



# THE ANNA SOBOL LEVY FELLOWSHIP (ASL) 2023-2024



**Left to Right:** Skye WILLIAMS, David GORSHEIN, Samuel WEISS, Anthony MARCO,  
Barak BEN-TZUR, Valérie SUSSKIND, Justin FOX, Austin LAND

# Report & Activities Summary

## Fellowship Coordinator:

Valérie Susskind

## Fellows:

- Justin FOX
- David GORSHEIN
- Austin LAND
- Anthony MARCO
- Skye WILLIAMS
- Samuel WEISS

## **THE ASL FELLOWS**

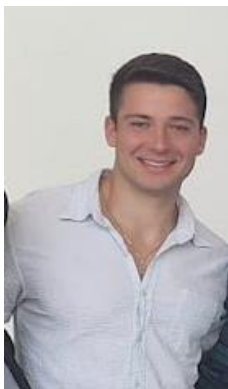
### **\*\*In Their Own Words\*\***

#### **Justin Fox**



Justin is 23 years old and comes from Brunswick, Maryland. He studied Government and Politics at the University of Maryland-College Park and graduated with the class of 2023. Justin looks forward to serving as an Ordnance Officer in the US Army after completing his master's program at Reichman University. Outside of school, he enjoys working out, traveling, and trying new foods.

#### **David Gorshein**



David is from Lake Mary FL, attended West Point for his undergraduate degree, and will serve in the Army, in Infantry.

## Austin Land



Austin Land, a Second Lieutenant in the US Army Transportation Corps, currently calls Colorado Springs home, but has grown up in a military family and lived in Hawaii and Germany. Austin is pursuing a Master of Arts in Government through the Conflict and Diplomacy Studies program at Reichman University. Commissioning out of AROTC at Washington University in St. Louis, Austin majored in Political Science with concentrations in American Politics and Political Theory and minored in Legal Studies. At WashU, Austin was a captain on both the club gymnastics and spike ball teams as well as an intramural volleyball and ultimate frisbee champion.

Austin has been to Israel twice before, once as a participant on the Joyce Zeff Israel Study Tour and once as a member of the staff for a similar study tour. In his free time, Austin likes to ski, hike, workout and write food and movie reviews.

## Anthony Marco



Anthony (Tony) is from Long Island NY, attended West Point for his undergraduate degree, and will serve in the Army, as an Infantry Officer.

## Skye Williams



Lieutenant Skye Williams graduated and was commissioned from the United States Military Academy at West Point (West Point) as a Cyber Warfare Officer. Skye received her Bachelor of Science degree in Law and Legal Studies, Terrorism Studies, and Cyber Engineering from West Point. Skye has conducted research in Washington, D.C, in 2021 on terrorist threats in Africa that impact both foreign and domestic U.S. Military assets. In 2022, Skye completed an immersive internship in Israel through the Peace & Dialogue Leadership Initiative (PDLI) fellowship with Yale University, where she focused her studies on understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Skye will complete graduate school in Israel for her Master's degree in Government with Specialization in Counterterrorism, Homeland Security, and Cybersecurity at Reichman University as a

2023 Anna Sobol Levy Scholar. Skye intends to marry her passions in law, counterterrorism, and cybersecurity to advance both domestic and making a positive impact and inspiring others.



### **Samuel Weiss**

Samuel is 23 years old and comes from Chicago, Illinois. He earned his BS in Systems Engineering from the University of Illinois. Samuel looks forward to serving as a Navy Pilot after completing this program at Reichman University. Outside of school, he enjoys exercise, movies, travel, and outdoor adventure.

## **THE ASL COORDINATOR**

### **Valérie Susskind**



Valérie Susskind was born and raised in Paris, France. She spent many years in New York, NY where she earned a BA in English Communications at Yeshiva University and a MBA in Marketing and Management at NYU Stern School of Business. She held various Marketing positions and taught Marketing and Management courses at LIM Fashion College in New York City. She moved to Israel with her family in 2019 from Riverdale, NY and currently resides in Ra'anana. At Reichman University, Valérie is Deputy Director of Admissions and Recruitment for Masters Degrees at

the Raphael Recanati International School, including the MA in Government. Valérie started managing the programming for the Anna Sobol Levy Fellowship in December 2021. For ASL, Valérie oversees the process from recruitment until the end of the Fellows' stay at Reichman, including programming, speakers and day trips.

