



Israeli Online Sabotage Campaign REVEALED?

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Jack Poulson has been doing some outstanding work in going through some massive leaks of emails on the part of high-level Israeli officials, including Benny Gantz, that contain some really important information relevant to the Ellison's and to all of this. It's been an email hack and release that very few other journalists have had access to or reported on, but he is one who has. He's an independent journalist who writes on technology and national security. He publishes all sorts of intelligence on Substack, which I cannot recommend highly enough. That's where he just published two of the most recent articles, one today on this topic. And he's also the founder and executive director of Tech Inquiry, a nonprofit that examines corporate influence on media and public life. Jack, congratulations on this reporting. It is great to have you back on our show. We're looking forward to talking to you.

Jack Poulson (JP): Thank you so much, Glenn, and also for the extremely kind introduction.

GG: Absolutely, it's well-deserved. Let's begin with this: You know, I'm somebody who follows these issues very closely. Obviously, my career has been very inextricably linked with mass digital leaks. And I have to say, it wasn't until recently that I even heard that there was this massive leak of the email inbox of Benny Gantz and maybe even a couple of other equally influential Israeli officials. So can you tell us exactly what it is that is this leak, how it happened, and what your access to it has been?

JP: Sure. In terms of context, the leaks were originally leaked by a hacktivist group calling itself Handala. And it's been widely reported, believed, conjectured that this group is related to Iranian intelligence. It's very transparently pro-Palestinian. One of its major hacks recently was on a sort of pro-Western Iranian media outlet called Iran International. And it's also claimed to have released a number of very sensitive documents relating to a front company operated by Israel's equivalent of the US National Security Agency, which is called Unit 8200. And so these emails were really first reported on on August 27 by a journalist named Matthew Petti from Reason Magazine. The first scoop that came out of them, which was

actually simultaneous to the release of the documents by an American transparency nonprofit named Distributed Denial of Secrets, was on emails hacked from former prime minister Ehud Barak that related to his discussion with Jeffrey Epstein and in particular discussion regarding investments in this company that's now known as Carbyne. At the time, it was known as Reporty. It was kind of roughly an analogue of the security application people may know in the United States called Citizen. And it also detailed a potential investment that Barak was going to make alongside potentially Epstein and a company known as Fifth Dimension, which was really geared up to be an Israeli competitor to Palantir.

In fact, this isn't reported, but in a lot of the internal documents, it was a very explicit strategy by the team at Fifth Dimension, to use the Snowden leaks as a way for Israel to surpass Palantir and US national security companies in their international sales. But in the case of the reporting that I did, for other important context, these leaks, for example, from Gantz, you can think circa 2015 to 2017. And so at first glance, this may not seem particularly relevant to ongoing activities, but what's actually shockingly provided in the Gantz emails, who – by the way, Benjamin Gantz had just come out of his term as the Chief of the General Staff, which is really the Commander in Chief of Israeli military, something like the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in the United States. He moved into the private sector for about five years, 2015 to 2020. In fact, for three of those years, he was chairman of this company I just mentioned, Fifth Dimension, which was competing with Palantir. But most notably, he is revealed through these leaks to have initiated a programme which he initially called 12 Tribes, and it was designed to task 12 Jewish philanthropists from around the world to commit \$1 million each over five years to counter the BDS or the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement opposing the Israeli occupation of Palestine and apartheid using what he called cyber technology. And this included discussions with the controversial private intelligence firm Black Cube. And it also included conversations with David Ellison.

Now, I will say the way that this ties in to, for example, what I discussed on your show last time, which was this propaganda initiative, Voices of Israel, is that other emails in the Gantz archive revealed that 12 Tribes actually became a programme that is very widely known in journalism in terms of opposition of BDS that was known as Israel Cyber Shield. And so while there's, really the challenge here isn't even always just finding these documents, it's kind of fitting them together into a bigger picture because so many of these programmes change names, not just for obscurity reasons, but for bureaucratic reasons. And so effectively, what seems to have happened is this 12 Tribes initiative, which again, had pulled in David Ellison at a very early stage, kind of had a bureaucratic knife fight with the Director General of Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs, which was a woman named Sima Vaknin-Gil, who's still quite prominent to this day. And the 12 Tribes initiative was absorbed into what is now known as Voices of Israel and is part of the cyber intelligence arm that has been referred to as Israel Cyber Shield, Keshet David, and then also its legal American name, Innovative Collaboration Strategies. And so, that's maybe a mouthful to have laid out, but the context really is that these leaks provide the origin story, so to speak, of a programme that still exists to this day. And it's been very relevant to the Israeli response to October 7.

