#### **04242024 NEWS SPECIAL**

IDF ready to conquer Gaza's Rafah, awaiting government okay, says senior official Israeli generals said to meet Egyptian counterparts to coordinate evacuation of civilians from southern city, seen as last major Hamas redoubt in Strip



By Agencies, Emanuel Fabian and Tol Staff Today, 8:44 pm

A makeshift tent camp for displaced Palestinians in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on April 4, 2024. (Mohammed Abed/AFP)

The Israel Defense Forces has conducted all necessary preparations to take Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah and can launch an operation the moment it gets government approval, a senior Israeli defense official said Wednesday.

Israel deems Rafah the last Hamas bastion in the Gaza Strip and is poised to evacuate Palestinian civilians from there and assault Hamas holdouts, the unnamed official told the Reuters news agency,

which didn't specify whether the source was connected to the IDF.

A spokesperson for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government told the agency that Israel was "moving ahead" with a ground operation, but gave no timeline.

Meanwhile, multiple Israeli reports indicated that top Israeli security officials visited Egypt Wednesday to coordinate the planned offensive in Rafah.

The officials included IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi and Shin Bet head Ronen Bar, according to Channel 13 news. Axios reported that the officials had met Egypt's intelligence chief Abbas Kamel and Chief of Staff Osama Askar, amid fears in Cairo that an offensive could create a humanitarian catastrophe that will drive tens of thousands of Gazans to breach the border and enter Egypt.

Egypt, which Rafah abuts, has said it warned Israel against pushing into the city. Such a move, Egypt's State



Information Service said, "would lead to massive human massacres, losses [and] widespread destruction."

File: Shin Bet head Ronen Bar, center, speaks to IDF chief of staff Herzi Halevi, right, during a hostage rescue operation in southern Gaza's Rafah, February 12, 2024. (Shin Bet)

Israel says victory in the Gaza war, which began with Hamas's cross-border massacre and kidnapping spree on October 7, is impossible without taking Rafah, crushing the Palestinian terror group and recovering any hostages there.

The IDF said earlier Wednesday that it was readying to deploy two reserve brigades for missions in the Gaza Strip, apparently as part of its plan to remove

Hamas from Rafah.

The 679th "Yiftah" Armored Brigade and the 2nd "Carmeli" Infantry Brigade, which had been operating on the northern border, were set to take responsibility for areas of central Gaza that have remained under Israeli military control since troops largely pulled back from other areas of the Strip earlier this month, according to an Army Radio report.

The move will free up Nahal Brigade troops currently holding the central corridor to join the rest of the 162nd Division in preparing for future operations, including planned offensives in Rafah and central Gaza, military sources said.



Troops operate in Gaza in an undated photo released by the military for publication on April 24, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

Israeli officials said Hamas has six remaining battalions in the Gaza Strip, including four in the southern city of Rafah: Yabna (South); Shaboura (North); Tel Sultan (West); and East Rafah. Two more Hamas battalions remain in central Gaza, in the Nuseirat and Deir al-Balah camps.

The IDF has so far operated across northern Gaza and Gaza City, in some parts of central Gaza, and in southern Gaza's Khan Younis, saying it has dismantled the 18 Hamas battalions there.

The **fighting has pushed an estimated million displaced Gazan civilians into Rafah**, with the international community, including the United States, warning that an offensive in the city could significantly worsen an already dire humanitarian crisis.

"I have to make a decision whether to leave Rafah because my mother and I are afraid an invasion could happen suddenly and we won't get time to escape," said Aya, 30, who has been living temporarily in the city with her family in a school.

She said that **some families recently moved to a refugee camp in coastal Al-Mawasi**, but their tents caught fire when tank shells landed nearby. "Where do we go?"



Girls peer through the hole left by a destroyed window from a building in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on April 24, 2024. (Mohammed Abed/AFP)

While not discussing specific battle plans, the Israeli military has increasingly signaled readiness to move on Rafah, after pushing off the offensive for over a month to allow for truce talks aimed at freeing the 133 hostages that are believed to still be held in the Strip and to hear out US concerns about its plans for fighting in the city.

"Hamas was hit hard in the northern sector. It was also hit hard in the center of the Strip. And soon it will be hit

hard in Rafah, too," Brig. Gen. Itzik Cohen, commander of the 162nd Division operating in Gaza, told the Kan public broadcaster in an interview aired on Tuesday.

"Hamas should know that when the IDF goes into Rafah, it would do best to raise its hands in surrender. Rafah will not be the Rafah of today... There won't be munitions there. And there won't be hostages there," he said.

Israel has procured tens of thousands of tents for Palestinian civilians it intends to evacuate from Rafah in the coming weeks, Israeli sources said on Wednesday.



After weeks of talks with the US about civilian safeguards, the Defense Ministry has bought 40,000 tents, each with the capacity for 10 to 12 people, for Palestinians relocated from Rafah, Israeli government sources said.

Video circulated online appeared to show rows of square white tents going up in Khan Younis, a city some 5 kilometers (3 miles) from Rafah. Images from <u>satellite</u> company Maxar showing multiple tent camps on Khan Younis land that had been vacant on April 7.

This handout satellite image courtesy of Maxar Technologies shows tent camps for displaced Palestinians in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on April 23, 2024. (Satellite image ©2024 Maxar Technologies/AFP)

Government sources said Netanyahu's war cabinet planned to meet in the coming two weeks to authorize civilian evacuations — expected to take around a month — as the first stage of the Rafah sweep. The Defense Ministry and Netanyahu's office had no immediate comment.

Israel believes Hamas leaders and many operatives are hiding in Rafah, and also that many of the remaining 129 hostages kidnapped in the Hamas-led October 7 atrocities are being held in the city.

https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-ready-to-conquer-gazas-rafah-awaiting-government-okay-says-senior-official/

#### IDF deploying two reserve brigades to Gaza as Israel girds for Rafah offensive

Troops to reportedly secure central corridor and US aid pier, allowing soldiers who are there now to prepare for planned push into southern city; 40,000 tents for evacuees procured

By Emanuel Fabian and Agencies Today, 2:42 pm



Troops operate in Gaza in an undated photo released by the military for publication on April 24, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

The Israel Defense Forces on Wednesday said it was readying to deploy two reserve brigades for missions in the Gaza Strip, as the military appeared to move ahead with plans for an offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah as it seeks to remove the Hamas terror group from its last major redoubt in the enclave.

