



Report of the State Comptroller of Israel | May 2022

Interdisciplinary Audit

Samaria and Judea District of the Israel Police – Follow-up Audit



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Background

In September 1994, the Israel Police (IP) established the Samaria and Judea District ("the district"). The district covers a broad geographical area – from Mount Hebron in the south to the Megiddo region in the north and from the Judea and Samaria boundary line region in the west to the Jordan Valley in the east in Area C. The District is the second largest of the IP districts. Many roadways are paved within its territory, some of them main roads serving the Palestinian population and the Israeli residents.

Key figures

12,865

the number of cases opened in the District in 2020 for offenses of disturbing public order, security violations, and damage to property

48,371

the number of traffic tickets issued in the district in 2020, out of which 36,074 were issued to Palestinians (about 75%)


most of

of the inventory of ceramic vests intended to protect the safety of the district's police officers are old vests past their expiry date

tens

of the district's bulletproof vehicles do not address its needs to fulfill its missions

Audit actions

 From February to August 2021, the Office of the State Comptroller examined the activities of the IP, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), the Civil Administration (CA), and the IDF to rectify the main deficiencies noted in the previous audit on the IP's District (the follow-up audit). The follow-up audit was conducted in the IP, COGAT, the CA, and the IDF: in Central Command and the Military Police. Supplementary examinations were done until November 2021.



This 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 extent of rectification of deficiencies that were raised in the previous audit



Securing certain police activity – in the follow-up audit, disparities were found in the standards of securing certain police activity and the procedure application. Some of these disparities **were not rectified** in relations to the previous audit.



Bulletproof vehicles – on the previous audit's completion date, the District operated only few tens of bulletproof vehicles for carrying out its missions, which were intended for transporting combat police and coping with riots on roadways and in villages. The previous audit noted that these vehicles are not suitable for police missions in the district and that there is a need for other, lighter bulletproof vehicles. The follow-up audit found that **the deficiency has not been rectified**: in June 2021, the District operated using the same kind and the same number of bulletproof vehicles serving a few hundred field police officers, which does not fully address the district's needs to fulfill its missions.



Ceramic vests – for a ceramic vest (a vest that protects against light weapons fire) to protect its wearer effectively, it is necessary to replace the ceramic plates located within it frequently by the manufacturer's instructions. The previous audit raised that the ceramic plates have past their expiry date in most of the Districts' ceramic vests and do not meet the manufacturer's requirements. The follow-up audit found that **the deficiency has not been rectified**: most of the inventory of ceramic vests intended for protecting the safety of the district's police officers are old vests, in which the ceramic



plates are past their expiry date, and they do not meet the manufacturer's requirements, which might risk the lives of the police officers and harm their ability to fulfill their missions.



Information on the licensing of Palestinian vehicles and on Palestinian drivers driving on the District's roads – the District Traffic Department is in charge of enforcement, handling traffic collisions and lawsuits in it and coordinating service for citizens. Thus, it needs to receive up-to-date information about the Palestinian vehicles and drivers traveling on the District's roads. In the previous audit, the Office of the State Comptroller noted to the CA on the ongoing deficiency in transferring this essential information, from the CA to the IP, for transport law enforcement in the District. It stated that the existing information gaps between the two bodies could endanger all road users. The follow-up audit found that **the deficiency has not been rectified**: the transfer of the essential information from the CA to transport law enforcement officials in the District is still deficient, and there are information gaps between them. The existing information gaps harm the functioning of law enforcement officials and might endanger all road users in the District's territories.



Investigating falsified real estate transaction offenses – the previous audit raised that the District police stations cannot handle suspicions of falsified real estate transactions in it due to the lack of professional personnel and that the investigations in these cases last a long time. The previous audit also found that delays in handling complaints regarding real estate fraud offenses could have serious consequences, such as violating the property rights of real estate purchasers, undermining public confidence in the law enforcement system, and harming economic activity in the District. The follow-up audit found that **the deficiency has not been rectified**: in recent years, there has been an increase in serious suspicions of falsified transactions and real estate purchases in the District; examining the permanent arrangement for investigations of falsified real estate offenses has not been completed, and the District does not professionally address the investigation and gathering of sufficient evidence to prosecute the suspects of these offenses.

