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IDF Training



Mostly absent. Gal Hirsch Photo: Effie Shrir

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Source: Secret IDF material went unguarded in Georgia

Former Israeli soldier returns disillusioned from training Georgian soldiers for company owned by Brig.-Gen. Hirsch in preparation for war with Russia; says confidential army material such as charts, officers' names was revealed to foreign troops

Nava Tzurriel

Tomer (alias), formerly a soldier of an elite IDF unit, returned from Georgia a short while ago. He was enlisted by Defensive Shield, a company owned and operated by Brigadier General (Res.) Gal Hirsch, to help train Georgian soldiers for battle, but returned disappointed in the manner in which the company handles secret army material.

Hirsch's company was responsible for training an elite search and rescue unit, and training was handled by the companies of two other reserve officers, all of which hired ex-soldiers like Tomer. This resulted in hundreds of former IDF soldiers working as trainers in Georgia over the past few months.

Tomer said he and his friends had at first received guidelines for the handling of covert material, listing what they could and couldn't tell Georgian soldiers about IDF activities. But in actuality, he said, the Georgians were told top secret information.

"When I arrived in the operations room I saw a book of IDF safety instructions that shouldn't have been there," he said. "There were IDF CDs that explicitly said, 'Confidential' documenting army activities, charts from special units' operations, and officers' names." He added that the room was not guarded, making this information easily obtainable to everyone.

Tomer said the main reason for the infidelity was mercenary. "The training companies wanted to finish the projects as quickly as possible in order to create more projects and make more money," he said. "We knew the training had to be completed quickly because the soldiers would soon have to get into real military activity."

He added that the Georgian officers told their soldiers they would be going to help NATO forces in Iraq, while the real objective was Ossetia and Abkhazia.

According to Tomer, Gal Hirsch came to visit the trainers now and then, but was mostly absent. And when the training was officially over, Tomer did not feel that his soldiers were ready for war. "By Israeli standards, the soldiers had almost zero capability and the officers were mediocre," he said. "It was clear that taking that army to war was illogical."

By keeping in touch with one of his soldiers, Tomer discovered that most of the men he had trained had indeed been killed in the war. "Some of them became good friends of mine and invited me into their homes. It's hard to digest that these people have suddenly vanished from the face of the earth," he lamented.

Defense Shield stated in response that "all of the company's actions were approved by the Defense Ministry, including the materials transferred to the training companies. The

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information security standards were set, emphasized, and maintained by experienced security officers, and we have no knowledge of these claims."

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