

State University of New York Study:
"MERKAVA Project Achievements Impressive"

By Galya Yemini
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Last year the state comptroller had many complaints against the way MERKAVA, the cross-governmental computerization project, was being conducted. Contrary to the state comptroller, however, there are those who are complimentary to the project. Two American researchers from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany conducted an academic study on public yield assessment in government IT projects. One of the examples that they chose to analyze is the MERKAVA project.

The researchers, Anthony Cresswell and Brian Burke, followed the project's development, studied government expectations, and attempted to examine the project's ROI.

Although the project has not yet ended, and will be implemented only in several government ministries, the researchers say that, "the success of implementation efforts to date and the growing record of returns, both internal to the government and the public, suggest that the remaining roll-out will continue as planned and the accumulation of returns will continue to grow."

The researchers also complimented the team managing MERKAVA, headed by Itzik Cohen, senior deputy to the Accountant General. In their opinion, the project's consistency maintained over the years, despite changes in the government and the ministers in charge, was achieved only due to the diligence, initiative and political independence of the Finance Ministry officials, led by Cohen.

They report that the project's achievements thus far are "very impressive," and that the project has eliminated 143 legacy systems in one-third of government ministries, and reduced overall IT expenditures by 45%.