The 679th "Yiftah" Armored Brigade and the 2nd "Carmeli" Infantry Brigade, which had been operating on the northern border, were set to take

responsibility for areas of central Gaza that have remained under Israeli military control since troops largely pulled back from other areas of the Strip earlier this month, according to an Army Radio report.

The move will free up Nahal Brigade troops currently holding the central corridor to join the rest of the 162nd Division in preparing for future operations, including planned offensives in Rafah and central Gaza, military sources have said.

The IDF said the two reserve brigades "prepared in recent weeks for their mission in the Gaza Strip."

They "practiced battle techniques and learned the main insights and lessons from fighting and maneuvering in the Gaza Strip so far," the military said.

The mobilized brigades were to be placed under the 99th Division. During the first few months of the IDF's ground offensive, the division had been tasked with the so-called Netzarim corridor in the central Gaza Strip, an east-west route.

One of the brigades will again be deployed to the east-west belt dividing the Strip in two, while the second will secure a pier being built by the <u>United States</u> on central Gaza's coast aimed at boosting deliveries of humanitarian aid, according to Army Radio.



The corridor, built around a road south of Gaza City, enables the IDF to carry out raids in northern and central Gaza while allowing Israel to control access to the north for Palestinians seeking to return after fleeing south

An IDF reservist prepares equipment ahead of a drill, in a handout image released on April 24, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

Victory in the Gaza war, launched after Hamas's cross-border massacre and kidnapping spree on October 7, is impossible without taking Rafah, crushing the terror group, and recovering any hostages there. Israel has said.

Israeli officials have said Hamas has six remaining battalions in the Gaza Strip, including four in the southern city of Rafah: Yabna (South), Shaboura (North), Tel Sultan (West), and East Rafah. Two more Hamas battalions remain in central Gaza, in the Nuseirat and Deir al-

Balah camps.

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The fighting has pushed an estimated million displaced Gazan civilians into Rafah, with the international community, including the US, warning that an offensive in the city could significantly worsen an already dire humanitarian crisis.

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Government sources said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war cabinet planned to meet in the coming two weeks to authorize civilian evacuations — expected to take around a month — as the first stage of the Rafah sweep.

The Defense Ministry and Netanyahu's office had no immediate comment.

Citing Israeli and Egyptian officials, The Wall Street Journal reported earlier this week that **the Israeli** plans envision that the first two to three weeks of the operation in Rafah will consist of evacuating civilians, in coordination with the US, Egypt and other Arab countries.

The evacuation will reportedly involve moving civilians to the nearby city of Khan Younis, among other areas in Gaza, where Israel will set up shelters with tents, food and medical facilities.

After that, the officials said the IDF would gradually move troops into Rafah and target areas where it believes Hamas leaders and operatives are hiding.

Israel also believes that many of the remaining 129 hostages kidnapped in the Hamas-led October 7 atrocities are being held in Rafah.

The war in Gaza erupted when 3,000 terrorists poured across the border with Israel on October 7 in an unprecedented Hamas-led attack that resulted in the deaths of 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapped 253.

The ensuing Israeli offensive has killed over 33,000 people, according to the Hamas-run Gaza health ministry. This figure cannot be independently verified and includes over 13,000 terror operatives Israel says it has killed since the beginning of the war. <a href="https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-deploying-two-reserve-brigades-to-gaza-as-israel-girds-for-rafah-offensive/">https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-deploying-two-reserve-brigades-to-gaza-as-israel-girds-for-rafah-offensive/</a>

# 'Stay strong, survive': Parents of hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin respond to video of son

Hamas periodically publishes videos of hostages to increase pressure on the Israeli government and as a form of psychological warfare.

By TZVI JOFFRE APRIL 24, 2024 17:05 **Updated:** APRIL 24, 2024 21:20



A photo of Hersh Goldberg-Polin next to a screenshot from a video released by Hamas showing him in captivity. (photo credit: screenshot)

Hamas published a propaganda video showing Israeli-American hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin on Wednesday on their Telegram channel. Warning: The content of the video included in this article may be graphic for some viewers. Viewer discretion is advised.

The Jerusalem Post cannot confirm the date or authenticity of the video. The Goldberg-Polin family has given permission to Israeli

#### media outlets to share the video.

Hamas has periodically published videos of hostages in an attempt to increase pressure on the Israeli government to agree to its terms and as a form of psychological warfare. In the past, hostages have been forced to read from scripts prepared by the terrorist organization.

Goldberg-Polin seriously injured in Hamas's assault on Nova Music Festival

In the video, Goldberg-Polin notes that he was hanging out with friends at the Nova Music Festival when Hamas attacked the festival and kidnapped him and his friends, countering claims that Hamas leaders have made in the past that they did not target civilians.

Warning: The content of the video below may be graphic for some viewers. Viewer discretion is advised.

An undated propaganda video published by Hamas showing Hersh Goldberg-Polin. (Credit: Hamas)

Goldberg-Polin was seriously injured by a grenade during the Hamas assault on the Nova

Music Festival and lost his left hand.

"On Friday evening, our family gathered to celebrate Simchat Torah," said John Goldberg-Polin, Goldberg-Polin's father, in October. "Hersh went to a party around 11:00 at night. We wished him a good time. On Saturday morning, we heard alarms and realized something serious had occurred. My wife checked her phone. At 08:00 in the morning, we received a message from Hersh saying, 'I love you.' Ten minutes later, he sent another message 'I'm sorry.'"

Rachel Goldberg, Goldberg-Polin's mother, has been a central activist in the worldwide effort to push for the release of the 133 Israelis still being held hostage by Hamas in Gaza.

