



## Shimon Levinson (Lavi) Affair

### Preamble

Every counter-intelligence agency's nightmare is the existence of an agent (a spy) of a hostile entity at the heart of the state's intelligence community and in the vicinity of the state's high-ranking decision makers. Such an agent obtains accessibility to most sensitive information, including strategic plans, and is therefore liable to cause extensive strategic damage.

The case of Shimon Levinson (Lavi), a reserve military officer, a former army intelligence colonel, a former member of both ISA and Mossad as well as a chief security officer in the Prime Minister's Office, **was such a nightmare come-true.**

In April 1983, Mr. Levinson entered the Soviet Union's embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, and **offered his assistance to the Russians.** He was recruited and **operated by the Soviet intelligence agency and secret police, the KGB,** until his arrest in May 1991.

In the years he had been operated by the Russians, Levinson held intensive communication with his handlers, both by clandestine meetings in Europe and Moscow, and by means of clandestine communications: secret writing, radio transmissions, dead-letter drops, etc., through which he had transferred a great deal of critical information to his handlers.

Levinson stated in his interrogation, his **sole motive was his financial difficulties** and concerns about his family's future economical situation, and **not any ideological motives, nor any affiliation to the Soviet Union.** Throughout the seven years of his handling, Levinson received from his



Russian handlers 31,000 dollars, and has disrupted the ties once his financial situation improved (in the beginning of the 90's). Due to Levinson's varied background, his familiarity with and access to top secret information, he was considered one of the highest-ranking KGB agents in Israel, causing Israel the gravest intelligence scathe.

### [Levinson – chronicles of a spy](#)

Shimon Levinson was born in 1933 in Jerusalem. He was married +4. He was enlisted in the IDF in 1950 and has served there for more than 10 years in a variety of positions, such as:

- 1950 – 1953 – a member of the Israeli-Jordanian armistice committee.
- 1954 – an army attaché in Turkey (attained an honorary rank without attending an officers course).
- 1954-1960 – returned to the armistice committee, as a coordinator between the Intelligence Corps and the Jordanian army.
- 1960 – 1961 – participated in the vocational high course for intelligence, after which he had been appointed head of documentation section in the Military Intelligence Directorate

He left the military out of frustration for not having been promoted. For a year he was employed as CEO of the Government Coins and Medals Corporation, but was forced to resign after having submitted a false complaint on corruption and mismanagement.

In March 1963 Levinson was recruited by ISA and served in the Jerusalem field office as head of a security vetting team.

In 1965 he was transferred, at his request, to 'Mossad' where he was employed until March 1967 in credibility checks.

At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he returned in 1967 to the armistice committee, where he served until its nullification in July 1967.



Israeli Security Agency  
Shimon Levinson (Lavi) Affair

**He was later enrolled for the UN Liaison, and was subsequently promoted to commander of the unit until 1970. Upon finishing this term in the UN liaison, he returned to Mossad's liaison department, and has served for two years as head of an overseas station.**

**He was returned to Israel due to a security mishap he was responsible for, and was re-positioned as special assistant to head of special liaison in Mossad headquarters, where he worked until 1973. In July 1973 he was reposted as IDF liaison colonel to the UN until 1978 when he retired again, frustrated for not being promoted.**

**Levinson exploited the connections he developed with the UN and was appointed in 1979 in charge of UN war on drugs in Thailand, where he had served until June 1983. Near the end of his term of office in Thailand he ran into financial difficulties due to failing attempts to undertake private business.**

**In 1984 Levinson tried to rejoin Mossad again but was rejected in light of negative information regarding his character and traits.**

**In May 1985, after interference by close high-ranking acquaintances, he was appointed chief security officer at the Prime Minister's Office. He left abruptly in December that year, after having been criticized for his function as a security officer.**

**He later tried his luck unsuccessfully as a businessman.**

**In May 1991, after having been identified as a spy – he was lured back to Israel from abroad, and was arrested in the Ben Gurion airport. He was interrogated and immediately admitted to the offences attributed to him. He was convicted in trial and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment**



## Information provided by Levinson to his KGB handlers

Levinson provided his handlers with comprehensive information in the following topics:

- The structure of **the Israeli intelligence community** – its various units, including: the Military Intelligence Division, Mossad, ISA, the police's special operations unit and Nativ – the government liaison bureau for eastern Bloc Jewery.  
The information provided included names and details of units and sub-units, names of their chiefs as well as modus operandi.
- Structure of the **Prime Minister's Office**, activity and key personalities.
- Details on the **Israeli Foreign Ministry**, including the forwarding of original documents to his handlers.
- **The Israeli political system**: personnel, parties, opinions and atmosphere.
- Information on **American intelligence officers** in contact with Israeli intelligence, including names, functions and specialties



## Epilogue

Levinson has served his sentence in jail, sharing his cell with Dr. Marcus Klinberg.

He was released from jail in 1999 after a third of his sentence had been deducted for good behavior.

While in prison, his wife left him, as well as his friends and colleagues. He was disbanded from organizations he was a member in, such as the IDF Veterans Association and others. His health was also deteriorating. Upon his release, he rented an apartment in Jerusalem, socially secluded and looking to keep himself busy.

In 2003, as soon as his stay of exit term expired, Levinson left Israel, currently staying abroad, and usually returning for brief visits.

Lessons from this event have been learnt and assimilated, thus contributing to a process of **implementing new working processes, safeguarding from similar future occurrences.**

---