GG: Involving the Ellison family, who have already taken steps to and are about to even further consolidate their control over some of the most influential news and entertainment platforms in the US, as well as TikTok. Now, I wanna delve a little bit more into the details, and I just have to say before I do, it is kind of amazing how, with the news cycle being as kind of rapid as it is, and that's especially been the case over the last two weeks, so many vital stories get raised and then just get forgotten about, including the fact that Ehud Barak, who was the former Defence Minister and then the Prime Minister of Israel, and somebody who even once he left office has been central to all sorts of spying technology and Israeli entrepreneurship, really was close friends, you could say best friends with Jeffrey Epstein, long after he was convicted that first time, and there's very little interest at this point any longer and even getting answers from the Trump administration about what the relationship was between Israeli government officials and the Mossad on the one hand and Jeffrey Epstein on the other, even though it's something so glaring as this, to say nothing of that accused Israeli paedophile who met all week with the NSA and the FBI in Las Vegas got caught up in a kind of trap, a paedophile trap and for some reason was able to just go back to Israel, never to return at least as of yet, even though he's charged with crimes that put people in prison for a long time.

So it's just so much going on that I think is important and yet it's very hard even for those of us who do this as full-time work to keep track of it. Now, before I get in a little bit deeper into these revelations and I'm particularly interested in the part that includes Larry Ellison and his son David Ellison, given what they're about to do, I just wanna ask you about the leak itself because I think maybe sometimes people hear, oh, this was engineered by Iranian intelligence or groups that seem to have sympathy for the Palestinian cause. And I know from the past, although I think people have learned the lesson that a lot of times people question the value of documents, if it's obtained by people who may not have the best of motives, that was of course what Democrats tried to do with the Hillary Clinton and the DNC emails to WikiLeaks was to say, oh, this was hacked by the Russians, which even if true, didn't in any way impugn the value or lessen the relevance of what those emails that they obtained and released, if they did revealed. So in this case with Iranian intelligence or Iranian link groups, perhaps being the hackers who got these emails, have there been any legitimate questions raised about the authenticity of what's in them?

JP: I mean, of course that's the initial question a journalist should ask. And I should say that this tranche of emails has a precedent which was the Anonymous for Justice leaks of, for example, the Israeli Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defence, and then the IDF emails over the past year or so. And I spent an extreme amount of time going through those emails and just trying to pick holes and find information that might not be authentic. At one point I literally got the Israeli army to confirm that an obscure broadcast that was mentioned in one of these leaks that wasn't on the website to actually dig through their archives and find that yes, indeed that broadcast even existed. So, of course there's a fear in the back of your mind as a journalist, is this generated by a Chat GPT or something like that to look authentic. But I will say that so far not only has everything that I've been able to chase down turned out to be true, not a single entity that I reached out to for comment has actually denied the validity

either. And Israel is treating these leaks very seriously. And for example, the Anonymous for Justice leaks, there was just a blanket censorship of any reporting on them in Israel.

In terms of maybe the ethics of dealing with leaked documents like, look, I mean, I know I'm preaching to the choir here, but I view a core trade of journalism is extracting signal from potential noise. Anybody can go read the New York Times and just cite the most prestigious outlet, and there's gonna be things that are lost there, but really the skill of a journalist is to take potentially dubious sources and bubble up to the top or pan for gold so to speak. And so what I found digging through these massive archives over the last few years is that, one, you learn a lot digging through them, and two, everything seems to check out and help you understand things more deeply.

And so, yes, I would say it's fair to have scepticism, but I'm far from the only journalist reporting on these leaks. I think we're gonna see more and more reporting on it. As I mentioned earlier, Reason Magazine reported on some of the Epstein leaks. Intelligence Online, which is a very respected French outlet, has done a series of reports on, for example, the Barak leaks. And the Anonymous for Justice leaks have been covered very heavily. And then the Israeli press has been very heavily covering the leaks from Handala. I mean, if anything, their argument has been that the information released by Handala is too accurate and too comprehensive, not that it's phoney.

