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The Qatargate co-conspirators quarrel but Netanyahu stays cool

Amos Harel

The three-part interview with the criminal defendant Eli Feldstein that Kan public television broadcast this week and a series of new disclosure in other media outlets returned the Qatar affair to headlines. What the public is seeing is a falling-out among the co-conspirators.

Feldstein was arrested in October 2024, as part of the probe into the leak of a classified (and falsified) intelligence document to the German newspaper Bild. That set in motion what has come to be called Qatargate, involving the alleged receipt of money by three of Benjamin Netanyahu's advisers from what the prime minister has called a "complex country."

The three – Feldstein and the two men on whom he pinned his hopes, Yonatan Urich and Srulik Einhorn – are entangled in a web of mutual accusations. The criminal investigation involves alleged offenses including harm to national security, receiving money from a dubious country in wartime and – an issue that is not getting enough public attention – a campaign of influence and deceit that the accused are suspected of conducting via Israeli media outlets, many of which bought the shoddy goods offered to them without expressing an iota of doubt.

The individual who is somehow managing to stay dry amid the storm is the trio's employer. The prime minister has not been ques-



Finance Minister Smotrich, left, Transportation Minister Regev, center, and Prime Minister Netanyahu at a ceremony on Thursday marking the extension of the Red Line of Tel Aviv's light rail system to Rishon Letzion.

Maayan Touff/GPO

tioned as a suspect in either of the intertwined cases. At the peak moments of the long interview with Feldstein, in the third part, broadcast on

Wednesday, he described being abandoned by Urich, whom he had considered a friend and something of a mentor. Recounting the

staged confrontation with Urich during the police investigation, Feldstein hinted clearly that it's his understanding that Netanyahu

was behind the leaks, from which he is now keeping a safe distance.

The main players are conducting flexible relation-

ships with the truth. That's the world in which they operated: a world of unrestrained political campaigns in the service of a boss for whom every means justifies the end

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Haaretz Qatargate exposé

Ex-PM campaigner asked spox to look after Qatari 'friends'

Gidi Weitz
and Bar Peleg

A former campaign adviser for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party Srulik Einhorn and Eli Feldstein, a former spokesperson in Netanyahu's office, referred to Qatar as "friends" when discussing a classified military document, Haaretz reveals in new information obtained from Einhorn's investigations.

The two figures are embroiled in the "BibiLeaks" affair, in which figures within the Prime Minister's Office leaked classified documents to foreign media, and "Qatargate," in which figures close to the prime minister received payment from Qatar before and during Israel's war in Gaza.

"We need to brief on how to trust the friends," Srulik Einhorn, a former campaign adviser for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party, wrote to Eli Feldstein after receiving a classified military document from him.

The "friends" in question were the Qataris, who paid both men – close associates of the prime minister – for public relations on behalf of the country that funded Hamas.

The document's contents, intended to embarrass Egypt, dovetailed neatly with the campaign built by Einhorn and Jay Footlik, the American lobbyist working for Qatar. "How you can trust our friends is a

general, generic message," Einhorn explained during his interrogation. "That's his job [Feldstein's]: to keep pushing that message to the media all the time."

The classified military document was an independent study conducted by six Military Intelligence reservists, who claimed there had been foreign involvement in Hamas' October 7 attack. The authors sought to pass the document on to the prime minister, even though their superiors determined it was not sufficiently validated.

**Army Radio
closure = coup**

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The document was found in Feldstein's kitchen. He had received it from IDF reservist Ari Rosenfeld and was supposed to deliver it to Netanyahu. According to the indictment against Feldstein in the BibiLeaks affair, he also passed the document on to Srulik Einhorn.

During his interrogation in July, which was carried out by Israeli representatives in the presence of Serbian law enforcement, Einhorn told Shlomo (Momi) Meshulam, a representative from Israel's Major Crimes Unit, that the document was "bizarre, like a child made it on a computer or something."

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Military says it killed Iranian Quds Force member in southern Lebanon strike

Yaniv Kubovich
and Deiaa Haj Yahia

The military said that it assassinated a "major terrorist" from Iran's Quds Force in an attack in southern Lebanon on Thursday.

According to the military, an Israeli attack in the an-Nassariya region killed Hussein Mahmoud Marshad al-Jawhari, who was active in the Quds Force operations unit, and had been involved "promoting terrorist plots against the State of Israel" near Israel's borders with

Syria and Lebanon in recent years. According to a report on the Lebanese Al Mayadeen news network, an Israel Defense Forces attack was carried out on Thursday using a drone and one person was killed.

IDF intelligence asserts that al-Jawhari is not senior enough to cause Iran to respond militarily to the assassination, and it has not raised alert levels in Israel. The assassination comes amid regular Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon, which the IDF says target Hezbollah.

