

Netanyahu names new Mossad chief after Gaza defeat

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This picture shows deputy Mossad chief David Barnea (L), Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu (C), and Mossad chief Yossi Cohen (R) during a ceremony on May 24, 2021.

Tel Aviv, May 25 (RHC)-- Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has appointed a veteran Mossad operative, reportedly specialized in recruiting agents to work against Iran and Hezbollah, as the new chief of the regime's espionage agency.

Netanyahu said Monday that 56-year-old David Barnea, who has been Mossad's deputy director for the past two years, will replace Yossi Cohen early next month. Israeli attorney-general Avichai Mandelblit announced earlier in the day that he had cleared the way for Barnea to take the helm as the new chief of

Mossad.

A few months ago, Mandelblit had frozen the appointment saying that it should wait for a new Israeli cabinet to be finalized. He said on Monday that the political situation looks like there might be no new administration in place by June 1 when Cohen steps down.

Cohen has served as the head of the Mossad since January 2016. He has reportedly served as Netanyahu's special envoy for various tasks. He is reportedly seen by Netanyahu as his preferred successor. The outgoing Mossad chief played an important role in the Israeli regime's so-called normalization deals with a number of Arab states. He traveled to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, as former US president Donald Trump brokered the normalization deals

Cohen also reportedly joined Netanyahu on a 2020 visit to Saudi Arabia, for talks with Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman.

Barnea joined Mossad in 1996, serving as a case officer. He has served in a wide variety of Mossad divisions, including as head of the Tzomet division, which Israeli media reports said recruits and runs agents, from 2013 to 2019.

According to the Israeli Haaretz newspaper, Barnea was responsible for enlisting operatives against Iran and Hezbollah as Tzomet's commander. Iran has accused Mossad of being behind the assassination of nuclear scientists as well as sabotage at its uranium enrichment facilities.

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