GG: Right. You know, it's interesting, obviously, I've been somebody in my career who has worked on the unauthorised release or leak of massive digital archives in several cases. And for me, this is what Julian Assange, above all else, really pioneered and deserves immense credit for. And I think in a lot of ways is why I consider him a genius was that he was the one who before anybody else anticipated that in a digital world, this was going to be one of the main vulnerabilities of large power centres for how we could actually find out what they're doing in the dark is through the ease of leaking huge amounts of digital information. I always tell the story, I remember hearing it from Dan Ellsberg himself that when he wanted to release the Pentagon Papers, leak the Pentagon Papers in the 1970s, which showed that the US government was systematically lying to the American population about the Vietnam War, one of his big difficulties was just like logistics. Like, how do you copy, you know, how do pilfer and copy a volume of, you know, 40,000 pages at the time. Nothing was digital. He literally went to the drug store with a big bag of dimes and started xeroxing, you know, pages of it, which is not good to do if you're trying to make sure you don't get caught.

And what WikiLeaks realised is the ease of transferring this data would be a key source for journalism. And many of the biggest stories have been that. And along the way, we've developed mechanisms for how we can verify their authenticity in a way that people like me and you are willing to stake your professional reputation on by reporting on them because you can confirm their authenticity. I remember that's how I felt very comfortable about confirming the authenticity of the Hunter Biden archive when almost every media outlet, except a few on the right, was saying, oh, this seems fake, this is Russian disinformation. There are ways that you can immediately verify it. So the reason why I want to focus so much on what it reveals about the Ellison family, and this goes back, you know, not in the last

couple of years, but even in 2015, is because we do have a lot of billionaires, including very pro-Israel billionaires who are very well known, especially if they become politically active, like Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Ackman and even Pierre Omidyar and Sergey Brin, the co-founder of Google, like there are a lot of billionaires who are pretty well known. The Ellison family, despite Larry Ellison's insane amounts of not just wealth, but power, in terms of the data, has pretty much flown under the radar. And now we have this very family, him and his son, at a crucial time, buying up some of the most influential media outlets, not just CBS, but especially TikTok, which you can't deny the importance of, in a way that clearly seems designed to respond to their concerns about unravelling support for Israel in the United States, in terms of public opinion.

So what is it that you can tell us? Because I think a lot of people really assume that these efforts on the part of Israel to interfere in the United States politics and media started after October 7, but in reality, it's a long time in the making. I remember when we did the Snowden reporting, the NSA identified our great ally Israel as the single greatest and most effective threat for spying on the United States with their technology. We give them billions of dollars and yet they spy on us more effectively and intrusively than anybody. What have these documents shown in general about Israeli influence campaigns over American public opinion about the involvement of David Ellison and the Ellisons in particular?

JP: So it is two asides there, one of the things that's fascinating in these leaks is that, as you recall, I'm sure during the Snowden leaks, one of major leaks was that the NSA had actually been spying on the Israeli Air Force's cockpit feeds from its aircraft. And so you can actually see in some of these emails that news breaking to Israeli officials. The other thing I would say about the sort of intellectual credit that's owed to Assange, I would say yes, I think the concept of scientific journalism is something that he was very big on. And I think when WikiLeaks first started to compile a much larger historical archive of released diplomatic cables, much beyond cable gate, you know for example, the Kissinger cables, et cetera, they really got a lot of heat from journalists who were saying, oh, do you not do leaked materials anymore? Are you just now kind of doing non-secretive things? And the response from Assange was really like, look, the point of this is just to understand things better into – you know, the fact that it's leaked isn't the point. And so I think there's a lot of intellectual credit there in terms of just the project of continually compiling more and more extensive archives of information that is shockingly not that widespread even to this day.

Now in terms of Ellison, yes, you're 100% right. Of course, the prehistory in terms of where a lot of the investigative journalism was much before October 7, was the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, which had really led a lot of these sabotage campaigns. And so what's shown in these emails is that, for example, in 2015, David Ellison was really approached by Gantz through, you know, is part of trying really to reach out to Larry Ellison. And there's actually a lot of conversation with Safra Catz as well. In fact, as a short aside, there's a TV show that she helped produce called *The Women of the IDF*, which is talked about a lot in these emails that recently finally published a decade later. And I bought a copy of the first episode, which was explicitly meant to be propaganda,

which you see in the emails. But Ellison himself said in these emails to be explicitly interested in supporting [Editorial correction: surveilling] the BDS movement. And specifically Gantz named the 12 Tribes Initiative as one of the things that Ellison was interested in. So as of December 2015, through his Skydance email, with the logo and everything, Ellison responds to Gantz of, yes, let's meet next year. Now, I can't tell you what happened after that email, but the fact that these conversations are taking place through the official corporate email addresses about a campaign that is known to have involved, you know sabotage against the BDS movement, like spying on behalf of the Israeli government, collaboration with Black Cube, this is not just some tweets to put it that way.

