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Cannabis Laws Loosening for Israel's Military

13 January, 2017

The Israel Defense Forces have relaxed its cannabis laws for soldiers who are off-duty.

Israeli soldiers accused of using cannabis while on leave will no longer receive disciplinary action, The Times of Israel reports.

Soldiers on leave caught using marijuana or hashish were up until recently systematically court-martialed and subject to prison sentences of up to two months. Under the changes, offenders are required to undergo regular drug testing to verify that they are no longer using.

"We are offering soldiers the chance to continue their service normally and not be imprisoned and hindered by a criminal record in civilian life," former military advocate general Maj. Gen Danny Efroni told Army Radio.

Except for medical purposes, cannabis use is currently illegal in Israel. However, the Military Prosecutor's office has said that the previous policy drained resources and wasn't effective. The Times of Israel reports that 128 soldiers were prosecuted for drug use last year.

"The army wants to give a second chance to soldiers who want to complete a proper military service and to return to the right path," the military said in a statement.

The Israel Defense Forces' loosening of the rule, which went into effect on January 1, does not apply to soldiers who are on active duty or officers. Additionally, the current investigations into off-duty soldiers using cannabis will continue despite the new loosening of the rules.

"We haven't cancelled the investigations," Efroni said. "We are talking about light drug offenses and one-time or a handful of uses in civilian circumstances. But the investigation will be carried out and if we have all the material and evidence to file an indictment we will do it."

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IDF to ease up on pot-smoking soldiers

Service personnel will still be probed for recreational use of cannabis, but no court-martials for limited use

BY AFP | December 21, 2016, 3:50 pm |

Israel's army is to relax its disciplinary action against soldiers accused of smoking cannabis while on leave, a general overseeing the reform said Wednesday.

Offending soldiers will no longer be systematically court-martialed nor receive prison sentences of up to two months, former military advocate general Maj. Gen. (res) Danny Efroni told Army Radio.

But they must agree to undergo regular tests to show they are abstaining from smoking cannabis.

The relaxation does not apply to soldiers who use the drug while on duty.

"We are offering soldiers the chance to continue their service normally and not be imprisoned and hindered by a criminal record in civilian life," Efroni said.

"We haven't cancelled the investigations," he explained. "We are talking about light drug offenses and one-time or a handful of uses in civilian circumstances. But the investigation will be carried out and if we have all the material and evidence to file an indictment we will do it."

Cannabis use is illegal in Israel except for medical purposes.

Last year 128 Israeli soldiers were prosecuted for use of narcotics.

Almost half of the investigations conducted by military police involve drug use.