezer, who has served as defense minister, said it is imperative for Olmert to act quickly in the current security situation with the threats facing Israel. Transport Minister Shaul Mofaz, who was defense minister before Peretz, refused to recommend any of the candidates.

Both defense officials and politicians believe former prime minister Ehud Barak's opinion is crucial, in part because it is believed that Olmert is tipping Barak to replace Peretz at the Defense Ministry.

VOCABULARY

former - לשעבר, קודם	straighten - לחזק
defense minister - שר הביטחון (מילולית שר ההגנה)	rebuild - לשקם, לבנות מחדש
consultations - ייעוץ, התייעצות	deterrence - הרתעה
replacement - מחליף	threats - איומים
Chief of Staff - ראש המטה הכללי, רמטכ"ל	first and foremost - ביטוי- בראש ובראשונה
tendered - להגיש, להציע	Infrastructures - תשתיות
resignation - התפטרות	favors - מעדיף
candidates - מועמדים	Contrary to – בניגוד ל
series - סדרות, טורים	imperative - חיוני, הכרחי
deteriorating - התדרדרות, החמרה	recommend - להמליץ
Sources - מקורות	crucial - מכריע, קריטי
referred - להתייחס, לפנות	
informing - ליידע	
under wraps - תחת מעטה סודיות, סודי	
step down - ביטוי- להתפטר	
official - פקיד רשמי, נושא משרה ציבורית	
immediate - ישיר, מיידי	
superior - ממונה	
Meanwhile - בינתיים	
current - נוכחי, עכשווי	
director general - מנהל כללי, מנכ"ל	
communicate - מתקשר, יוצר תקשורת	
Vice Premier - המשנה לראש הממשלה	
rush - למהר, להיחפז	
appointment - פגישה	
Opposition - התנגדות, אופוזיציה	
urged - לדרבן, לדחוק	
particularly - במיוחד	
exhibit - להציג	
leadership abilities - יכולות הנהגה	
management capabilities - יכולות ניהול	