I would say the broader context here is that one of the things that's gone under the radar is that the initial funders that agreed were actually not American, and I think have received far too little scrutiny, which is Heather Reisman, who's the CEO of Indigo Books in Canada. She's a billionaire alongside her husband, Gerald Schwartz, who's the CEO of a private equity firm based out of Toronto, named Onex Corporation. And that pair was immensely close to Benny Gantz. In fact, Gerald Schwartz was even on his list of seven personal references. Gantz is shown in these emails to have consulted through one of the portfolio companies of Onex Corporation, which is a Swiss packaging company that used to own what's now, you now, the SIG Sauer brand of handguns and machine guns. And then the other very influential donor was Frank Lowy, who is a billionaire that's very famous in Australia for his kind of real estate empire, Westfield. But maybe more to this crowd, he's also the chairman, very longtime chairman of the Tel Aviv-based think tank, the Institute for National Security Studies, which a former head of Israeli intelligence was the executive director of for about a decade. And the Institute for National Security Studies is shown in these emails to have been at the very core of this counter-BDS programme known as 12 Tribes, which, again, to anybody who's sort of known this story for years would know it probably by the name Israel Cyber Shield.

But the other really shocking thing about these emails is that the founder of it is actually an Israeli journalist, one of the co-founders, this is kind of what shocked me the most, it is a still prominent to this day, Israeli national security journalist, his name is Yoav Limor. And just as you mentioned Epstein being extremely close friends with Barak, Lemur seems to basically be like on the level of family with Gantz in these emails. And I would say that that was actually kind of the scariest thing to report on.

GG: Which is just so ironic because, you know, one of the main Israeli arguments and justifications for murdering whatever journalist it feels like murdering in Gaza and elsewhere is that these journalists aren't really journalists, they're working hand-in-hand with the ruling entity of Hamas. And here you have in these emails all kinds of evidence of people who are presented as journalists from mainstream Israeli organisations who of course are working hand in hand directly with the Israeli government in a way that even for the United States would be extremely embarrassing if not worse to reveal. Jack, I need people to go and read these three articles on your Substack because there's so much detail, but I wanna ask you about one in particular, kind of a more of a theory than a specific revelation that there's a lot

in here to support it.

So the first article that you wrote from this archive, and again, this is a massive archive of leaked emails from the inbox of Benny Gantz, an Israeli politician who has been up and all through the top echelon of the Israeli government and still is, and the title of this first article on September 11, that your Substack was: *Exclusive: New owner of CBS – meaning David Ellison – coordinated with former Israeli military chief to counter country's critics, according to leaked emails*. And then you followed that up with one on September 17, I think we have the title on the screen, which was: *Leak indicates the billionaire funders of Israeli cyber campaign targeting anti-apartheid activists*.

Now, I've tried talk about this before and it's a little bit convoluted and difficult to express, but I think it's nonetheless so critical that I'm gonna always keep going back to it, which is in the wake of 2020 and George Floyd and even in the Me Too movement, we had this kind of very effective political movement inside American politics, but also American media that positions itself as opposed to this new form of woke-ism. And there are a lot of people who branded themselves and built media outlets on the basis of this and became very wealthy; you know, saying our free speech is under attack, these people are forcing ideas on us, these are totalitarian, I'm talking about people like Ben Shapiro and Barry Weiss and a lot of others, including myself, I was quite critical of this woke-ism and the effect it had on American discourse. But one of the things that happened, if you go back and notice this, is that there are a lot people for whom Israel had always been their primary political cause, certainly through Ben Shapiro, Barry Weiss going all the way back to her college days at Columbia, was obsessed with professors who she thought were too anti-Israel, and this anti-woke punditry and these new media outlets position themselves against woke-ism were very focused on American college campuses. And I always used to hear the critique and I even kind of shared it myself like why are these adults in their 30s, 40s, and 50s so obsessed with what 18 and 19 and 20-year-old freshmen and sophomore and juniors are doing on American college campuses in terms of their expression?! And their argument was, look, we think that this is a very un-American sort of movement, we're concerned this is gonna spill over into once they get out of college, they're gonna go to workplace and then politics and this is a very kind of oppressive movement, and we as classical liberals, might be Barry Weiss and Ben Shapiro, we love America and so we wanna make sure to smash this college activism. This was before October 7th.

