



Report of the State Comptroller of Israel | May 2022

Interdisciplinary Audit

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# **Security Components in Front Line Communities in the Regional Commands – Follow-up Audit**





## Security Components in Front Line Communities in the Regional Commands – Follow-up Audit

### Background

Through the Regional Commands, the IDF is responsible for the security and defense of about 900,000 residents living in 399 communities exposed to security risk (communities) near the borders and the Judea and Samaria areas. In addition to the IDF forces, the system for defending these communities also includes forces based on the community's residents whose role is to act in terrorist infiltration to the community until the arrival of the army's forces, including the Civilian military security coordinators (MRSC) and community defense squad. For defending the communities, security components have been defined for them including, by order of the Ministry of Defense (MOD), "infrastructure, buildings, facilities, paths, roads, equipment and other self-defense means, addressing routine security [in the communities] and constituting part of the emergency infrastructure, to help the residents defend the community, to serve as a barrier and deterrent to systemic enemy attack, terrorist attack or criminal attack, and to improve the emergency and rescue services in such an attack or incident".



## Key figures

**NIS 500  
million**

needed for supplementing security components in Judea and Samaria communities, according to the Home Front Command (HFC) estimate

**NIS 110  
million**

needed for supplementing security components in communities in the north of Israel and next to the Gaza Strip (not including Judea and Samaria, the border with Jordan, and the border with Egypt), according to an HFC estimate

**NIS 54  
million**

has been allocated to the HFC to strengthen security components in 21 communities in the Northern Command Region (NCR), of which the HFC has received and utilized NIS 34 million (63%)

**144**

incidents of terrorist infiltrations to communities in Judea and Samaria from January 2019 to September 2021

**NIS 85  
million**

HFC's annual security components budget

**71**

MRSCs (51% of the MRSCs who responded to the questionnaire distributed by the State Comptroller Office)<sup>1</sup> stated that communication with IDF forces takes place using non-military communication means

**NIS 10.6  
million**

has been allocated by the HFC for the acquisition of thousands of two-way radios for intra-community communication in a tender published in 2019. By the audit end date, the radios had not yet been distributed


**21%**

of "Barak Katom" devices required by the standard have been distributed to Judea and Samaria communities

<sup>1</sup> 140 MRSCs answered the questionnaire out of 430 MRSCs in all of the sectors (including MRSCs from communities that are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Security and MRSCs from communities in which there is more than one MRSC).



## Audit actions

 From January 2020 to October 2021, the State Comptroller Office intermittently conducted a follow-up audit of the rectification of the deficiencies raised in the previous audit (published in 2018) on the security components in front-line communities. The audit was conducted in the IDF: in the HFC, Northern Command, Central Command, Southern Command, the Ground Forces command and the Operations Directorate, and the Settlement Unit in the MOD. Supplementary examinations were conducted in the Israel Police, the Mateh Binyamin, and South Mount Hebron Regional Councils. As part of the audit, the State Comptroller Office distributed a questionnaire to security officers and MRSCs in the local authorities where the front-line communities are located.


This audit report was presented to the Prime Minister and the Knesset State Audit Committee on February 15, 2022, and was classified as confidential until the State Audit Committee's subcommittee hearing.

By the authority under Section 17(c) of the State Comptroller Law, 1958 [Consolidated Version], and after considering the government's arguments, consulting with the bodies responsible for the protection of national security information and in coordination with the Chairman of the Knesset, since the subcommittee above did not convene, it was decided to publish this report while imposing confidentiality on sections of it. These sections shall not be submitted to the Knesset, nor shall they be published.

The findings of the audit report and its recommendations are valid as of the date of its presentation.

## Key findings



 **The security components adequacy** – in 2017–2021, the HFC increased the portion of the budget for restoring and revitalizing security components. However, the budget size is still less than half of the budget required (about NIS 45 million is needed) as determined in 2017. The budget that the HFC, together with the Settlement Unit, allocates for maintenance of security components changed in 2015–2021 and stands at 82% on average of the budget required (about NIS 57 million is needed). In addition, the questionnaire distributed to the MRSCs raised gaps in the adequacy of various security components, including security fences, security roads, security lighting and guard booths.



**The plan for closing the gaps in the security components** – the previous audit raised that as the 2012 HFC plan was not implemented and due to the emergence of new needs, the gaps in the security components grew. Consequently, it was recommended that the IDF and the MOD, each in its responsibility and in coordination, formulate a plan for reducing the gaps in the security components. The follow-up audit found that **the deficiency was only slightly rectified**. The HFC did formulate plans to close the gaps, however, out of the plan for closing the security components gaps throughout the country, only the portion relating to communities in the north was approved at about NIS 54 million, and only about NIS 34 million was budgeted. In addition, the plan to reduce the gaps in Judea and Samaria was not discussed at the Ministerial Committee on National Security Affairs (the State Security Cabinet), and as a result, was not budgeted, even though this is the most threatened region and has significant gaps in the security components, estimated at about NIS 470 million.



