



# ***ISRAEL MATTERS!***

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Sholom  
1809 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06517-1401



Issue Number 54  
January 2012

## **Mossad Linked to Iranian Military Blast**

### **Sid Cohen, Co-Founder of the Israeli Air Force, Dies at 90**

Sid Cohen arrived in Israel with one purpose in mind—contributing to the establishment of the Israeli Air Force. He was the second Commander of the “101 Squadron” and a one of a kind pilot. On his death, the IAF said goodbye to one of the most influential people to ever serve the State of Israel. Born in South Africa into a large family, when World War II began the 19-year-old joined the South African National Defense Force. In 1941 he received his pilot wings. A month after completing his pilot training course, Sid was sent to Egypt where he participated in flight operations with a South African Squadron that was a part of the Royal British Air Force.

After the war, Sid returned to South Africa and began medical studies. He took a leave of absence from medical school to go to Israel in its War of Independence. In June 1948, he arrived in Israel and was drafted to the 101 Squadron of the new Israeli Air Force. The Commander of the Squadron at the time was Mordechai “Modi” Alon and some of Cohen’s friends were Lou Lenart, Milton Rubinfeld, Eddie Cohen, Ezer Weitzman, and many other pilots from England, Canada, the United States, and South Africa. Cohen took part in operation “Velvetta” transporting Spitfire aircraft from Czechoslovakia to Israel.

After the war, Cohen returned to South Africa to finish his medical studies. On December 2nd 2011, Dr. Sid Cohen passed away in his house in Ramat HaSharon at age 90. Leaving his wife Adeline and three daughters: Liora, Keren, and Janet. [IAF]

Reports claim the Israeli secret service, the Mossad, was recently behind a huge blast at an Iranian facility that killed an Iranian missile development pioneer. The blast, which killed 17 people and wounded 15, gained widespread coverage in the Israeli media. While Iranian officials insisted the explosion at the Bid Ganeh base was accidental and caused by the movement of ammunition, claims from anonymous western and Israeli officials that the blast was a covert Israeli operation have gained momentum.

The Israeli newspaper, Ha’aretz, reported that a western intelligence source quoted in Time magazine claimed the Mossad carried out the attack in an attempt to stall Iran’s development of a nuclear weapon. The official is said to have warned: “There are more bullets in the magazine.” The blast at the base, which is reported to have been a storage facility for long-range missiles, was so powerful that it was said to have been felt 30 miles away in the capital, Tehran. Among those killed was Major General Hassan Moghaddam, the Revolutionary Guard Commander charged with “ensuring self-sufficiency” in armaments, and described by Iranian media as a pioneer in Iranian missile development.

Israel’s defense minister, Ehud Barak, responded to news of Moghaddam’s death by saying: “May there be more like it.” Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office refused to comment on speculation of the Mossad’s involvement. Ilan Mizrahi, former head of the national security council and former deputy head of the Mossad, also would not be drawn into substantiating the claims: “I have no idea whether this blast was accidental or whether it was sabotage. But I will say God bless those who were behind it, because the free world should be doing its best to prevent Iran from achieving nuclear military capability.”

A recent International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report suggested Iran was secretly working on nuclear weaponry. Both the US and France have offered close co-operation with Israel, threatening increased sanctions unless Iran responds with transparency to the nuclear watchdog report. Iran’s envoy to the IAEA said any nuclear development is for peaceful means and that the material evidence against it has been fabricated by the US.

Israel has been linked to several previous incidents in Iran similar to the recent explosion, including an explosion at a Shahab missile facility in southwestern Iran in 2010, and a bomb attack earlier that year in Tehran, in which Iranian physicist Masoud Ali Mohammadi was killed. [Guardian News and Media Limited]

## In Race to Moon, Israel Thinks Small



They aren't planning to put the first Israeli on the moon, but they do want to plant the country's flag there, send a robot on a 500-meter or so stroll past some craters, and send pictures back home. Along the way, they want to inspire the next generation of Israelis to pursue science and technology and show the world Israel's tech abilities. And they want to do this employing innovative and often untried technology all in the space of two years and on a budget that NASA would regard as petty cash.