## **Activities Summary**

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Speaker or Trip Destination</b>                           | <b>Topic</b>                                                                                                                     |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dec 2023    | Talia Baram-Shimshi                                          | War! Zoom Meeting with Academic Coordinator                                                                                      |
| Dec 2023    | Dr. Eitan Azani                                              | War and Current Events in the Middle East (Zoom session)                                                                         |
| March 2024  | Jonahan Davis                                                | Welcome and Expectations                                                                                                         |
| March 2024  | Dr. Barak Ben-Tzur                                           | Intelligence Failures                                                                                                            |
| April 2024  | Trip to Gaza Envelope                                        | Bear witness to Oct. 7 disaster                                                                                                  |
| May 2024    | Naftali Granot                                               | Current Situation                                                                                                                |
| May 2024    | IDF Reservists                                               | Meeting between ASL fellows and IDF reservists                                                                                   |
| June 2024   | Dave Zimmermann                                              | Career paths within the FBI                                                                                                      |
| June 2024   | Trip to Jerusalem with Grisha Yakubovitch                    | Jerusalem and Surroundings                                                                                                       |
| May 2024    | Danny Carmon                                                 | The significance and role of diplomacy and its contribution to national resilience, Israel's foreign policy, the UN, foreign aid |
| June 2024   | Amos Gilad                                                   | Open Discussion                                                                                                                  |
| June 2024   | Visit to Machaneh-Aviv army base, home to IDF Spokespersons. | Discussion and presentation by the IDF Spokespersons Unit.                                                                       |

## **Speakers and Guides**

### **Dr. Eitan Azani**



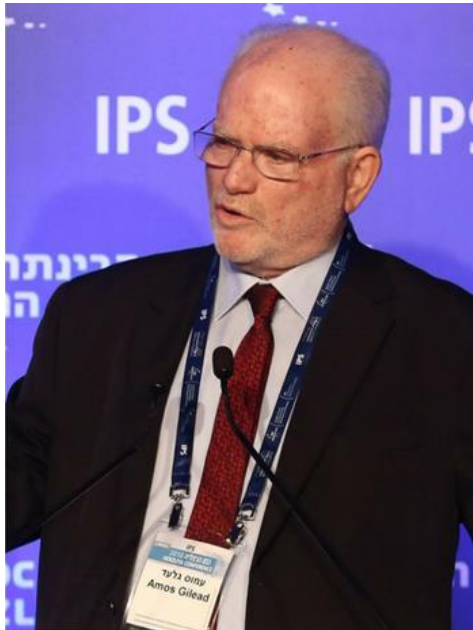
Director of Research, International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) & Lecturer, BA & MA with Specialization in Counter-Terrorism and Homeland Security at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at Reichman University. He is a Colonel (Res.) in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) with operational, research and academic experience in counter-terrorism in the regional and international arenas. He previously served as the Deputy Executive Director of ICT. As part of his position at ICT, Dr. Azani maintains working relations and advises both private and government entities on counter-terrorism issues. Dr. Azani lectures at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at Reichman University, and additional security and organizational establishments in Israel and abroad. He testifies on the subject of Hezbollah in front of the United States House of Representatives' Committee on International Affairs as well as the European Parliament.

### **Dr. Barak Ben-Tzur**



Dr. Col.(Res.) Barak Ben-Tzur is an expert in risk and threat analysis, strategic intelligence, Middle Eastern studies and counter-terrorism.

## **Maj. Gen. Ret. Amos Gilad**



Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Amos Gilead served as Director of Policy and Political-Military Affairs at the Ministry of Defense. During his thirty years of service at the IDF, Gilead had been, among other positions, Head of the Military Intelligence Research Division; IDF Spokesperson; Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories; and Military Secretary of Prime Minister and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Today Gilead is a lecturer and researcher at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at Reichman University.

## **Naftali Granot**



Naftali Granot concluded his intelligence career as Deputy Director of the Mossad in 2007. He joined the Mossad in 1982 and served in Lebanon and various western countries. Granot was nominated Head of the HUMINT (Human Intelligence) division in 2002. Granot lead many ground-breaking operations for the Mossad. In 2004, he was the recipient of the highest security decoration awarded by the President of the State of Israel.