Goldberg-Polin's parents: 'We love you, stay strong, survive'

Goldberg-Polin's parents published a statement on Wednesday, saying, "Seeing the video of Hersh today is overwhelming. We are relieved to see him alive, but we are also concerned about his health and wellbeing as well as that of all the other hostages and all of those suffering in this region."

Hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin's parents: "Seeing the video of Hersh today is overwhelming. We are relieved to see him alive but we are also concerned about his health and wellbeing as well as that of all the other hostages and all of those suffering in this region. We are here...

pic.twitter.com/MQwZITbGSO

— Eylon Levy (@EylonALevy) April 24, 2024

"We are here today with a plea to all of the leaders of the parties who have been negotiating to date. This includes Qatar, Egypt, the United States, Hamas and Israel: be brave, lean in, seize this moment and get a deal done to reunite all of us with our loved ones and end the suffering in this region," said his parents. "Hersh, if you can hear this, we heard your voice today for the first time in 201 days and if you can hear us, we are telling you, we love you, stay strong, survive."

Biden administration received video two days ago

The Biden administration received the video on Monday, two days before Hamas published it to the public, and officials got in contact with Goldberg-Polin's family right after, a US official told CNN. [That seems rather strange the "Bi-Dum" in the US gets this video before the media or Israeli government would get it. Is the DC group of trolls consorting with Hamas more than we think????? rdb

The FBI's Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell is examining the video for any potential evidence and information about Goldberg-Polin and where he's being held captive, according to the official.

Hostage Families Forum: 'We cannot afford to waste any more time'

The Hostages and Missing Families Forum stressed after the publication of the video that "for more than 200 days, 133 hostages have been held captive by Hamas, enduring daily physical, sexual, and psychological torment."

"Hersh's cry is the collective cry of all the hostages - their time is rapidly running out. With each passing day, the fear of losing more innocent lives grows stronger," added the Forum. "We cannot afford to waste any more time; the hostages must be the top priority. All the hostages must be brought home - those alive to begin the process of rehabilitation, and those murdered for a dignified burial."

"This distressing video serves as an urgent call to take swift and decisive action to resolve this horrific humanitarian crisis and ensure the safe return of our loved ones."

Tikva Forum of hostage families calls on gov't to increase pressure on Hamas

Tikva Forum, one of the two central groups of hostage families, responded to the video on Wednesday afternoon, saying, "This video is another signal that Hamas is undeterred and wants to abuse us, the families of the hostages."

"Our hearts go out to the Goldberg-Polin family, and we grieve with them for the cruelty and disgust of Hamas," said the Forum, urging media outlets "not to cooperate with the Nazi propaganda videos."

"We expect the prime minister and the War Cabinet to stop shuffling and start using significant levers of pressure that will bring back Hirsch and the rest of the hostages to their homes as soon as possible," said the Tikva Forum. "There are many pressure levers for the return of the hostages that have not been used, such as the annexation of territories from the Gaza Strip, the cessation of 'humanitarian' aid, the occupation of the Philadelphi Corridor, and more."

Some anti-government <u>protest groups</u> affiliated with friends of Goldberg-Polin announced that they would hold a demonstration in front of the Prime Minister's Residence in Jerusalem on Wednesday afternoon in order to demand that the government work harder for the release of the hostages. <a href="https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-798476">https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-798476</a>

Hamas chief Sinwar exited tunnels, met with terrorists aboveground - report The Hostage and Missing Families Forum said they'd found that the reports about Sinwar's exit from the tunnels were "reliable."

By <u>JERUSALEM POST STAFF</u> APRIL 24, 2024 15:19 **Updated:** APRIL 24, 2024 16:33

Hamas's chief in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, exited the terrorist movement's tunnels and met with the movement's forces aboveground recently, a senior source in Hamas told Al-Araby Al-Jadeed on Wednesday.

Sinwar "recently inspected areas that witnessed clashes between the resistance and the occupation army, and met some of the movement's fighters on the ground and not in the tunnels," said the source.



The source claimed that Sinwar is "not isolated from reality" where he's hiding, adding that "talk that Sinwar is isolated in the tunnels is nothing but a claim on the part of Netanyahu and his agencies to cover up his failure to achieve the goals declared to the Israeli street and to his allies."

Yahya Sinwar highlighted in a video published by the IDF on February 13, 2024 (credit: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

The Hamas source also denied reports that Hamas had changed its demands to only being willing to release 20 hostages instead of the 40 originally discussed in the first phase of any agreement. The source stated that while it's not possible to "accurately

determine the number of living hostages," it is "certain" that the number is higher than the number being cited in some media reports.

The source claimed that Hamas has about 30 IDF and Shin Bet officers and that these hostages are being kept in "highly secured places, far from the hands of the occupation, and it is impossible to reach them under any circumstances."

Hostage families say they've found claims Sinwar emerged from tunnels are 'reliable'

The Hostage and Missing Families Forum announced in response to the report that intelligence sources had found that the report that Sinwar emerged from the tunnels under Gaza was "reliable."

The picture of Sinwar in the streets of Gaza, while the hostages languish in basements, is the picture of Israeli failure," The Hostage and Missing Families Forum said.

Former Shin Bet officer downplays reports Sinwar exited tunnels

Micah Kobi, a former senior Shin Bet officer who interrogated Sinwar back when Sinwar was still in prison in Israel, told Maariv that "theoretically, there is a possibility that Sinwar is taking advantage of the IDF's shuffling and the withdrawal of most of the forces from the Strip, for his freer movement while commanding his fighters."

"Hamas' discourse in the media, and especially the report on Sinwar's exit from the tunnels, is nothing more than media spin," insisted Kobi. "They now know that the highest probability is that the IDF will enter Rafah, and therefore, through false information, they are trying to confuse us and divert us from our main goals there."

"Always before a military or political move, every time Israel declares a military intention, Hamas tries to cloud our view. Their media 'spins' are well known; this is Hamas' culture of lies that wants us to act contrary to our common sense. In the end, the research elements in the army know which statements should be given importance - and which statements are false," added the former Shin Bet officer.

