

RELEASE IN PART
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Sent: Monday, November 26, 2012 7:04 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Barak Announces Retirement

Fyi

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Sent: Monday, November 26, 2012 06:55 AM
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Subject: Barak Announces Retirement

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Defense Minister Ehud Barak announced in a press conference at 11:00 AM local time that he will not run for re-election to the next Knesset, and he will retire from political life. He says he will complete his term as Defense Minister in February or March when the new government takes office following the Jan. 22 elections. His announcement took the political world by surprise. After near 50 years of public service, he said, he desired to spend time with his family.

He was asked in his press conference if he would consider accepting a "personal appointment" as Defense Minister in the new government. The law permits the prime minister to nominate non-Knesset members to be ministers in the government. Barak was vague in his reply, but clearly did not close the door to this possibility. Political observers are split on the likelihood that a reelected PM Netanyahu would turn to Barak in this capacity. The PM may see advantages in his personal comfort with Barak and the more moderate image Barak can project to the international community, but there would be strong opposition to such an appointment within the Likud party.

The first name often mentioned as the next Defense Minister is Minister of Strategic Affairs Moshe "Bogey" Yaalon (Likud). But it is a long way to go to anticipate how portfolios will shake out in the new government.

Here is a partial transcript of his announcement:

...I had the privilege to assume a major role in the team that led Operation Pillar of Defense, both militarily and politically, all the way to its successful end so far. Fifty-three years ago, in November 1959, I enlisted in the IDF and since then and for 47 years, I have served the people of Israel as best as I could. Today I stand before you to announce my decision to retire from politics and not to stand for re-election in the coming elections to the Knesset.

I made this decision whole-heartedly, despite some deliberations. I would be lying if I'd say that the warmth I've been feeling from the public during these past few days, and even the somewhat positive coverage I've received from some of you in the media were not pleasant. Not having been spoiled this way, I know to appreciate this support and am happy with it.

Practically speaking, I will vacate my position as defense minister after the next government is formed, in about three months' time. That will be the end of a cumulative period of seven and a half years I spent in that office, in two tenures, under three governments, one of which I headed. These were years when I, alongside others, led the Israeli Defense Forces, rehabilitated it after the Second Lebanon War, strengthened its long arm and its operational capabilities, so it can withstand the Iranian threat, if and when a decision is made on the subject. I've promoted the Iron Dome and the multi-layered missile interception system, and no less important, we safeguarded the essence and depth of the operational, intelligence, and diplomatic aspects of our relationship with the Americans.

I am proud of the fact that during the past year and a half, aside from the important operational achievements, a new sense of openness, truthfulness, integrity, calm self-confidence, and modesty has returned to the IDF -- attributes that have been scathed from time to time in the past. We have restored the basics of the ethical code, and the unequivocal understanding of the democratic basis of our lives, whereby the military level is subordinate to the political level.

My decision to retire is based on my wish to spend more time with my family. I feel that I have had enough of politics, which I was never exceptionally passionate about. I also feel we need to allow other people to take up high-ranking positions in Israel. Personnel turnover in high-level positions is a good thing, and there are many ways to contribute to the society and to the country, not only through politics. As a former IDF chief-of-staff and prime minister, as a present defense minister, and as long as my advice is needed and valued, I will make it available to the prime minister and to senior officials in any political or security issue.

I extend my gratitude to IDF commanders and soldiers, both reservists and in the regular army, to the Defense Ministry and IDF Intelligence personnel, for helping me function successfully as minister of defense, and I am proud of the privilege of heading such a fine group. I thank the prime minister and my colleagues in the government, and my devoted friends in the Atzma'ut party who gave me much strength to cope daily with numerous arduous tasks, for years and years. Thanks to all.

In the coming three months we will continue to tackle together all challenges we are facing, and I promise you that there will be many challenges. I would also like to thank all of you for coming here on such short notice to cover my announcement. Now, I would like to answer your questions.