Additional deficiencies that were raised in the current audit



The CA's handling of collecting fines due to traffic offences by Palestinian drivers – the follow-up audit raised that until December 2021, the CA did not prevent Palestinian drivers who did not pay the fines to enter into Israel. The scope of the fine that was not collected in 2014–2021 is estimated at NIS 270 million. In addition, it found that the data transfer on fines between the IP and the CA is done via Excel files without computer systems connection. It also raised that from 1998 (the year of the government's decision on the procedure for preventing entry into Israel for people with monetary debts to governmental authorities in Israel) until December 2021, the CA did not implement the procedure that the government of Israel had decided on.



The District's Control Center (CC) – the previous audit raised that one of the main lessons learned from investigating the murder of the three adolescents and Operation "Brother's Keeper" is that it is imperative to improve the functioning of the 100 hotlines, with an emphasis on the telephone exchanges technological improvement by the command and control operational concept. The operation of the CC, which also includes the 100 hotlines, requires a fast, professional and service-oriented response to callers and management and control of emergency events. The previous audit raised that in June 2017, the District's CC operated with 11 police officers who had been temporarily assigned to it from throughout the district and had not been trained for their positions. The follow-up audit found that the deficiencies had been rectified. In September 2021, police officers were not temporarily assigned to the CC, and the position holders at the CC were trained for their position. It also raised that in 2019, the district's entire 100-hotline telephone exchanges system had been replaced with digital telephone exchanges, and were technologically improved. However, two regional districts expressed dissatisfaction regarding the District's CC interface with the civilian hotline operating within their territory, which requires clarification between the two bodies.






Shielding of the District CC – the previous audit raised that the District CC is located in an unshielded building and that the district have no alternative CC to transfer its activity in times of emergency if the need arises. The follow-up audit raised that the deficiency has been rectified. The construction of a new and shielded CC in the district is about to be completed and is meant to be operated by the beginning of 2022. In November 2020, an alternative CC for the District was inaugurated at the national headquarters of the IP.

The average response time for calls received at the District's 100 hotlines is – 2.67 seconds, which is 35% shorter than the national average response time of – 4.14 seconds.

Investigation of Border Police gunfire incidents that caused injuries or deaths in the District – the previous audit stated that for many years, the District itself had investigated Border Police officers who were involved in gunfire incidents that caused the injury or death of Palestinians, not by the Police's orders and at a slow pace. In January 2018, the Prime Minister decided that handling complaints against Border Police officers who operated under the IDF's command in the District would be transferred to the IDF or the Military Police. The follow-up audit raised that the deficiency has been rectified: in October 2019, the authority for examining and investigating all incidents of gunfire carried out by Border Police officers who operated in the District under IDF command was transferred to the IDF (to the National Unit for Operational Investigations in the Military Police headquarters), and by the audit completion date, the IDF had investigated seven cases of gunfire by Border Police officers in the district.



Key recommendations

-  The Office of the State Comptroller notes the IP and the Ministry of Public Security to reconsider and reassess the security needs of certain police activity and to optimize this activity.
-  Given the importance of acquiring bulletproof vehicles that are suitable for the district's needs and its impacts on the district's operational ability to fulfill its missions, it is recommended that the IP complete the supply of bulletproof vehicles to the district, according to the established standard. In addition, it should complete the District's needed acquisition of ceramic or alternative vests that are not past their expiry date and, by the manufacturer's requirements.
-  COGAT should act to realize development of the computer interface between the CA's and the IP's computer systems. Afterward, the CA and the IP should cooperate to transfer the information between the District and COGAT efficiently.
-  It is recommended that the CA and COGAT examine additional ways to improve the collection of fines issued to Palestinians in coordination with the IP to increase the effectiveness of transport law enforcement.
-  The IP should act to complete the examination of ways to establish a professional district fraud unit for the District. This unit could efficiently investigate real estate fraud cases, especially as there has been an increase in serious suspicions of the falsification of real estate acquisitions and transactions in the District.



Security and protection deficiencies that raise concerns about the safety of the District's police officers





Summary

The District Police has an essential role in enforcing the law and maintaining public order in it. The district handles serious security offenses alongside incidents of nationalistic and criminal offenses. Threats of hostile terrorist activity, the number of incidents with an emphasis on terrorist attacks, and the finding of weapons in the District's territories lead to its police officers operating in a high-risk environment. The follow-up audit raised that some of the deficiencies found in the previous audit have been rectified fully or to a large extent. The IP, the Ministry of Public Security, the IDF, and COGAT should rectify the deficiencies that have not been rectified since the publication of the previous audit to ensure the security and safety of the civilian population, road users in the District, and its police officers.