Kobi also denied the Hamas source's claims about the number of hostages who are IDF and Shin Bet officers, saying that they are "not at all accurate and incorrect." <a href="https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-798454">https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-798454</a>

IDF hits 40 Hezbollah sites; Gallant says group's south Lebanon command decimated Fighter jets, artillery target weapon depots, assets in Ayta ash-Shab amid incessant attacks, including missile fire on Avivim

By Emanuel Fabian Today, 5:18 pm

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on Wednesday claimed that the military had killed half of Hezbollah's commanders in southern Lebanon, as the Israel Defense Forces carried out a large wave of strikes against dozens of sites belonging to the terror group.

"Half of the Hezbollah commanders in south Lebanon have been eliminated... and the other half hide and abandon south Lebanon to IDF operations," Gallant said, after holding an assessment at the Northern Command headquarters in Safed with the chief of the command, Maj. Gen. Ori Gordin, and other top officers.

He said Israel's main goal in the north was to return tens of thousands of Israelis displaced by Hezbollah's daily attacks to their homes.

"We are dealing with a number of alternatives in order to establish this matter, and the coming period will be decisive in this regard," Gallant said.

As the defense minister toured the Northern Command, the IDF said some 40 Hezbollah targets in the town of Ayta ash-Shab were hit within just several minutes by fighter jets and artillery shelling.

The wave of strikes came hours after the terror group fired anti-tank missiles at a community in northern Israel.



Defense Minister Yoav Gallant holds an assessment with the chief of the IDF Northern Command in Safed, Maj. Gen. Ori Gordin, and other top officers, April 24, 2024. (Ariel Hermoni/Defense Ministry)

The military said the targets included weapon depots and other assets belonging to Hezbollah, and charged that Ayta ash-Shab was used by the group for "terror" and that it places dozens of its sites in the area.

In a statement, the IDF said the strikes were "part of the effort to destroy the organization's infrastructure in the border area," and not a response to any specific attack.

Ahead of the strikes, the military issued an unusual statement announcing that it had begun to attack Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon. Amid the ongoing war, the military has generally announced strikes in Lebanon only after they have been completed. The announcement indicated that the strikes were on a much larger scale than usual.

Hours before the wave of strikes, Hezbollah fired several anti-tank guided missiles at the northern community of Avivim, striking two homes and causing a fire.

The Merom HaGalil Regional Council, which has jurisdiction over Avivim, said the missiles **caused no injuries**.

**Hezbollah claimed the attack in a statement,** saying it "targeted a building in Avivim in which 'enemy soldiers' were present."

The missile attack on Avivim came after a wave of overnight Israeli Air Force strikes against Hezbollah positions in Lebanon, following repeated attacks by the Iran-backed terror group on northern Israel.

מיעוד פגיעת טילי הנ"ט באביבים <u>rubih67</u>

(צילום: מועצה אזורית מרום הגליל)pic.twitter.com/lzglkKF7IJ

— כאן חדשות (@kann\_news) April 24, 2024

The overnight strikes targeted a rocket launcher in the town of Tayr Harfa after it was used in an attack on the northern community of Shomera on Tuesday night, the IDF said.



The IDF said additional targets included Hezbollah infrastructure in Markaba, a building in Ayta ash-Shab and an observation post in Marwahin.

Troops also shelled areas near Chihine and Kfarchouba with artillery to "remove threats," the military added.

Smoke billows from the site of an Israeli airstrike on the village of Majdal Zoun near Lebanon's southern border on April 21, 2024. (Kawnat Haju/AFP)

Since October 8, Hezbollah-led forces have attacked Israeli communities and military posts along the border on a near-daily basis, with the group saying it is doing so to support Gaza amid the war there.

So far, the skirmishes on the border have resulted in eight civilian deaths on the Israeli side, as well as the deaths of 11 IDF soldiers and reservists. There have also been several attacks from Syria, without any injuries.

Hezbollah has named 287 members who have been killed by Israel during the ongoing skirmishes, mostly in Lebanon, but some also in Syria. In Lebanon, another 54 operatives from other terror groups, a Lebanese soldier and at least 60 civilians, three of whom were journalists, have been killed.

Israel has threatened to go to war to force Hezbollah away from the border if it does not retreat and continues to threaten northern communities, from where some 70,000 people were evacuated to avoid the fighting. <a href="https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-hits-40-hezbollah-sites-gallant-says-groups-south-lebanon-command-decimated/">https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-hits-40-hezbollah-sites-gallant-says-groups-south-lebanon-command-decimated/</a>

Iran tried to cover up damage of alleged Israeli strikes - report Iran appears to have replaced a damaged radar with a different, incompatible radar in order to hide the impact of the strike.



By JERUSALEM POST STAFF APRIL 24, 2024 21:43

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting with a group of academic elites and scientific talents in Tehran, Iran October 19, 2022 (photo credit: Office of the Iranian Supreme Leader/WANA/Handout via Reuters)

Iran tried to cover up the damage caused by the alleged Israeli airstrike near Isfahan last week, satellite imagery shared with the Economist and the Institute for Science and International Security showed on Wednesday.

The alleged Israeli strike targeted an S-300 air defense battery near Isfahan in central Iran in response to a drone and missile attack launched by Iran against Israel earlier this month.

NEW: The Institute acquired high-resolution Airbus Pleiades Neo satellite images of Iran's Eighth Shekari Air Base taken shortly after the reported Israeli attack on the S-300 missile defense system deployed at the base.https://t.co/ly57SkvfRy pic.twitter.com/kKFN4lpomH

- Inst for Science (@TheGoodISIS) April 23, 2024

While at first, Iran claimed no damage had been caused in the alleged Israeli strike, satellite imagery shared by Planet Labs and the Institute for Science and International Security later revealed that the 30N6E2 Tombstone radar used by the S-300 air defense battery had been destroyed in the attack.

On Tuesday, the Institute for Science and International Security shared two high-resolution Airbus satellite images from April 19 and 20, showing the targeted location in the Eighth Shekari Air



Base, where four missile launchers and a mobile radar were deployed.