## Grisha Yakubovitch



An experienced lecturer, having lectured to members of the US Congress and European Parliament, law enforcement agencies, student delegations, religious leaders, and academics, my lectures span from topics of Israel's security and understanding the conflict in depth, to an inside view of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the future of the Palestinian economy and infrastructure. Col. Res. Yakubovich concluded his military service in 2016 as the head of the civil department for the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (C.O.G.A.T.). He currently serves as a policy and strategy consultant to various international NGO's. Yakubovich has more than thirty years of first-hand experience initiating and implementing high level cooperation projects between Israelis and Palestinians in the public and private sectors.

## Danny Carmon



Attaché in Washington, DC, from 1978 to 1982 and member of the Israeli Delegation to the Camp David peace talks He was in Israel's embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, first as Consul, Counselor and Administrative Officer , and later as commercial attaché and as Deputy Chief of Mission. Ambassador Carmon served as Head of the Situation Emergency Room in the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem. Carmon also served as Head of the Information and Internet Division in the Department of Public Affairs as well as Head of the Bureau for Coordination, and Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Director General's Bureau. He also was Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative at Israel's Mission to the United Nations in New York. Ambassador Daniel Carmon was appointed Deputy Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Head of MASHAV – Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation. He also served as Ambassador of Israel to India and Sri Lanka. He completed his term in September 2018.

## Dave Zimmermann

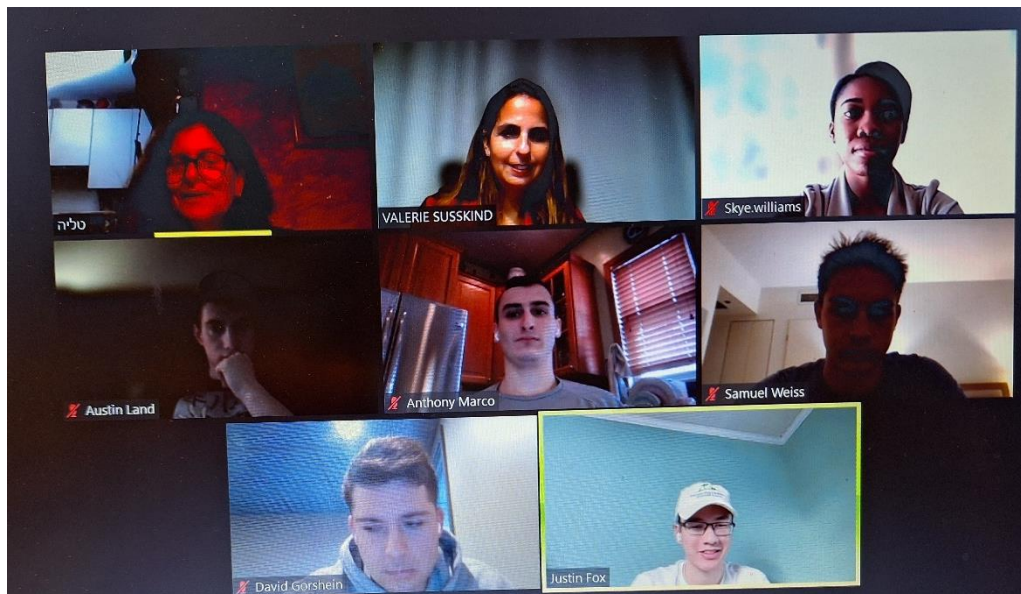


Dave was in his final year serving as the assistant legal attaché with the FBI in Tel Aviv.

## Our Program in Pictures

### Welcome from far due to the war – Zoom with Academic Coordinator Talia Baram-Shimshi

December 2023



## **Zoom Session with Dr. Eitan Azani**

December 2023



Great session on Zoom with Dr Eitan Azani and the Fellows who were mostly still in the US due to the war. A lot of ground was covered on the aftermath of October 7. We also had an open conversation where each fellow got to ask a question.