And of course after October 7, it became very overt that if you loved Israel, if your cause was Israel, your main focus became college campuses. You wanted those people crushed and smashed, you wanted them expelled and deported, you wanted new hate speech laws imposed on college campuses, you wanted college professors of Ivy League schools fired, a huge showing of power in the name of stopping anti-Israel protests and I always go back to, and these emails from 2015, people in Israel were for a long time very afraid of what was happening on American college campuses because they believed that this movement to boycott Israel, which had its ground zero centrepiece on American college campuses, the epicentre, was very similar to the boycott movement of South Africa that also grew out of

college campus activism that took down the apartheid regime of South African, very close Israeli ally in the 1980s, and they were petrified that this boycott movement was growing and would be a threat to Israel.

And they got Europe to implement laws, basically criminalising advocacy of boycotts of Israel. In the US it was a little harder; lots of laws got passed saying, if you want a job with the government, you have to pledge you'll never boycott Israel. This is all before October 7. And especially billions of dollars being devoted to combating what they called radicalism on campus, meaning anti-Israeli speech on campus. Have you been able to see, both in general with these email archives, but also with David Ellison's involvement specifically in 2015, this kind of recognition that they need to spend a lot more money and become a lot more organised to control American public opinion about Israel in general, but also college campus dissent in particular?

JP: The notion of campuses being a central battleground was explicit in these Gantz emails in at least one place. I don't think I could quote the specific email offhand, but yeah, I mean, that's not particularly controversial that the BDS movement from Israel's perspective was about combating college campuses. But one maybe provocative, and I'm a little hesitant because I don't like to give too much weight to provocative statements, but I was reporting in person at a conference last year in DC, it was called the Special Competitive Studies Project, and it was the biggest gathering of technology companies in DC ever at the time, according to the organisers, hosted by former Google CEO and decabillionaire Eric Schmidt. And Alex Karp, the CEO of Palantir was one of the speakers. And he explicitly addressed the question you're referring to. And I'm paraphrasing here, of course, because this is offhand, but he said that people think that the US campuses, what's going on there with respect to the encampments, protesting the Israeli occupation, that this is a sideshow, and he said, no, this is the show. And his argument was that if the US government can't suppress the moral protests, the anti-apartheid, anti-genocide protests on college campuses, that then the US government will not be able to in practise deploy US troops in a war where there is loss of life. So basically winning that campus war is actually necessary to win for the sort of freedom of action, so to speak, of the Commander in Chief of the US Government. So sitting next to him was a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and so this was not a particularly controversial statement, let's say. I think it was kind of saying the quiet part out loud that in a country where there is democracy to suppress a sufficient amount of campus activism is actually seen as something that's required for the US military to be effective if that protest is contrary to US foreign policy goals.

In terms of maybe a more substantive response, I actually think one of the more interesting topics here is the kind of complex relationship that's existed between the so-called Network Contagion Research Institute, and then the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, or FIRE, who in full disclosure has actually defended me in a lawsuit quite successfully in California. And I bring it up because NCRI, Network Contagion Research Institute is a very right-leaning, very close with US police, especially the NYPD, with US intelligence, very close with the Israeli government, and in fact, with Sima Vaknin-Gil, who I mentioned earlier

as former Director General of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, and yet it's sort of been right in the world of the freedom of speech community. And in fact this really core report, which I think I even alluded to when I came on the show last was I think it was called The Corruption of the American Mind. And it was cited multiple times in Congress. And its co-authors came from this Institute – it is gapped for the study of global antisemitism and policy. But it had co-author is both from NCRI and from FIRE, which was quite interesting to me. And so there's certainly been a lot of like rubber meets the road here, but I don't think we have the full picture of how some of that response has been as to sort of the squaring of freedom of speech with Zionism to put a word on it.

END

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