The S-300 missile system is seen during the National Army Day parade ceremony in Tehran, Iran, April 17, 2024. (credit: Majid Asgaripour/WANA via Reuters)

According to the Institute for Science and International Security, the imagery appears to show that the vehicle the radar was on was hit and likely caught fire. Marks near the vehicle appear to be from extinguishing fluids used to fight the fire.

After the attack, a covering of some sort was placed on top of the mobile radar. On April 20, a new vehicle was placed where the radar used to be, possibly a replacement radar, although it doesn't seem to be the same type as the one that was damaged.

Iran replaced damaged radar with incompatible radar to save face

Chris Biggers, an imagery analyst who used to work for the US's National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, told the Economist that the Tombstone radar had been replaced with a 9616e "Cheese board" radar, which is not interchangeable with the Tombstone radar, meaning the battery cannot operate with it.

"It's a case of <u>denial and deception</u> to suggest the site is still operational," said Biggers to the *Economist*. The targeted site is a key part of air <u>defenses for nuclear sites</u> in both Isfahan and Natanz, according to the Institute for Science and International Security. <a href="https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/iran-tried-to-cover-up-damage-of-alleged-israeli-strikes-report-798502">https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/iran-tried-to-cover-up-damage-of-alleged-israeli-strikes-report-798502</a>

#### Iranian rapper sentenced to death over popular protest songs

Rapper Toomaj Salehi songs supported months of protests in Iran in 2022, and he has 20 days to appeal the ruling

<u>Reuters</u> 14:14

An Iranian revolutionary court has sentenced well-known Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi to death for charges linked to Iran's 2022-23 unrest, his lawyer told the Iranian newspaper Sharq on Wednesday.



a Supreme Court ruling.

Salehi in his songs supported months of protests in Iran in 2022 sparked by the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman arrested for allegedly wearing an "improper" hijab.

Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi

Salehi was initially arrested in October 2022 after making public statements in support of the nationwide protests.

He was sentenced in 2023 to six years and three months in prison but avoided a death sentence due to

"Branch One of the Revolutionary Court of (the central city of) Isfahan in an unprecedented move, did not enforce the Supreme Court's ruling .... and sentenced Salehi to the harshest punishment," his lawyer Amir Raisian told Sharq.

The Iranian judiciary has not confirmed the sentence yet. Salehi has 20 days to appeal the ruling. https://www.ynetnews.com/article/skzue6ub0

Iranian Revolutionary Guard official missing since 2007 defected to US, report says Seventeen years after Ali-Reza Asgari vanished in Turkey, opposition channel Iran International reports he's now living in US under CIA witness protection program

Itamar Eichner 11:55

Ali-Reza Asgari, a former senior Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps official who disappeared in 2007, has resurfaced in the United States under an assumed identity, London-based opposition channel Iran International reported Wednesday, citing three U.S. intelligence sources and a senior European diplomatic source.



Asgari, who also served as deputy defense minister and was responsible for Hezbollah's military buildup, reportedly resides in the U.S. as part of the CIA's witness protection program. The sources confirmed that Asgari changed his state of residence in the U.S. several times over the past 17 years.

Ali-Reza Asgari

Asgari was recruited by U.S. intelligence in Thailand in 2005 and played a central role in steering the U.S. away from plans to

attack Iran over its nuclear program in 2007. He identified Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh as the key figure leading the mullah regime's military and nuclear program. Fakhrizadeh was assassinated in 2020.

Asgari disappeared in Turkey in early 2007. Since then, various reports about his fate have circulated in the media, including claims that he defected or was abducted by Western spy agencies. The Iranian regime threatened to retaliate for his disappearance and abduct Americans and Israelis on European soil.

In March 2007, a senior U.S. official told the Washington Post that Israel was behind Asgari's defection to the West. Official sources in Jerusalem denied Israel's involvement in the disappearance of the Iranian official. Senior officials in then-prime minister Ehud Olmert's office clarified that they "learned about the issue through the media."

Over the years, Asgari's family dismissed reports suggesting he defected to the West, claiming instead that he was abducted by foreign agents. In 2007, the newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat reported that Asgari was residing in a northern European country, where Americans and other Western intelligence operatives interrogated him. <a href="https://www.ynetnews.com/article/hyrdzhuwr">https://www.ynetnews.com/article/hyrdzhuwr</a>

## Qatari official: Jews are murderers of prophets; October 7 is only a 'prelude'

Essa Al-Nassr, member of the Gulf state's legislative body and a brigadier general at the Emiri Guard, gets ovation as he makes bigoted accusations against Jews and promises the end of Israel.

By OHAD MERLIN APRIL 23, 2024 21:24 Updated: APRIL 24, 2024 00:58



Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani delivers an annual speech during the opening of the 52nd session of the Shura advisory council in Doha, Qatar, October 24, 2023. (photo credit: Amiri Diwan/Handout via REUTERS)

Essa Al-Nassr, a member of the Qatari legislative Shura council, spoke on Monday at an Arab League session, expressing antisemitic remarks and inciting to violence and terrorism.

"There will be no peace nor negotiations with the Zionist entity for one reason: because their mentality does not recognize negotiations, but rather only... breaking promises and lying... They only recognize one thing, which is killings; since they are killers of

prophets."

The accusation of Jews as 'killers of prophets' is a well-known antisemitic trope made in several Islamic texts, which is understood by many, including Al-Nassr himself, as a charge against the entire Jewish people valid for eternity.

This allegation is reminiscent and perhaps reflective of the charge of deicide by which Jews were accused in classical Christian texts.

In addition to the inherent antisemitic rhetoric featured in such allegations, the projection of real or unreal wrongdoings by Jews of ancient times onto the modern State of Israel is viewed as another type of antisemitism practiced nowadays in many religious and nationalistic circles.



Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani makes statements to the media with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in Doha, Qatar, October 13, 2023. (credit: Jacquelyn Martin/Reuters)

Al-Nassr was not satisfied with these comments alone, as he went on in his speech to commend the "Flood of Al-Aqsa operation" (Hamas's name for the October 7th massacre), claiming that this was only a "prelude to the annihilation of the corruption of the 'second Zionist entity' upon earth."