**Distribution of two-way radios** – the previous audit found that the HFC provided 28% and 63% out of all of the Barak Katom devices and two-way radios for internal communication (respectively) that it was supposed to provide to front-line communities and did not set a timetable for completing the provision of these devices. It also found that Central and Southern Commands distributed other military radios to the communities without the distribution controlling or setting procedures or reporting to the HFC. As a result, the HFC did not have complete information on the communities' ability to communicate with IDF forces. The follow-up audit found that **the deficiency had not been rectified**. Despite the great importance of the existence of communications networks as part of the community defense doctrine, the IDF does not have a uniform and clear situation report of the gaps in distributing "Barak Katom" devices to the classified communities, with all that entails. It also found that the communication gaps led the MRSCs to use communication means that are not military and not part of the IDF acquired communication system. In addition, the HFC Commander's directive regarding distributing standard military radios to Judea and Samaria communities as an alternative to the "Barak Katom" devices was not implemented. This alternative does not fully address operational needs, as these devices also have reception problems in some areas of Judea and Samaria. Given the physical limitations of the device, it does not provide an available solution for the MRSCs.



### **Communication gaps in the Command Regions**

**Northern Command** – the follow-up audit raised that the existing arrangement for communication between community defense forces and IDF forces in the Northern Command region is quite partial and has even worsened since the previous audit due to the change of use procedures of "Barak Katom" devices in routine times, without a proper alternative that provides immediate response for unexpected emergencies. The main communication means between MRSCs and IDF forces are not military and might not function in an emergency event.



**Central Command** – the follow-up audit raised that there are communication gaps between IDF forces and the defense forces of the communities in Judea and Samaria that arise from reception gaps and a lack of two-way radios. These gaps may constitute a severe operational failure in the communities' defensive system.

**Southern Command** – the follow-up audit raised communication coverage gaps in the Southern Command Region.

**All regions** – the follow-up audit raised that the **deficiency regarding the deployment of relay stations was slightly rectified**, and despite the IDF's investment in establishing new relay stations in 2017–2020, there are still substantial reception problems in all regions. It also found that the HFC's activity to strengthen intra-community communication does not address communication problems outside of the communities. In addition, the situation assessment raised by the MRSC questionnaire indicates that almost half of the MRSCs have difficulty maintaining communication with the IDF and with emergency services, including the Israel Police using the communication means at their disposal.



**The HFC's communities' classification procedure** – the previous audit raised that the HFC had not updated the classifying communities' procedure since 2011, including the division into classifications and the security components each community is entitled to have due to its classification. It also found that communities classified as "seam lines" are entitled to participation in the cost of maintaining infrastructural security components and supplementary security components. They are not entitled to restoring infrastructural and supplementary security components and establishing security components in the case of the community's expansion. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency has been rectified**. Since the last audit, the HFC has updated the classifying communities' procedure several times, including the standard of security components necessary for each classification. As part of updating the procedure, the "seam line" classification was canceled. These communities were reclassified according to the updated procedure for classifying communities, which also entitles them the standard of security components in all aspects of their life cycle: establishment, maintenance, and restoration.

**The General Staff Order for Regional Defense and the operational directive for security components and the community defense** – the previous audit raised that even though the Ground Forces hold overall responsibility for force buildup regarding the communities protection, the IDF had not assigned it a role in planning the security components in communities in the General Staff Order for Regional Defense, which regulates the responsibility of the bodies involved in defense of communities. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency has to a large extent, been rectified**. In February 2018, the IDF updated the General Staff Order for Regional Defense. The updated order states that the



Ground Forces are also responsible for approving the Regional Commands' operational requirements on the security components. Nevertheless, the IDF should ensure that there is complete compatibility between the General Staff Order for Regional Defense, which defines the roles of the IDF bodies involved in communities defense and their areas of authority and responsibility, and the operational directive on the communities defense that are meant to implement the General Staff Order for Regional Defense.







**The allocation of security components is based on various priorities** – the previous audit raised that the Settlement Unit and the HFC separately provide budgets for basic security components according to different priorities. The HFC allocates the budget for establishing and acquiring basic security components according to the operational priorities determined by the Operations Directorate. While the Settlement Unit allocates the budget according to priorities determined by the Minister of Defense, and the two do not match. The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency has to a large extent, been rectified**. The Mod Director General approves the Settlement Unit's and the HFC's work plans regarding the security components with a comprehensive perspective. The HFC approves sections of the work plans of the Settlement Unit, and it does so, among other things, based on the operational requirements of the Regional Commands. The amount of investment not according to the IDF priorities has been significantly reduced compared to the previous audit. Nevertheless, there is still a gap between the priorities for investment in security components set by the HFC and the Settlement Unit.

**Equipment of the community defense departments in Central Command communities** – the previous audit found that in 35 out of the 47 settlement defense departments that were examined, there was a shortage of necessary equipment, including in communities classified as "front." The follow-up audit raised that **the deficiency has to a large extent, been rectified**. Since the last audit, the shortage of equipment for the community defense departments has been largely reduced. Nevertheless, it found that the inventory of weapons in communities in the Center Command Region was about 40% higher than the standard and that the inventory of combat equipment indicates a shortage of about 6% compared to the standard. Consequently, the IDF should ensure the compatibility of weapons inventories with the required standard and consider collecting surplus weapons beyond the standard.