## **Welcome to Campus - Lunch with Jonathan Davis**

March 2024



Left to Right: Austin LAND, Skye WILLIAMS, Sam WEISS, Valérie SUSSKIND, Jonathan DAVIS, David GORSHEIN, Tony MARCO

## **Meeting with Barak Ben-Tzur**

March 2024



Left to Right: Skye WILLIAMS , David GORSHEIN, Sam WEISS, Tony MARCO, Barak BEN-TZUR, Valérie SUSSKIND, Justin FOX, Austin LAND

Dr. Barak Ben-Zur, an expert in strategic intelligence analysis, counterterrorism, and special operations. He delivered a presentation titled “Intelligence Failures Fighting Terror – The Israeli Case.” The discussion began with a brief overview of notable intelligence failures in contemporary conflicts, from Pearl Harbor to the failed 2018 Shin-Bet operation that sought to plant listening devices on Hamas communications in Gaza. The intelligence shortcomings were then posed against common terror strategies to demonstrate how terrorism can circumvent even the most advanced intelligence. Our discussion shifted focus to the intelligence failures of October 7th, with particular emphasis on the decision-making process. One discussion highlight was understanding how guerilla and terrorist actors leverage civilians to wage asymmetric warfare against technologically superior forces. Dr. Ben-Zur brought his expertise in analyzing intelligence from the Shin-Bet to the table, spending quality time with the American fellows discussing the Israeli intelligence process.

## **Trip to the Gaza Envelope** (Hosted by the Institute for Counter-Terrorism)

April 2024



Left to Right: Sam WEISS, Valérie SUSSKIND, Tony MARCO,  
David GORSHEIN.



The ICT and Anna Sobol Levy Fellows at Reichman University went on a joint staff ride to the South of Israel to engage with residents of Kibbutz Kfar Aza, Military officials from the base in Nakhal Oz, farmers around Yated, and to visit the site of the Nova Massacre.

Prior to arrival in Kfar Aza, the group drove through the Southern city of Sderot to better understand the scope of the Hamas October 7<sup>th</sup> invasion into Southern Israel. Sites which were highlighted from Sderot were destroyed buildings, the furthest points which Hamas reached outside of Gaza, and locations of Israeli command and control sites in response to the invasion.

Upon arrival in Kfar Aza, the group spoke with multiple eyewitnesses to better understand the conditions of the pillaging and massacre of their kibbutz. The eyewitnesses told of the stories of the loved ones they lost, explained how hostages were taken back into Gaza, and spoke to the conditions in their village after the massacre.

At Nakhal Oz, the group met with the base commander and received an in-depth military explanation as to what happened on October 7<sup>th</sup>, and how the IDF reacted. Points of emphasis from this tour were issues relating to command and control after many leaders were killed, the timeline for which the IDF managed to regain control of the base, and the extent of the destruction which the base is still recovering from.

On the farm, the group met with the owner as he told his life story which served to inform our group as to what life conditions are like for a business owner along the border, especially in times of conflict. The farm owner showed us the innovative nature of his farming practices which enable growth in the desert, he told us the stories of how his farm reacted to October 7<sup>th</sup> attacks, and he gave us an optimistic message of hope for the future.

Lastly, at the Nova massacre site, the group took a brief stop to visit the memorials of those lost and still missing. This site was incredibly devastating and the destruction was still evident. Overall, the staff ride served to enhance the understanding of ASL fellows on the conditions at the start of the war between Israel and Hamas.

## **Meeting with Naftali Granot**

May 2024



Left to Right: Sam WEISS, Austin LAND, Valérie SUSSKIND, Naftali GRANOT, Justin FOX, Skye WILLIAMS , David GORSHEIN.

On May 1, 2024, the ASL Fellows were given the privilege of speaking with Mr. Naftali Granot, an expert in counterterrorism, intelligence gathering, and military operations. In this conversation, Mr. Granot first provided us with a brief description of his background, explaining his career through the lens of his transition from the IDF to Mossad and his never ending goal to positively contribute to Israel. Following this, however, Mr. Granot was more than eager to transition the meeting towards a Q&A setting. As the vast majority of the meeting was conducted in this manner, numerous subjects were broached including cross-national intelligence collaboration, enhanced interrogation techniques, informant motivations, decision making processes, etc. However, one of the main streams of conversation circled upon the war in Gaza with respect to strategies and implications for the future of Israel. From Mr. Granot's perspective, Israel should pursue the war to weaken if not destroy Hamas in its entirety while doing whatever it can to free the hostages held in Gaza without offering international guarantees. He believes this all has to be done while maintaining humanitarian aid as it is counterproductive to starve the population while attempting to continue the fight. After eagerly fielding questions with respect to Mr. Granot's intelligence expertise, the fellows were also curious as to Mr. Granot's retirement, and the skills his former career provided in his most recent endeavors. According to the guest speaker, his experience in running projects for his business ventures is quite similar to operating intelligence operations which both involve large budgets and arrays of technology.