He then referred to a presumably Godly promise for the ingathering of Jews in the land of Palestine as preparation for the 'battle of the next generation,' which according to Al-Nassr, would bring an end to the Jewish state.

This excerpt refers to yet another religious-nationalistic view salient in Islamist circles which regards the ingathering of Jews in the Holy Land as part of a Godly plan to an epic battle of Muslims against Jews in which Jews as a whole would suffer a deadly blow.

According to the Shura council's website, Al-Nassr is a Brigadier General at the Guard for Intelligence and Security of the Emiri Guard, and serves as a member of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee, and the Cultural and Media Affairs Committee.

#### Qatar's role in war against Jews

The Qatari Shura council of which Al-Nassr is a member, is comprised of 45 members, 15 of which are directly appointed by the Emir. Members of the council hold very limited powers, which allow them, inter alia, to oversee the country's budget and question the Prime Minister about his policies, provided that two thirds of the council agree.

In 2021, the <u>Qatari regime</u> passed a controversial election law which effectively denied the right of an entire clan, the Aal Murrah clan, to running in the elections, sparking a short-lived and very rare wave of protest from members of the clan, which in turn led to the arrest of seven clan activists and oppression of the movement.

The Qatari regime made many headlines in the past six months due to their patronage and hosting of Hamas, a designated terror organization in many countries which led the October 7th massacre, featuring the murder, kidnapping and sexual assault of over 1500 Israelis and foreign citizens.

The small Gulf country has also endeavored in the last months to act as a mediator between Israel and the terror organization in an attempt to broker deals in which Israeli citizens aged 1-86 would be released from captivity in exchange for Palestinians convicted in various terrorist actions, from murder to rioting to incitement.

This is not the first time in which Qatar is found as a promoter of antisemitism, as a March 2023 report by the Zachor institute showed how its mouthpiece and state-owned channel Al-Jazeera has reportedly propagated conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial and antisemitic tropes on its various outlets, mainly the Arabic-speaking ones. <a href="https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/qatari-official-jews-are-murderers-of-prophets-october-7th-is-only-a-prelude-798358">https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/qatari-official-jews-are-murderers-of-prophets-october-7th-is-only-a-prelude-798358</a> If this is a common attitude in Qatar there is no way they can be a part of any negotiation team working on Hamas. rdb

# US secretly shipped ATACMS missiles to Ukraine - media

President Biden personally approved the delivery, an anonymous official has said 24 Apr, 2024 19:00

Washington secretly sent Kiev an unspecified number of longer-range ATACMS missiles last month, multiple US outlets reported on Wednesday, citing an anonymous US government official.

The Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS), with a range up to 300 kilometers, were included in the \$300-million package of military aid approved by President Joe Biden on March 12, according to the official, who spoke with Reuters, Politico and the New York Times, among others.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the source said that Ukraine used the missiles for the first time last Wednesday, targeting a Russian airfield about 165 kilometers (103 miles) from the front line.

On the morning of April 17, Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky said his forces had attacked the airbase in Dzhankoy, Crimea. The Russian Defense Ministry has not commented on that claim.

Zelensky has long clamored for longer-range missiles. According to the anonymous official cited in Reuters' report, the Pentagon was initially opposed, but changed its mind after Russia used ballistic missiles allegedly supplied by North Korea and began targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

"We warned Russia about those things," the official said. "They renewed their targeting."

Biden was advised to send the longer-range missiles by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Charles Q Brown, the official said.

The **ATACMS** were acquired from Lockheed Martin, rather than from the Pentagon stockpiles, and paid for by the "savings" discovered in March, when several military contracts were reportedly delivered for less than the original bid value.

According to the official, Biden instructed his aides to include the ATACMS in the package but to keep it secret, so as to preserve Ukraine's "operational security and the element of surprise."

**Ukraine first received mid-range ATACMS last September**. The Russian military quickly began shooting them down, however, thwarting Zelensky's plan to damage or destroy the Crimean Bridge.

"This is yet another mistake on the part of the United States," Russian President Vladimir Putin said last October, explaining that, had Washington refrained from sending the missiles, it could have later positioned itself as the "good guy" for its attempts to prevent needless casualties.

With Russia upgrading its air defenses to intercept the ATACMS, their arrival will not have a major impact on combat operations, and will only "prolong the agony" of Ukraine, Putin explained. "That's why it's a mistake." <a href="https://www.rt.com/news/596527-atacms-secret-delivery-ukraine/">https://www.rt.com/news/596527-atacms-secret-delivery-ukraine/</a>

## Pentagon details massive shipment of military supplies to Ukraine

The package, which contains assorted ammunition and hardware, comes after US President Joe Biden signed the long-stalled foreign aid bill

24 Apr, 2024 18:21



155mm artillery shells that are ready to be shipped are stored at the Scranton Army Ammunition Plant in Pennsylvania, US on April 12, 2023. © Getty Images / Hannah Beier

The US Department of Defense has pledged a massive new \$1 billion aid package for Kiev. The announcement comes shortly after President Joe Biden signed a long-stalled foreign aid bill on Wednesday, which includes \$61 billion for Ukraine.

The "significant new security assistance" package covers Ukraine's "critical security and defense needs," the Pentagon has said in a statement. The upcoming delivery includes

assorted ammunition, namely 155mm and 105mm artillery shells, as well as 60mm mortar rounds, projectiles for HIMARS-family multiple rocket launchers, as well as various shoulder-mounted antitank launchers and small arms ammo.

The package also provides anti-aircraft capabilities, namely shoulder-launched Stinger missiles. The delivery will not include any munitions for Patriot anti-aircraft systems, including instead ship-borne RIM-7 Sea Sparrow and air-launched AIM-9M Sidewinder anti-aircraft missiles. The munitions have been adapted during the conflict for use with Soviet-era ground-based anti-aircraft systems under the so-called FrankenSAM program.

Ukraine is set to receive an unspecified amount of combat hardware, including Bradley infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), Humvees, and mine resistant ambush protected vehicles (MRAPs).

