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MILITARY BUDGET CUTBACKS LEAD TO ENERGY, OTHER SAVINGS

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[Text] The Air Force, just like the rest of the IDF, gave up meat once a week. The army will continue to march, even with a somewhat empty stomach. The problem is that the cutbacks did not just trim the fat. For lack of choice some flesh also had to be cut.

Fuel has always been, and remains, an expensive--and necessary--commodity for the functioning of the force. Various and original ways to conserve fuel have been devised in different bases.

"We have established a transportation center," says Colonel T., commander of the administrative squadron in Hatzor. "Any vehicle leaving the base has to report to the center, where other tasks are assigned to it.

"In the past fuel that was left in planes after flights was simply dumped. Today it is drained to an underground reservoir and recycled. The monthly fuel consumption of each squadron is published, which serves as a restraining and deterring factor."

"In Ramon the fuel remaining in the planes is used for home heating," says the commander, Colonel M. "The benefit is double: not one drop of fuel is wasted and on cold winter evenings the rooms are warm."

In Palmahim, the left over fuel is used for exercises in fire fighting. No use has yet been found for recycled smoke...

"In 'Ovda one can see officers on scooters or even on bicycles. Drivers now have Motorola intercoms for more efficient communications. The result--a substantial saving in fuel consumption," says Colonel H., commander of the base.

A Package of Savings

Cutbacks have been implemented not only in fuel. Reporters of BITA'ON HEYL HA'AVIR toured several Air Force bases to see at first hand how the challenge of cutbacks is being met.

In some bases there are now special committees, assigned to find ways for efficiency and saving. The committees are made up of representatives of all the squadrons. Sometimes they are augmented by reservists, industrial engineers and administrators in their civilian life. Any soldier may propose ideas for savings and the response is very enthusiastic. All that remains to be done is to convert these methods to a way of life.

"We called for a contest to save electricity," says Colonel T. of Hatzor enthusiastically. "People were assigned to turn off those appliances which were not being used."

In Ramon, built by the Americans, the electric systems are the most modern. "At the same time," says Colonel M., commander of the administrative squadron, "We reduced lighting by 30 percent and we are about to reduce lighting hours to a minimum just so as to not to have an impact on security."

In Palmahim the possibility of longer periods between checking planes is being examined. Explains Colonel D., commander of the maintenance squadron: "If we can only implement this step without impacting on security and quality, we may bring about a substantial and meaningful saving."

We have already stopped painting complete planes. We only paint those parts which are replaced. Moreover, when helicopters or other equipment is washed, we use a controlled sprayer to reduce the amount of water consumed. Iron and other scrap parts are collected and whenever possible, recycled."

The Air Force is also meticulous about savings in office equipment. In Ramat-David, for example, a 20 percent saving has been realized. The commander has issued specific instructions so they do not find themselves without the necessary supplies. It was decided to recycle envelopes. Even pins and paper clips are not thrown out. They are carefully removed, straightened out and reused.

Tightening Belts

The era of cutbacks is felt in kitchens and dining rooms as well. "Many appliances are retired, because of lack of budget to repair them," said Lt Bo'az, commander of the Ramat-David kitchen. "What was at one time done by machine is now done by hand, and rather slowly, at that."

In 'Ovda one of the dining rooms has been closed altogether. In Ramon the commander of the administrative squadron says: "The cheese is brought in in Brinks trucks..." But everyone admits that no one goes hungry.

In Nevatim that challenge of manpower shortage has been met. Says Colonel A., commander of the administrative squadron: "Soldiers fill in, in addition to their regular assignments. Everyone chips in. All told, any soldier on base who does not do what needs to be done, is pure waste. We refer to the direct contribution of any pair of hands. A clear cut example is the abolishment of certain commanding positions such as deputy commander, or officers in charge

of certain responsibilities. We have also consolidated several duties under one commander."

One of the main problems for Ramon was, and is, its isolation from population centers and entertainment facilities. Cutbacks in budget require Colonel M. to reduce the number of artists and entertainers and thus reduce activity after working hours. "Tours in the country are about to be cut out altogether. We will build only two instead of the originally planned three clubs. The Gashash Hahiver troupe will not be brought here even if we want them..."

Colonel H., commander of the administrative squadron in 'Ovda, describes it as "an atmosphere of savings" in his base. "Along with activities aimed at greater efficiency and cutbacks, we have also started a public relations campaign. We placed signs calling on soldiers to save. In base functions, taking place in the movie theater, we project slides with slogans encouraging savings. Our success in preventing waste depends on the response of our soldiers. Saving is a national duty. Each and every soldier, if he wants to, can affect considerable savings. Every small step brings about considerable savings."

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