## Meeting with IDF Reservists

May 2024



Left to Right: Tony MARCO, **Menachem REINITZ**, Sam WEISS, **Ari LEWIN**, Bernie MUNK, Jonathan DAVIS, Valérie SUSSKIND, Austin LAND, **Benjamin AMRAM**

The ASL Fellows got to meet with three **IDF reservists** (Ari, Benjamin, and Menachem), Jonathan Davis, and his guest, Professor (ret.) Bernie Munk. Professor Munk recounted his time abroad and his solemn experiences during 9/11, engaging in a historical discussion with the Fellows about the overseas involvements of the US. We then discussed the life impacts on young adults of being in the military as well as in a combat environment with the three

reservists. Ari in particular talked about the need for calmness and how an intense focus on the situation at hand in a combat zone cannot be taught in a classroom and how that skill can be readily applied to future aspects of one's life. As Mr. Davis was giving his closing remarks about Israel's need for regional security, we ironically experienced a rocket siren and all made our way to the shelter where we ended up taking the picture for the day's event. Following the official meeting, the ASL fellows continued talking to the IDF reservists about their personal experiences in the war following the harrowing events of October 7th. This event was an exemplary opportunity for the ASL fellows to interact with and learn more about their counterparts in the IDF as well as a chance to reflect on what it truly means to be a soldier in both the IDF and US military.

## **Meeting with Dave Zimmermann**

June 2024



Left to Right: Justin FOX, Sam WEISS, Skye WILLIAMS, Jenny McREYNOLDS, Valérie SUSSKIND, Dave ZIMMERMANN, Tony MARCO, David GORSHEIN.

The ASL cohort met with David Zimmerman, the FBI Attache (in his last year) at the Tel Aviv branch of the United States Embassy, for a conversation about his career of public service to the United States, the FBI's role in countering contemporary national security challenges, and the opportunities available within the FBI. Also present was Jenny McReynolds who will be replacing

Dave at the Bureau. At the start of the meeting, he spoke at length about his current role and responsibilities as the FBI Attache in Israel, a position he has held for four years. He further discussed the litany of challenges his office has experienced since October 7<sup>th</sup>, and how his team is working to further advance the priorities of the US-Israeli partnership. Following Mr. Zimmermann's insightful introduction, he fielded an array of questions from the ASL cohort, which included: the degree of interagency cooperation between the FBI and other critical U.S. government entities; his motivations for serving over twenty-five years in the FBI; and the critical role that the FBI plays in safeguarding American interests at home and abroad. We appreciate Mr. Zimmermann for taking the time out of his demanding schedule to inspire the next generation of America's national security leaders.

## June 2024



On June 24, 2024, the ASL Fellows' journey through Jerusalem began with a deep dive into the region's rich history and contemporary complexities, guided by Col. (ret.) Grisha Yakubovich, a Russian-born Israeli. Col. Yakubovich's personal history added depth to the tour; he emigrated to Israel in 1973, following his parents who survived the Holocaust. He served as a medic in the IDF, participated in conflicts in Lebanon and Gaza, and held the role of Liaison Officer during the first intifada in 1988.

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Traveling along Route 443 toward Jerusalem, we observed fences, checkpoints, and industrial areas. Colonel Yakubovich provided insights into the legal, security, and political balances aimed at minimizing residents' disruption while fostering economic success.

Next, we visited the **Gilo Neighborhood**, the first satellite neighborhood in East Jerusalem. From this vantage point, we enjoyed panoramic views of Bethlehem and Beit Jala. Col. Yakubovich discussed the creation of satellite neighborhoods, the differences between local communities, and the varied borderlines envisaged for a potential Palestinian state.