The delivery also includes various anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, as well as "demolitions munitions for obstacle clearing."

The package also apparently hints at ongoing preparations for the long-promised delivery of F-16 jets to Ukraine, containing such points as unspecified "precision aerial munitions" and "airfield support equipment."

The package comes after US legislators adopted a massive \$95-billion foreign aid package, that includes \$61 billion for Ukraine, after months of debate in Congress. The bill was signed into law by Biden earlier in the day, with the president stating the deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Ukraine were set to resume "in the next few hours."

According to unnamed US officials cited by AP, however, some contents of the package will indeed arrive on the frontline in a matter of days, while other items listed in the Pentagon's announcement could take longer. <a href="https://www.rt.com/news/596539-pentagon-ukraine-aid-shipment/">https://www.rt.com/news/596539-pentagon-ukraine-aid-shipment/</a>

#### More weapons for Kiev won't change battlefield dynamics – Kremlin

Remark from Dmitry Peskov comes after US Congress greenlit \$61-billion aid package for Ukraine following months of bickering

24 Apr, 2024 13:55



Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

The \$61-billion defense package recently approved by the US Congress will not change the situation on the battlefield in Ukraine's favor, according to Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov. Earlier this week, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said that Moscow's forces had seized an initiative in the Ukraine conflict.

On Saturday, the US House of Representatives passed the package valued at \$95 billion, the lion's share of which will go toward shoring up Ukraine. The Senate gave its thumbs-up to the legislation on Tuesday, with President Joe Biden expected to sign off on it on Wednesday. Several media outlets have reported that first batches of aid could be dispatched to Kiev within days.

Initially presented last fall, the package wallowed in limbo for months as Republican lawmakers blocked it in a drawn-out bid to squeeze concessions out of the Biden administration on US border-control policies.

Speaking to Russian media on Wednesday, Peskov stated that the "situation on the battlefield is too eloquent and unequivocal, but we never tire of repeating that all these new batches of weapons, which are likely ready by now, won't change the dynamics on the front line."

The Kremlin spokesperson also pointed out that Western media's and officials' narratives have "mutated" a lot over the past year. He explained that, while the general consensus in the West a year ago was that Russia's defeat was imminent, this later gave way to warnings that the Ukrainian government could fall, and eventually that more weapons deliveries could prevent this outcome.

Peskov emphasized that the US government has effectively been funneling billions of dollars into its own military industrial complex all along.

Speaking at a meeting with top Russian commanders on Monday, Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu announced that Moscow's forces had been making advances and have liberated several towns in Donbass in recent days.

He estimated Kiev's losses at half-a-million troops since the start of the conflict.

https://www.rt.com/russia/596509-peskov-us-aid-no-change-ukraine/

# Maps: Ukraine hits ATACMS strategic goals deep in Russia - Priority goals for Moscow, Kharkov, Sumi and Dniper

Changes in the Ukrainian War

New data in the Russian-Ukraine war is created by the sending of huge weapons systems to Kiev, including 300 km ATACMS missiles. Until now, Kiev has had variants of the ATACMS regular ballistic system with a range of 140 km.

The maps published by the Russians are revealing: The ATACMS missiles along with the SCALP EG/Storm Shadow cruise missiles that will equip the fighter jets that will receive Kiev, put within range the Rostov-on-Don, Bryansk, Kursk, Voronezh, parts of Krasnodar and the entire territory of Crimea.

This means there is no possibility of peace. The West is giving everything to prevent economic-social-military Russia and Moscow has no choice but to accelerate the creation of a demilitarized zone/occupation of Northern Ukraine to the Dnieper.

# What Russian areas are the Ukrainian Army hits with ATACMS

According to Russian experts, U.S. authorities will announce the transfer of long-range ATACMS missiles to Ukraine.

The ATACMS rocket is launched by the MLRS M142 HIMARS and M270 MLRS systems. The weight of the missile is about 2 tons and its range is from 140 to 300 kilometers.

If Ukraine receives 300-kilometer missiles, it will be able to hit several Russian regions.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces will be able to strike not only the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk, the Zaporizhya and Chersona regions, but also targets across the Crimean peninsula, Belgorod, Briansk, Kursk, Voronez, Rostov and individual areas of Krasnodar territory.

For example, the distance between Kramatorsk, controlled by the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and Rostov-on-Don is 219 km. The shortest distance between Kharkov and Voronez is about 280 km.

In this case, Ukrainian forces will be able to hit military and infrastructure facilities located in the listed areas, including military airports, military sites, power stations, logistics nodes and so on.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces are now bombing the territories of the Peninsula, Zaporizhya, Donetsk, Luhansk, as well as parts of Crimea with short-range missiles

The long-range ATACMS transfer could cause a lot of problems in Russia. In addition to military targets, Ukraine could hit tourism not only in Crimea but also in a significant part of the North Caucasus.

Parts of the Southeast and North Caucasus railways will be within the range of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which will harm the logistics of the Russian Armed Forces, as well as the transport of goods and passengers to the Black Sea coast.

The Crimean bridge, many cities and major targets in the European part of Russia will be threatened.

This means that the Russian Army will have to accelerate the attack on Kharkov and Sumi. Essentially, only if it pushes Ukraine behind the Dnieper will it be able to protect Rostov, Voronez, Kursk and the new territories it

#### **OP ED**

# This Post on the 'Progressive' Pro-Hamas Mob Absolutely Nails It



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

This righteous rant comes via <u>Commentary executive editor</u>, Abe Greenwald, who distilled so many key points into one social media post. The ignorance, moral rot, or outright bigotry required to ignore the questions and points he raises is actually quite disturbing -- especially because this sick worldview has become shockingly prevalent within so many of <u>our 'elite' institutions</u>. I <u>tweeted yesterday</u> that it's nearly impossible to reason with people who celebrate an actual genocidal terrorist massacre -- and shout the terrorists' genocidal slogans — then rationalize their subsequent insanity, bullying and bigotry as fighting a "genocide" that doesn't exist.

