



Seminar participants outside the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center in Ramat Hasharon, June 2023. Photo: Courtesy of AFICC.

FEATURE Jewish Diaspora

Diaspora leaders take deep dive into Israeli intelligence world

The American Friends of the Israel Intelligence Heritage Center holds its first high-level seminar.

ROLENE MARKS

June 29, 2023

US. Jewish leaders engaged firsthand with experts from the Israeli intelligence community recently during a six-day seminar hosted by the American Friends of the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center.

The seminar was not confined to meeting rooms at the center in Ramat Hasharon, north of Tel Aviv. Participants traveled throughout the country to gain a better geopolitical and practical perspective.

They visited IDF bases, the northern border and a cross-border attack tunnel, which Hezbollah has used. They also attended briefings from the Military Intelligence Directorate, Mossad and Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) and visited a military monitoring center at the Gaza and Sinai borders, Iron Dome battery bases and Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip.

Participants were able to gain a better understanding of the threats posed by Iran and its terrorist proxies and see how close they are to Israel's borders and civilian communities.

"This is our first major seminar," said Igal Zaidenstein, president of AFIICC. "We believe that Israel cannot survive without the Diaspora and the Diaspora cannot survive without a strong Israel."

"We want to strengthen the bonds between U.S. Jewry and Israel," he added. "We are bringing experts at the highest levels of the intelligence establishment to address some of the biggest security concerns facing us today and share our knowledge."

Zaidenstein launched the AFIICC in November 2022 to engage in outreach to the U.S. Jewish community.

The IICC, a nonprofit which commemorates fallen intelligence community members, operates a terrorism information center and an intelligence methodology research institute, and houses two exhibitions.

The seminar participants joined in the annual commemoration ceremony for the fallen of the Israeli intelligence community.



Seminar participants attend a briefing in the South of Israel, June 2023. Photo: Courtesy of AFIICC.

They also attended lectures on topics including artificial intelligence, big data and the new challenges facing the intelligence community. Information sharing between Israel's security organizations was of particular interest.

Former Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon spoke about intelligence and national policy. Maj. Gen. (res.) Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash, chairman of the

IICC and former head of the IDF Intelligence Directorate, also briefed the seminar participants.

“Israel’s intelligence history, achievements and values make us all proud and make Jews around the world feel connected to the Jewish state,” Brig. Gen. (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser, director of the IICC’s Institute for the Research of the Methodology of Intelligence, told JNS.

“This seminar provided an opportunity to hear from Israel’s best intel personnel and experience the unprecedented openness in information sharing between Israel and the Diaspora,” he added.

Kuperwasser called emerging technologies, such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and encryptions, “double-edged swords.”

“They can be used for both positive and negative purposes,” he said. “The landscape that we operate in is rapidly changing and we are open to hearing fresh angles on some of the challenges we face.”

“We really hope to encourage young Jewish leaders to be more connected to Israel,” Kuperwasser added. “This seminar was hopefully the start of many to come.”