At **Rachel's Crossing**, a pedestrian crossing between Bethlehem and southern Jerusalem, we witnessed the daily flow of Palestinians entering Israel for work, medical treatment, shopping, and family visits. The discussion here focused on the Israeli/Palestinian economy and the intricacies of access and movement between the West Bank and Israel. At this site, the pre-Oct 7th reality of roughly 140,000 Palestinians working in Jerusalem highlighted the economic interdependence between Israelis and Palestinians.



Our next stop was the **Armon Hanatziv Promenade**, a lookout point offering inspiring views of the Old City, Kidron Valley, City of David, Mount of Olives, Judean Wilderness, Dead Sea, and Mountains of Moab. Here, we delved into

the geography outlined in the Oslo Agreements, the challenges posed by the Security Fence, and its impact on East Jerusalemites. The political disputes between the Palestinian Authority and Israel over the Kidron Valley and the Holy Basin, encompassing Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, were highlighted and environmental issues, such as the sewage problems in the Kidron River, were also discussed. Strategic settlements and the E1 corridor connecting Jerusalem to the Jordan Valley were identified as critical security measures.



After a delicious lunch at the *Meat and Eat* restaurant, we proceeded to the **Mount Scopus Overlook**. This strategic mountain, overlooking all of Jerusalem, served as a Jewish enclave under Jordanian sovereignty between 1948 and 1967 and is home to the Hebrew University and the original Hadassah Hospital. Col. Yakubovich emphasized Israel's intention to retain strategic settlements in the Jordan Valley, aligning with former President Trump's plan for border access corridors. This strategic corridor between Israel and the Jordan Valley is of critical importance for peace with Jordan, and the new "no man's land" of the Jerusalem envelope. Discussions also touched on the different perceptions of settlements and their significance as well as societal issues like crime among Arab families and the broader existential conflict.

Throughout the tour, broader geopolitical and security issues were woven into the narrative. The role of Egypt in the Oct 7th attacks, the imminent collapse of Gaza's aquifer, and Israel's need to enhance its psychological warfare capabilities were all discussed. The different classifications of Palestinian

territories (B, C, H1, H2) and Hezbollah's funding through drug trafficking were also highlighted.

The concluding messages emphasized the ongoing conflicts, including a potential war in Lebanon, and the shared language of conflict. The Palestinian view of settlements as obstacles to peace was a recurring theme, illustrating the deep-seated tensions in the region.

We ASL fellows are appreciative of this great experience. This trip through Jerusalem provided a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex historical, political, and social issues that define this contested land.



## **Meeting with Danny Carmon**

June 2024



Left to Right: Austin LAND, Skye WILLIAMS, Sam WEISS, Danny CARMON, Valérie SUSSKIND, Tony MARCO, Justin FOX.

Our discussion began with an introduction to the ASL cohort and an overview of Ambassador Carmon's career. Now a private citizen, Amb. Carmon actively engages in political advocacy, particularly regarding the current hostage crisis. He provided valuable insights into the political and diplomatic impacts of hostage-taking and the unique social contract that obligates Western countries to protect their citizens. As a member of one of the first hostage forums, he collaborates with professionals to support families affected by the events of October 7th. Amb. Carmon shared his perspective on the intricacies of military pressure, political credibility, and diplomatic resolutions in the context of the

hostage situation. This engaging discussion highlighted the complexity of the hostage crisis, one of the most challenging aspects of the conflict today.

Amb. Carmon's transition to private advocacy offered a unique window into life after public service. Having spent most of his career defending Israeli policy abroad, he now advocates for broader societal concerns. Unlike their Israeli counterparts, U.S. government officials face additional political advocacy constraints, outlined in the Hatch Act of 1939, and further restricted by each branch's specific policies. Even in retirement, U.S. officials are expected to remain on the sidelines of policy discussions while receiving benefits from their service. Amb. Carmon's passionate advocacy for a resolution prioritizing the hostages was inspiring and did not diminish his image as a professional diplomat.

Another topic of great interest to the ASL Fellows was Amb. Carmon's thoughts on the situation in the North. As a former Israeli ambassador to the U.N., he had unique insights into international affairs and conflict resolution. In a region where de-escalation is seen as weakness, many believe that international intervention is the only effective resolution to the Hezbollah conflict without full-scale war. Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter grants the Security Council the power to identify threats to peace and take military or non-military action against them. Amb. Carmon has witnessed the difficulty of passing resolutions invoking Chapter VII and believes escalation will continue to a breaking point.