Some people are too radicalized and too far gone to reach. But I must believe there are others who may be nominally "pro-Palestine," or are not sure about how they feel, or might at least be somewhat open-minded, who are willing to willing to grapple with the challenges and arguments Greenwald raises below. Since <u>it's posted on Twitter/X</u>, I'll quote it in its entirety, and I recommend reading it twice (edited slightly for explicit language):

Why aren't the "protestors" demanding that the terrorist group Hamas release hostages and surrender? Literally none of them are calling for that. All the fury is aimed at Israel, none at the party that started the war with an act of mass slaughter and rape and that keeps it going with hostage-taking and human-shielding. Hamas has turned down every "ceasefire" offer. Why would pro-ceasefire activists support the side that refuses a ceasefire? Why would a supposedly anti-war movement overtly support the side of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hezbollah, the Houthis, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas, all of whom exist only to wage war? Why haven't these wonderful humanitarians mounted similar campaigns in response to actual genocides, such as those carried out against Muslims in China, Syria, Sudan, and Myanmar? Slaughters that have claimed many more innocent lives than the war in Gaza? I've screamed and written about these atrocities for years. Where were they? Why do protesters cite Hamas statistics as gospel? Why do they ignore the fact that most wars—especially those wars that have been overwhelmingly celebrated as righteous—have far worse civilian to combatant ratios than does the current war in Gaza? World War II comes to mind.

Why did they start protesting Israel immediately after October 7, before Israel even launched its ground invasion in Gaza? Why do people who would be apoplectic over the most microscopic indication of anti-black racism or Islamophobia downplay the flagrant and widespread violent anti-Semitism of these rallies as the unrepresentative behavior of "just a few jerks"? Have they not seen the total saturation of Hamas slogans at these events? Why are these protests growing larger, more active, and more violent at the moment that Gaza has been becalmed? Israel pulled out the majority of its troops weeks ago and the death toll dropped dramatically months before that (even by the bullsh\*t Hamas numbers). Why does a political movement that claims to believe in indigenous rights, immigration, gender-equality, refugee acceptance, democracy, and religious pluralism support a non-indigenous, conquering, theocratic tyranny of female servitude, murderous homophobia, religious intolerance, and totalitarian subjugation against a democratic state of an indigenous people that values equal rights and personal liberty?

And here's his catch-all answer that unquestionably applies to so many within the <u>explicitly pro-Hamas</u> ranks:

Because they're full of sh\*t. And f\*\*\* them. If Gazans ever know anything resembling freedom and peace—and that's a massive "if"—it will be because Israel broke the boot of Hamas and the Islamist oppressors that's been on their necks for countless generations. Am Yisrael chai. No mercy for terrorists and totalitarians.

To my point about the invented, <u>non-existent</u> Israeli "genocide" the Hamas crowd cites as their broad justification for all manner of odious sentiments and actions related to their hatred for Israel and its allies, there's this context, which Greenwald also references:

Scott Galloway (<u>@profgalloway</u>) defends Israel: "2,200 American servicemen killed at Pearl Harbor. We go on to kill 3.5 million Japanese, including 100,000 in one night. 2,800 Americans in 9/11. We go on to kill 400,000 people in Afghanistan and Iraq. We weren't accused of... <u>pic.twitter.com/HCNZnVEN9K</u>

— Tom Elliott (@tomselliott) April 23, 2024

The retort from some of the <u>anti-American hordes</u> would be, 'yes America is also a nasty, genocidal country.' Some might even toss in a, "death to America!" for good measure, as that's becoming all the rage. It's not just for Islamists overseas, or in Dearborn, anymore. It's for heavily white, COVID mask-wearing Communists

preparing to disrupt the Democratic National Convention. And it's for "activists" at major American universities. Death to America, and Go Blue:

NEW: <u>@UMich</u>'s new "Liberated Encampment Zone" is handing out pamphlets calling for "death to America" and a third intifada. H/T <u>@rubin\_a1</u> & <u>@jbis9051</u> <u>pic.twitter.com/5CiooMn2DH</u>

— Eitan Fischberger (@EFischberger) April 22, 2024

The damage control responses to the unhinged bigotry, menacing and violence we've seen afflicting various campuses around the country have involved (1) revolting 'both sides' equivalencies -- <u>Biden's Charlottesville moment</u> -- (2) outright gaslighting about anti-Semitism and violence, and (3) placing blame on outside agitators and interlopers meant to discredit an otherwise "<u>peaceful</u>" movement. They're *peaceful*, you see, because they wear shirts glorifying notorious murderous Communists, <u>erect signs</u> calling for another expanded round of 'Intifada' Jew-killing, <u>put up hagiography</u> of convicted terrorists, <u>publicly encourage</u> terrorists to murder Jewish students, and <u>commit assaults</u>. But aside from all that peace, all the trouble is caused by those terrible, allied "agitators" (with whom they also agree):

The talking points have gone out. It's all the fault of faceless agitators. https://t.co/HhKTJ7PZAw

— Bonchie (@bonchieredstate) April 23, 2024

As an aside, the Ferguson riots were sparked by a <u>destructive and debunked lie</u> about a police shooting <u>deemed justified</u> by even the Obama/Holder Department of Justice. Bush's <u>fellow anti-Semitic</u> Congresswoman Ilhan Omar (D-MN), whose daughter <u>we wrote about</u> earlier in the week, piled on this conspiratorial claim -- only to receive an absolutely epic response from a social media user. *Ouch:* 

— Guy Benson (@guypbenson) April 23, 2024

I'll leave you with a case study in divergent leadership and values:

It is not lost on people that while both sides have issues with antisemitism, these mobs and the accompanying harassment is only really occurring in areas dominated by radical progressives. <a href="https://t.co/Ohll3dioJH">https://t.co/Ohll3dioJH</a>

— AG (@AGHamilton29) April 22, 2024

 $\frac{https://townhall.com/tipsheet/guybenson/2024/04/24/the-best-rant-on-the-progressive-pro-hamas-mobs-moral-bankruptcy-and-hypocrisy-ive-seen-in-awhile-n2638179}{}$