



THE “GAZA WAR”:

A Strategic Analysis

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Final Review Draft:
Circulated for Comment and Updating

February 2, 2009

Executive Summary

One can argue whether the fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza is a “war,” or should be seen as just one more tragic surge in violence in the decades-long struggle between Israel and the Palestinians. It is, however, the first major armed struggle between Israel and Hamas, as distinguished between Israel and the PLO and Fatah. It also is a case study in how Israeli capabilities have changed since the fighting with Hezbollah in 2006, and in the nature of asymmetric war between states and non-state actors.

This report examines the war in terms of the lessons of the fighting, what it says about the changes in Israeli tactics and capabilities and the broader lessons it may provide for asymmetric warfare. It analyzes the fighting on the basis of briefings in Israel during and immediately after the fighting made possible by a visit sponsored by Project Interchange, and using day-to-day reporting issued by the Israeli Defense Spokesman.

The analysis reveals impressive improvements in the readiness and capability of the Israeli Defense Forces since the fighting against the Hezbollah in 2006. It also indicates that Israel did not violate the laws of war. It did deliberately use decisive force to enhance regional deterrence and demonstrate that it had restored its military edge. These, however, are legitimate military objectives in spite of their very real humanitarian costs.

Hamas has only provided a few details on its view of the fighting, other than ideological and propaganda statements. Any military report has to be written largely from an Israeli perspective; although it is already clear that the IDF did not succeed in deterring Hamas from new rocket strike on Israel or made definitive changes in the political and military situation in Gaza. In fact, the post conflict situation looks strikingly like the situation before the fighting began.

The impact of the “Gaza War” on the Arab world and Israel’s neighbors is far clearer. The IDF’s success may have enhanced some aspects of Israel’s military “edge” and ability to deter, but it also did much to provoke. Reactions built on the anger caused by both the steadily deteriorating situation of the Palestinians and the impact of civilian casualties and collateral damage – not only in the fighting in Gaza but in Lebanon in 2006.

The end result is that it is far from certain that Israel’s tactical successes achieved significant strategic and grand strategic benefits. In practice, they seem to have had only a marginal impact on Hamas, and their benefits may well have been offset by the mid and long-term strategic costs of the operation in terms of Arab and other regional reactions. Such conclusions are necessarily uncertain, but Israel does not seem to have been properly prepared for the political dimensions of war, or to have had any clear plan and cohesive leadership for achieving conflict termination. Moreover, it seems to have approached the fighting, and the Arab world, with from a strategic perspective that will increase instability in the region and ultimately weaken Israel’s security.

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I. Introduction

One can argue whether the fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza is a “war,” or should be seen as just one more tragic surge in violence in the decades-long struggle between Israel and the Palestinians. It is, however, the first major armed struggle between Israel and Hamas, as distinguished between Israel and the PLO and Fatah. It also is a case study in how Israeli capabilities have changed since the fighting with Hezbollah in 2006, and in the nature of asymmetric war between states and non-state actors.

This report examines the war in terms of the fighting, what it says about the changes in Israeli tactics and capabilities and the broader lessons it may provide for asymmetric warfare. It also examines the impact of the fighting on Israel’s strategic position in the Middle East, and the strategic and grand strategic outcome of the fighting.

Any such report, however, must begin with important caveats. Hamas has not provided details on its view of the fighting other than ideological and propaganda statements. Any military report has to be written largely from an Israeli perspective, although the impact of the fighting and its strategic outcome can be evaluated from a much broader perspective.

Many of the data on the details on the Israeli side of the fighting are not yet available, or contradictory. The author was able to visit Israel at the end of the fighting in a trip arranged by Project Interchange, and speak to senior Israeli officers and officials, and draw on material issued by the IDF spokesman. There was no one Israeli view or perspective on many key issues, however, and the nature of the high level decision-making process on each side often remained obscure, or was colored by political statements and propaganda.

More broadly, it is possible to identify a number of strategic and grand strategic problems and issues, but their outcome is still dependent on the success of the ceasefires that ended the fighting and the struggle to dominate its aftermath. At best, these ceasefires, diplomacy, and ongoing military action of both sides will make the aftermath of the fighting during December 27th to January 17th an extension of the “Gaza War” by other means for months or years. It is the side that “wins” the aftermath of the conflict will be the actual winner – if there is any winner at all.

Asymmetry and Proportionality

There is another key caveat that must be applied to this analysis. It does not attempt to make moral judgments or to take sides in the conflict. It does examine the issue of proportionality, but it does so in the context of fighting and winning asymmetric wars and not as legal or moral issues. To the extent it looks beyond the conflict, it focuses on how fighting affected the perceptions of the combatants and outside states, and the strategic and grand strategic outcome of the fighting, not its legality or humanitarian costs.¹

No one can disregard the importance of international law, but there is a reason that trials are held in courts and not in the media or analysts without training in the complex laws of

war. Anyone can make assertions and many do. Political efforts to manipulate the laws of war and humanitarian considerations have become a key weapon in asymmetric warfare, and are often used as a basis for propaganda and gaining political leverage in this type of conflict. Real suffering is translated into exaggerated charges and numbers that cannot be validated by reliable data or methodology.

In practice, even if Israel had agreed to all of the conventions involved, they are severely limited and often difficult or impossible to apply to the realities of war — even one fought with restraint and a focus on military targets. The laws applying to targeting are ambiguous or dysfunctional in humanitarian terms. Some buildings like schools merit special consideration, but only require review to determine whether they are really military targets. Hospitals require warning but are not protected if used by an enemy. A nation can fight a completely "legal" war and still take actions that severely compromise its international position and have negative political consequences.