## **Meeting with Amos Gilad**

June 2024



Left to Right: Austin LAND, Justin FOX, Skye WILLIAMS, Valérie SUSSKIND, Amos GILAD, Tony MARCO.

The ASL group met with esteemed Major General Amos Gilad (res.). We began the discussion with an overview of the conflict since the tragedy on October 7th, which MG Gilad alleges was largely the fault of hubris in not trusting the intelligence reports. We then began looking into what Israel needs to do in the immediate future: destroy Hamas and then work closely with the US to find a diplomatic solution to Hezbollah's aggression in the North. The diplomatic option is favored, as a ground invasion of southern Lebanon would cause devastating losses to both sides and likely pull in the U.S. and Iran, leading to an even larger regional war. For MG Gilad, Israel's long-term priorities are clear: dealing with the head of the snake. Now is not the time for internal political disputes. Our time with MG Gilad presented an excellent opportunity to learn from a chief strategist at the forefront of Israeli military operations and we really appreciated him coming to talk with us.

## **Visit to the IDF Spokespersons Unit in Machaneh Aviv Base**

July 2024



**Left to Right:** Tony MARCO, Austin LAND, Valérie SUSSKIND, Skye WILLIAMS, David ROSS, David GORSHEIN, Justin FOX

On July 7, 2024, the ASL fellows were welcomed by the IDF Spokesperson's Unit in a visit to Camp Aviv, located to the south of the Ramat Aviv neighborhood in northern Tel Aviv. In this visit, they were first greeted by Major David Ross, a reservist attached to the unit. Maj. Ross invited the ASL fellows to personally inquire into topics of interest by means of group discussion. To begin, Maj. Ross described the basic purpose of the Spokesperson's Unit in addressing the three communication fronts from which Israel must engage: the Israeli front, the Arab front, and the International front. He further explained the varying focuses that exist within each of these fronts. In order to accomplish such goals, it was explained that the Spokesperson's structures itself in the following manner: Media, Strategy, Digital, Language, and Public Diplomacy. Then, Maj. Ross discussed the specifics of his unit, international media, touching upon the personal relationships that exist between the IDF and news networks such as CNN, Fox, New York Times. The method in which the IDF builds its narratives was also considered, with Maj. Ross explaining that the Spokesperson's Unit constructs its narratives through the evaluation of media timelines and influential events. It was Maj. Ross's opinion, however, that Israel requires strengthening in its long term strategy approach in comparison to quick-time responses to which it excels. Next, when questioned on the challenges that the Spokesperson's Unit is facing, Maj. Ross highlighted the difficulties of social media, especially among younger audiences who are more easily persuaded by the optics emerging from Gaza and therefore more averse to supporting Israel. In contrast, Maj. Ross believed that the Spokesperson's Unit has been successful in developing its messaging in conjunction with the operational successes that have occurred during the conflict in Gaza. For example, he stated that in developing an understanding of the Gaza conflict as being one composed of several stages, the IDF and government are able to project an image of advancement and progress. Likewise, vocabulary has evolved to include differing terminology based upon the time and audience, ranging from themes of self-defense to strength. One particular success story that Maj. Ross was interested in referencing was the case study of Al-Aqsa Hospital in the early stages of the war. Specifically, he noted that the IDF was able to rapidly counter the development of false narratives which blamed the Israelis for the explosions that occurred by responding promptly and with verifiable proof. Lastly, when asked on the impact of the upcoming US presidential election in November, from his position, Maj. Ross believed that there would be less focus on the conflict in Gaza "for better or worse" as he stated. Despite this, he believed that there

wouldn't be much upheaval between the US-Israeli military cooperation. Following this, Maj. Ross had to excuse himself but the ASL fellows concluded their experience with the Spokesperson's Unit by sitting in on a panel of IDF soldiers who were actively exposed to Hamas combatants on and directly after October 7th. In this panel, the ASL fellows listened to each of their stories and inquired into their respective backgrounds. Through such an opportunity, the ASL fellows were better able to grapple with the realities being faced by the IDF. With that, the visit concluded. The ASL fellows could not be more grateful for the opportunity that was granted to them by the IDF Spokesperson's Unit.



**\*\*\*End of 2023-2024 Annual Report\*\*\***