



Office of the State Comptroller
Annual Report 71A | 2020

Chapter Four

The Security Establishment



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Preparedness for Combat at a Battlefront under a Threat of Chemical Warfare Materials

Abstract


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Background

The use of chemical warfare materials (CWM) during combat has been a familiar threat for many years (named by the IDF as a CWM threat or as an CBRN threat [Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear]). During the civil war in Syria that began in 2011, the Syrian regime employed CWM against the rebel forces and against the civilian population. Various militaries are contending with this threat, including the U.S. military, which considers it a major and complex challenge.





Audit actions

 From June 2019 to February 2020, the Office of the State Comptroller audited the IDF's preparedness for combat at a battlefield under a CWM threat. The main topics audited: the preparedness of the ground forces; the CBRN battalions; and anti-CWM equipment management. The audit was conducted mainly in the IDF – in the Ground Forces Command: in the HQ of the chief engineering officer, in the Technology and Logistics Directorate and in the HQ of the chief medical officer; in the Home Front Command; in particular divisions in the Northern Command and in the Southern Command; in the Israeli Air Force; in the Military Intelligence Directorate; and in the Operations Directorate. In the Ministry of Defense; and in the Israel National Security Council.

The subcommittee of the Knesset State Audit Committee decided not to place on the Knesset's agenda and not to publish data from this report for national security reasons, pursuant to section 17 of the State Comptroller Law, 5718 – 1958 [Consolidated Version]. The withholding of these data does not obfuscate the fundamental issues in this audit.

Key findings






-  **Preparedness for contending with CWM at our borders** – it was found that the Ground Forces Command is not performing control to maintain capabilities in this regard.
-  **Preparedness of the CBRN battalions** – these battalions are not performing training exercises as is required.
-  **Responsibility for managing anti-CWM equipment** – although the Deputy Chief of Staff decided in September 2014 that the responsibility for anti-CWM equipment throughout the IDF would be delegated to the Home Front Command, in fact, anti-CWM equipment management in the IDF has remained decentralized among the Ground Forces Command, the Home Front Command and the Israeli Air Force.
-  **CBRN protective goggles for those who wear glasses** – at the very least since 2017, CBRN protective goggles have not been issued to soldiers who wear glasses.



Competence of designated systems – the IDF has significantly improved their competence.

Key recommendations

-  It is recommended that the IDF, led by the Ground Forces Command, should take action to improve the preparedness of the combat units in the standing army and in the reserve units for contending with the chemical warfare threat within the framework of routine defense and in times of war.
-  It is recommended that the Ground Forces Command, led by the chief engineering officer, should take action to close the gaps in the preparedness of the CBRN battalions.
-  It is recommended that the staff work ordered by the Deputy Chief of Staff on the subject of contending with the CWM threat should relate to all of the gaps raised in this report with regard to a CWM threat at a battlefield. According to the results of this staff work, it is recommended that the Deputy Chief of Staff should formulate directives about ways to improve the preparedness for contending with this threat.

Summary

Subsequent to the forwarding of the audit findings to the IDF, the Deputy Chief of Staff ordered staff work to be performed to analyze the IDF's preparedness for contending with the CWM threat. It is advisable that this staff work should address all of the said considerations.