On Tuesday, the IDF said it had killed three Hezbollah militants a day earlier near Sidon in southern Lebanon as they sought to rebuild the group's military operations. The IDF claimed that "one of the terrorists eliminated during the strike simultaneously served in the Lebanese intelligence unit."

The Lebanese army later confirmed that Warrant Officer Ali Abdullah of the army's Support Brigade and Anti-Tank Regiment had been killed when an Israeli strike hit a vehicle

**Problem of
drone smuggling**

News, Page 4

near Sidon on Monday. The Lebanese Defense Ministry said any suggestion that army personnel were tied to political or armed groups were false. Defense Minister Michel Menassa said such reports amounted to a "malicious attack" on the institution.

In late November, the IDF assassinated Hezbollah military chief Abu Ali Tabatabai in a strike on Beirut.

Also on Tuesday, Lebanese security forces stated that they suspected that the Mossad had kidnapped a former officer, Capt. Ahmed Shukar, from the town of Nabi Chit in the Baalbek area, believing that he had information about Ron Arad, an Israeli soldier missing since 1986, Al Arabiya reported.

With reporting by Reuters.

Katz again vows to renew Gaza settlements

W. Bank policy hailed as 'de facto annexation' – expanding settlements while expelling Palestinians

Haaretz

Israel will allow Jewish settlers to live in northern Gaza at some point in the future, Defense Minister Israel Katz said on Thursday, the latest promise in a recent string of seemingly contradictory statements regarding the enclave.

"In the northern part, it will be possible, in my view, to establish Garinei Nahal in an orderly manner when the time comes," he said, referring to the military service in which soldiers combine active duty with work on outlying settlements or communities.

The remarks were made at an education conference



Defense Minister Israel Katz, this month.

Moti Milrod

held by religious Zionist newspaper Makor Rishon. Katz promised that Israeli forces would never fully re-

treat from all of Gaza, and that there would be a significant buffer zone.

On Tuesday, Katz had

first vowed never to leave all of the Gaza Strip, saying that the Israel Defense Forces would establish Nahal outposts in the enclave's northern area. Later that day, he seemingly clarified his statements and said that Israel did not intend to "establish settlements in Gaza."

At Thursday's conference, Katz rejected claims that he had backtracked.

"The vision that I had from the start of the war was that on the northern border of the Gaza Strip ... [there would be a] model of Garinei Nahal that are military, but have meaning, and there can be a yeshiva there, and other things," he said.

Katz also said that the

West Bank would see more settlements, military bases and Palestinian evacuations, calling Israeli policy there "practical annexation."

"I was at the inauguration of the new neighborhood in Beit El," he said, recounting a ceremony marking new housing units in the West Bank.

"I said there that we are implementing a policy of practical sovereignty there. It is impossible now, due to the circumstances, to declare annexation. Practical annexation means ... [evicting] the Palestinians from the terror camps and stationing the Israel Defense Forces there, and establishing settlements."

Firebombing in Melbourne

Rabbi's car in Australia gets damaged in suspected hate crime



The rabbi's car, which was firebombed, in Melbourne, Wednesday.

Section 27A of the Copyright Law

Haaretz

Australian authorities are investigating the Wednesday night firebombing of a rabbi's car in Melbourne, ABC News reported on Thursday, less than two weeks after 15 people were killed in a terror attack at a Hanukkah event on Sydney's Bondi Beach.

No one was wounded in the firebombing. Authorities found the burning car around 3 A.M., and the family was evacuated, ABC reported. Photos show a "Happy Chanukah" sign on the roof of the fire-damaged car parked in the driveway in front of the rabbi's house in the city's St Kilda East neighborhood,

home to many Jewish residents.

Authorities did not immediately want to commit to a clear motive for the crime, but Prime Minister Anthony Albanese denounced the incident as "another terrible act of suspected antisemitism."

"Australia's Jewish community is in mourning after the Bondi terrorist attack," he wrote on X. "The firebombing of a car in Melbourne is another terrible act of suspected antisemitism ... There is no place in Australia for this kind of hatred, and it has to stop."

Police said they identified a person who could assist with the investigation, but no

arrests have been made, the report said.

Victoria Premier Acinta Allan said police were "taking the incident very seriously."

"This little car has been driving around town spreading the Hanukkah and holiday cheer," she wrote on X. "This is not what any family, street or community deserves to wake up to on Christmas Day in Australia."

MP David Southwick, whose electorate encompasses the neighborhood, told ABC that the site was the heart of the Jewish community.

"Carlisle Street is our Bondi," he told the outlet.