

# Ex-Israeli commandos innovate for 'weekend warriors'

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Written by **AFP**



*Besides military experience, Peretz has been helped along by his degree in mechanical engineering*  
**JACK GUEZ (AFP)**

As a young officer in an elite unit of Israel's army, with its motto that no mission is impossible, Idan Peretz knew there had to be a better way to send rescue ropes across rivers.

It was crucial to rescuing people stranded on the other side, but the harpoon-like devices the army used at the time didn't make the grade.

Years later, after over two decades of military service dealing with climbing, rappelling and rescuing, Peretz says he's finally nailed it.

Along with a partner, he's developed a solution involving a drone. Now he wants it to be a key part of his business.

Israel's military has long been known as an incubator for future high-tech firms started by former soldiers, but Peretz and others have adopted a different tack.

and a different take on a tourniquet.



JACK GUEZ (AFP)  
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### - 'Tried on myself first' -

Besides military experience, Peretz has been helped along by his degree in mechanical engineering and his partnership with an experienced inventor, Beeri Katznelson.

His product uses a spool of thin lead-rope attached to a small drone.

It can be flown to the other side of an obstacle, whether a river, bridge or building, and detached by remote control.

An adaptor connects the lead-rope to a sturdier one, which can then be set in place.

On the roof of a building recently, Peretz demonstrated another tool he has developed with Katznelson as part of their Highnovate company.

The tool, whose acronym RAFA sounds like a Hebrew nickname, is a compact and light clamp that Peretz unfolded and attached to the ledge before beginning to rappel.

"I don't hang people on a product I haven't tried on myself first," the soft-spoken Peretz says.

A 27-year veteran of rappelling and climbing, Peretz understands the needs of the field, both for hikers and rescue forces, and has created with Katznelson what he says are "solutions that hadn't existed".

### - 'Knew it was possible' -



*JACK GUEZ (AFP)*

**Peretz and others are using their military knowledge to develop tools that can be used for camping and hiking by**

A similar line of thinking brought two other veterans of Israeli special forces to create an all-in-one hiking tool.

Yaniv Bar was an intelligence officer in what is considered the military's top unit, where he served with Udi Cohen, who as an officer led soldiers in operations deep in the field.

Out of the army and hiking in Bulgaria, Bar realised the need for a single tool that could combine a shovel, axe, hammer, knife and saw.

Without a background in engineering or product development, they consulted with professionals, who told them that the tool they envisioned wasn't feasible.

"We geared ourselves up to action when we were told it's not possible," Cohen said in their office, located in what used to be a lens factory in Maayan Tzvi, a community in northern Israel.

Bar said: "We knew it was possible since we learned in the army that there's no such thing as impossible."

The two men, both in their early 40s and who spent years planning and executing seemingly impossible military operations, went on to create it, naming it COMBAR.

In a clearing of a nearby meadow, Bar and Cohen hacked, sawed and whittled pieces of wood for a small fire with COMBAR, changing its functions with smooth motions punctuated by clicks.

The two men approached the development of their product the way they would a military operation, Bar said.



JACK GUEZ (AFP)  
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### - 'Doing things seriously' -

COMBAR and Highnovate, as well as other devices such as a tourniquet being developed by a former military medic, may seem to have little in common with the high-tech firms Israel is known for.

But their inception is similar, according to one expert.

"You can learn technology in lots of places," said Saul Singer, who co-authored the bestseller "Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle."

"What's harder to learn is to be mission-oriented, to become very oriented toward solving concrete problems and having responsibility and getting challenged."

Israeli military service, mandatory for most Jewish citizens, sees young officers receiving "incredible amounts of responsibility" and facing major challenges, Singer said.

Peretz says Highnovate is a way for him to utilise his military training in the civilian world.

"Today I can say that some of the problems we solve are such that for years I had to circumvent with all kinds of other solutions," he said.

For Bar, "what we took from the army is (the culture of) doing things seriously."

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