

Wednesday, September 10th, 2025

## **Speech of the Commander of the Israeli Navy, VADM David Saar Salama**

The Chief of the General Staff, LTG Eyal Zamir my commander, former commanders of the Israeli Navy, the Navy command staff, commanders and soldiers, dear families, distinguished guests, and those in whose honor we have gathered here this evening - the graduates of Course 151, good evening.

In 1994, at an officers' course graduation ceremony, the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said: "The existence of the State of Israel rests on a wonderful group of people. These are people for whom the needs of the state come before their own."

Dear graduates, you chose to embark on the Naval Officers' Course; you chose to serve for something greater than each of you, and greater than all of us - you chose to shoulder national responsibility and to take a significant part in the mission of defending the nation. This is always a great privilege. It is an even greater privilege in times of war.

We are in the midst of a long and challenging war. A war in which the sword intertwines with the tears, the pain is bound together with heroism. This is a just war, not only because of the way it began, but also because of the recent events that prove it.

We are fighting for our home - our personal home, our national home. You have chosen to uphold the oath of generations: to serve, to fight, to defend - and beyond that, you have chosen to do so as commanders. This is one of the most meaningful and ethical choices of your lives.

You have chosen to lead and to guide, to shape the character of our soldiers, male and female. You have chosen to shape the culture of the warship or the submarine. You have chosen to shape the character of the Navy, of the IDF, and of the State of Israel.

"Shaping the character of the IDF is the great responsibility and privilege of the commander," said David Ben-Gurion. "The commander worthy of his mission does so not through orders and discipline, but through the example of his life. By serving as a model — one who can inspire in his disciples trust and devotion, courage and bravery. Through his personality and exemplary character. Only such a commander will fulfill his mission faithfully and successfully."

His words were spoken in 1955, and to this day they remain the first principle of command. The value of personal example - this is the cornerstone of leadership and of leading soldiers on the

naval battlefield. It is a value that obliges the commander to broad responsibility, professionalism, integrity, constant learning, and relentless improvement.

Dear graduates, if I had to say only one thing, it would be this: first and foremost - be human beings. This is the foundation of personal example, and it sets before us the central, clearest, and sharpest ethos in the skill set of a commander: to excel in attentiveness — human, command, educational, and leadership.

In just a moment, the sons and daughters of Israeli society will be entrusted to you. This is an immense responsibility - to care for their safety, for their physical and mental well-being. They are placed in your charge. Some are your age, some possess greater professional knowledge than you. Learn from them, gain from their experience.

This is a complex process that requires balance. It requires speaking with a soldier whose spirit is down. It requires praising the soldier who strained her eyes on the ship's bridge. It requires encouraging the troops during a live-fire drill. It also requires you to be full partners in the ship's activities. Do not hesitate to prepare the ship for battle together with them — to prepare it both in port and at sea. Be with them also in the hard work.

There is no stronger force of cohesion than personal example. This is how values are taught, this is how a sense of belonging is created - to the group, to the team, to a united warship. This is the essence of the Navy's strength. It is always true - it is doubly true in war, especially in the challenging and complex maritime arena, where uncertainty reigns, and where constant change and unending dynamism is the norm.

The fog of war is our daily reality at sea - at any moment, a suspicious target may appear; in any second, you may be called to battle stations, to destroy a terrorist boat, to intercept a UAV, or to carry out an emergency procedure on the ship. The maritime arena is constantly changing - and not only with the direction of the wind and the waves.

You experienced this during your training - on Navy ships intercepting threats from Iran, carrying out strikes in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen. The most essential tools in the face of these dramatic changes are openness, different thinking, accurate mapping of threats and opportunities, and continuous improvement of the quality of our operations.

And yet — there can be no compromise. No compromise on norms. No compromise on order and discipline. Command does not come at the expense of discipline, nor to weaken it. Bold, creative command can exist only when discipline, order, and organization are present. These are values not on a collision course, but on a complementary one. The expectation of you is to come as commanders who stand eye to eye with your troops, with fresh and regenerating eyes. You are not stepping into big shoes - you are creating, by yourselves and for yourselves, your own shoes. Shoes that are suited to your command style, in which you will march along your unique path.

On your journey there will be mistakes alongside successes, waves breaking and crises of every kind. Allow me to give you this advice — be true to your path and to your values. Most often, faith in the path and in the values leads to the best result. Faith in the path means rising from every crisis, lifting yourself after failure, getting up, looking back, examining, and improving.

For those of you who see difficulty as a challenge - there will also be immense fulfillment. You will know the exalted feeling of creation, of realization, of the fascinating magic of command. You are part of something greater, part of something ethical and powerful. You are the people upon whom Israel's security rests; you are the successors of the first sailors and soldiers of the State of Israel. Now, you are the ones holding the helm of command, the helm of the ship. There is no greater privilege.

Dear families, this evening must surely be an emotional one for you - to see your sons and daughters, after a long and demanding journey, standing here on the ceremony ground. I always share in this excitement. Tonight, I share in it even more - tonight I am one of you, a proud father.

The quality of our officers was not created at the base gates - but in your homes. It is the fruit of your labor, from which we are privileged to benefit. This evening, we all wish to thank and honor you for instilling excellence, for imparting values, for encouraging volunteering, and for your endless support. Deep thanks and great appreciation!

This is an opportunity to thank and acknowledge the work of the commander of the Officers' School and the entire training faculty. Training our future generation in the midst of a long war requires determination, precision, dedication, and professionalism. I wish to thank you for your long and devoted education and leadership. Thanks to you, standing here this evening is a long line of skilled, professional, and principled officers - well done!

Graduates of Course 151, from this evening onward, you are joining the ranks of commanders in the Israeli Navy. 35 officers now standing on our front lines of command. In your actions, you carry the moral compass that guides us all. You are a symbol of a young and remarkable generation, an Israeli generation driven by mission, leadership, and giving.

I am proud of you and place my trust in you. Thanks to you, to our national resilience, and to the justice of our cause and our path, we will preserve the security of the State of Israel. I wish you to return safely from every battle, victorious, on your way to the harbors of home. Best of luck!