## Key recommendations

-  Given the gaps in security components that have grown over the years, it is recommended that the MOD complete the proposal for decision on budgeting the gaps in security components in Judea and Samaria communities and bring it for discussion in the State Security Cabinet, alongside the required needs regarding the security components in additional regions, to approve a multi-year plan for closing the gaps in security components, subject to costs and risks, and to budget it accordingly.
-  Given the great importance of an available communication system between all of the forces responsible for defending the communities in coping with the danger of infiltration by hostile elements, the IDF, together with the MOD, should complete the distribution of the communication means that have been acquired to improve intra-community communication. In addition, given the shortage of "Barak Katom" devices in some of the communities, it is recommended that the IDF consider transferring devices of this kind from classified communities in which their use has been discontinued, to communities in which there is a shortage, instead of acquiring new devices, subject to the formulation of policy on the use of these devices.
-  The IDF should map out the needs and operational gaps that exist today regarding communication aspects between the community defense systems' and IDF forces, consider a solution to achieve continuous and effective communication between IDF forces and community defense forces, and formulate a plan for implementing it.
-  It is recommended that the MOD, together with the Ministry of Public Security, determine an operational doctrine and a central body – responsible and authorized for improving and optimizing the communication between all the bodies participating in emergency responses and the defense of communities.
-  It is recommended that the MOD define boundaries between the HFC activity and the activity of the Settlement Unit regarding basic security components to maximize efficiency in their activity.
-  The HFC should continue to develop the system for managing the inventory of security components and update it with the adequacy of the components to serve as a meaningful tool for managing the inventory of security components.



### Main gaps in security components by region, April 2021

Sector		Threat probability	Main gaps
Central Command: Judea and Samaria		High	Infrastructure, technology and teleprocessing capabilities
Central Command: the Jordan Valley		Medium	Infrastructure, technology and teleprocessing capabilities
Northern Command: border with Syria	Up to 4 km	High	Restoration of basic security components
	4–9 km	Medium	Restoration of basic security components
Northern Command: border with Lebanon	Up to 4 km	High	Strengthening security infrastructure
	4–9 km	Medium	Restoration of basic security components
Southern Command: border with Gaza	Up to 4 km	High	Restoration of road infrastructure
	4–7 km	Medium	Restoration of road infrastructure
Southern Command: border with Egypt	Up to 4 km	Medium-high	Security infrastructure
Southern Command: border with Jordan	Up to 4 km	Low	Teleprocessing equipment



### Extent of rectification of the main deficiencies raised in the previous audit

Security components in front-line communities – key findings of the follow-up audit					
Audit chapter	Previous audit deficiency	The extent of the deficiencies rectification in the follow-up audit			
		Not rectified	Rectified to a small extent	Rectified to a large extent	Fully rectified
Orders and directives related to community defense and security components	The HFC has not updated the classification of communities' procedure since 2011.				
	The IDF had not assigned the Ground Forces to plan the security components in communities by the General Staff Order for Regional Defense.				
Allocation of security components in front-line communities	The 2012 HFC plan was not implemented and caused the gaps in security components to grow.				
	The Settlement Unit and the HFC separately budgeted the basic security components according to different priorities.				
Communication and means of communication	The HFC had not provided the classified communities with all of the "Barak Katom" devices and two-way radios for internal communication that it was supposed to provide and had not determined a timetable for completing their supply. Central and Southern Commands had distributed other military radios to the communities with no distribution control or report to HFC.				



Security components in front-line communities – key findings of the follow-up audit					
Audit chapter	Previous audit deficiency	The extent of the deficiencies rectification in the follow-up audit			
		Not rectified	Rectified to a small extent	Rectified to a large extent	Fully rectified
Equipment for the community defense departments	In 35 out of the 47 community defense departments examined, there was a shortage of the required equipment.				
Management and control of security components by the HFC	The HFC does not have complete information about the gaps in security components in the classified communities and the cost of closing the gaps.				



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## Summary

About 900,000 residents live in front-line communities near Israel's borders and the territories of Judea and Samaria. In the effort to defend these communities from by terrorists' infiltrations, various bodies are engaged in establishing and maintaining security components in the scope of hundreds of millions of NIS over the years. The resources invested in the restoration and maintenance of security components are less than required by operational needs.

The follow-up audit raised that since the previous audit, published in 2018, some of the deficiencies regarding managing the allocation of security components have been rectified, as is expressed mainly in improving the coordination between the HFC and the Settlement Unit, in reducing the differences between the priorities of the two bodies for implementing security components and in formulating an aggregate work plan for handling the security components. The IDF and the MOD should rectify the deficiencies that have not been rectified and those that have arisen since the previous audit mainly the implementation of an effective and available communication system for all of the community defense forces and advancing the proposal for a decision on budgeting the closing of the gaps in security components in Judea and Samaria communities, which are the most threatened and are the top operational priority, bringing it to the discussion in the State Security Cabinet and budgeting it accordingly.