Space IL, the non-profit organization formed by three young Israelis, is undertaking its shoe-string dream as part of the Lunar X competition by Google to successfully launch, fly, and land a robotic spacecraft on the lunar surface. The team is competing for a \$20 million first-prize award, but Space IL is just as concerned about the process as the prize. "It's a vision," said Kfir Damari, one of the three twenty-somethings who founded Space IL a year ago. "If we show the next generation that we can build spaceships and land them on the moon, they'll become the next generation of engineers."

He was speaking at a ceremony at Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) near Ben-Gurion Airport, where Rona Ramon, whose husband Ilan died in the crash of the ill-fated Columbia space shuttle eight years ago, unveiled a mock-up of the Israeli spaceship. It is a six-sided device small enough to be squeezed through the door of the auditorium where it was introduced to the public. "Space IL is definitely part of Ilan's spirit and heritage because he really believed in education and how space can inspire young scientists to continue opening their horizons and their thoughts,"

she said on the sidelines of the ceremony.

At first glance, Space IL's quest seems like a long shot. Since Neil Armstrong touched the lunar surface, the only other country beside the United States to reach the moon is the former Soviet Union. Israel is competing against 25 teams from around the world, including contestants with NASA affiliations and multi-country consortiums. But Israel is a space power in its own right: It is one of only 10 countries in the world, and by far the smallest, with proven ability to put a satellite in orbit and is a pioneer in the field of miniature satellites.



About the size and color of a washing machine, Space IL's planned vehicle is miniature by spaceship standards. It weighs just 90 kilograms (200 pounds) and measures just 80 by 80 centimeters (30 inches), which means it will require less fuel to vault into space and gently land it on the moon. That is the key to building the spaceship and getting to the moon inside a budget of \$15 million, or less. But therein lies a risk, explained Yanki Margalit, Space IL's chairman and a high technology entrepreneur. "We're going to use micro technology that's never been employed for a moon landing. We are taking a risk," he said. "The spaceship is very small, which is both its beauty and the challenge it poses."

Space IL has raised about \$3.5 million, including a grant from the Israel

Space Agency, and is counting on donations in kind from an array of Israeli scientific institutions and high tech companies, including IAI. The vehicle itself will be assembled in a clean room at IAI to protect its delicate components and ensure that it doesn't inadvertently bring microbes from Earth to the pristine moon. Margalit added jokingly that anyone prepared to donate \$10 million could affix their logo to the spaceship beside the Israeli flag and IAI's logo.

Space IL is also stretching its budget by relying on volunteers. Damari, as well as his two founding partners, Yariv Bash and Yonatan Winetraub – all of them engineers with specialization in electronics and computers, communications, and satellite technology – have full time jobs and aim to get to the moon in their spare time. The volunteers include a large number of teenagers. Most of them are engaged in communications and marketing, but a select group of 15 comprise a team charged with a key engineering assignment. "Our goal is to find the site where the spaceship will land," Amit Levin, a 14-year-old member of the team said at the ceremony. He said the group had narrowed the decision

down to four or five locations and was now consulting with (grown-up) astrophysicists to make a final decision. "I'm studying at Tel Aviv University's Scientists of the Future program, which was started by President Shimon Peres," he explained. "Because all of us are learning either physics or chemistry, Space IL came to us and gave us the landing sites job. Most of us are 14 or 15 years old."

A big part of Space IL is education. The \$30 million, if it wins the Lunar X prize, will be donated to education. Its goal is to spur interest on the part of young people in science by enticing them with the glamour of space exploration. "Our mission is to land a spaceship on the moon," said Bash, Space IL's lead partner. "But our real goal is scientific education in Israel." [The Media Line]