The laws and conventions affecting the use of given weapons are sometimes more a matter of arbitrary labeling of given technologies than of the real world impact of such weapons on human suffering. Bullets and fragmentation wounds are not merciful, and the restrictions on them often have little relevance. Large ball bearings and tumbling bullets can be used, but not small flechettes. White phosphorous, can be used against military but not civilian targets

More broadly, such laws and conventions do not bind or restrain non-state actors like Hamas in any meaningful way, and they cannot determine perceptions of the legitimacy of given tactics or means of fighting by non-state actors. In most cases, non-state actors also have ideologies that they believe and declare override most or any restraints imposed by international law. Israel labels groups like Hamas as "unlawful" or "unprivileged combatants" for these reasons.

The end result is a situation where one side can potentially be limited by international law where the other is not, and that effectively makes international law a potential weapon for the side that rejects and exploits it. It is also a situation that empowers and incentivizes extremists to use civilians as the equivalent of human shields by embedding their forces in civilian populations and areas, and using sensitive buildings like mosques and schools or collocating near them. There is nothing new about such tactics. They also affected much of the fighting in Iraq and now affect the fighting in Afghanistan. Their impact, however, is far more apparent in a densely populated area like Gaza.

The debate over proportionality is becoming another extension of war by other means. States and non-state actors continue to use force in their own interest, and almost any rationale can be used to claim that this is done in legitimate self-defense. The opponents of war — or any given side -- can claim that virtually any act of violence is excessive. The advocates of force can claim that virtually any act is necessary.

All of these positions ignore the grim fact that war remains inherently amoral, regardless of it endless efforts to define legitimacy and "just wars." Wars can and should be fought

with restraint, but war will still ultimately be about killing and destroying until the conflict ends.

This does not excuse any use of force where there clearly are ways to avoid civilian casualties and collateral damage and achieve the same military objective. It does not excuse any failure to take humanitarian action where this is required by international law, or is possible without compromising military effectiveness.

But, the problems Israel encountered in the “Gaza War” present the same dilemmas and uncertainties that the US and its allies have faced in Iraq and Afghanistan, and affect every power that becomes involved in asymmetric warfare. There is no clear way to judge that “X” numbers of rockets justify retaliation with “Y” numbers of sorties. There are no rules that say “X” numbers of suicide bombings justify retaliation with “Y” numbers of ground troops. There are no rules that say one should accept the deaths of “X” numbers of one’s own troops to save “Y” numbers of civilians on an opponent’s territory.

These points are not academic. The fighting in Gaza is a case study in the fact that asymmetric warfare confronts any soldier actually in combat with a constant stream of hard choices and exercises in situation ethics obscured by what Clausewitz called the “fog of war.” In many cases, instant choices have to be made where all of the advances in intelligence and command and control do not allow those actually fighting to know the nature of the threat forces or the number of civilians at risk.

At the same time, the very nature of asymmetric warfare often forces the weaker side to maximize this uncertainty by not wearing uniforms, mixing in civilian areas, and using collocated civilians – often women and children – to provide support. This is no more an act of cowardice than using the protection of a tank or aircraft, but it does mean that war is evolving in ways that often increase the risk of civilian casualties and put more and more strain on the capability of armed forces to limit those casualties.

Taking sides in favor of Israel or Hamas cannot disguise the fact that there often are no clear rights and wrongs. Furthermore, focusing on the immediate consequences of military action ignores longer-term realities. Nations not only have to defeat their opponents, they have to deter other opponents. Peoples will not give up on armed struggle simply to survive. There are no equations that say “X” numbers of days of fighting are justified or unjustified by “Y” days of ceasefire. There are no ways to judge how much a given level of security is worth if it comes at the cost of hope for a peace process or alienating states that are not active opponents when the fighting begins.

The Strategic Impact of Taking Sides

At the same time, no state or non-state actor can ignore the real-world impact of their military actions in the “war of perceptions” that is as much a part of modern warfare as the actual fighting. States and peoples do take sides, and every modern conflict reflects the efforts of each side and its supporter to polarize military actions into simple models of good and evil, and just and unjust wars. The “Gaza War” is a case study in the fact that

every actor in a modern conflict must still take account of how their actions are judged by their opponent and the outside world. This is just as true in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, as it is in Gaza. It also is scarcely a new feature of conflict. The battle of perceptions was a key aspect of struggles like Boer War and during the conflicts between Athens and Sparta. Every war, and especially limited asymmetric wars, has a political and media dimension in which the world takes sides and makes moral judgments.

It is also a reality of limited war that the political and media dimension may do more to determine the final outcome of a conflict than the actual fighting. If the war is limited, both actors survive. If the purpose of the fighting is to deter or end a given kind of threat, it cannot end in provoking or leading to new forms of conflict. Deterring other threats is often a key grand strategic purpose of war, but even major tactical victories may not justify major political losses. Hiding among the people may allow a movement to survive, but survival is not victory of the movement loses the people in the process.

II. Going to War

The "Gaza War" did not begin on December 27th. Whether or not one calls the fighting from that date onwards a "war," it is clear that the fighting between December 27th and January 17th was shaped by the entire history of the struggles between Israeli and Palestinian.

The entire Levant is a living demonstration of the fact that those who remember history are often far more willing to repeat its worst moments than those who can manage to forget it. One can go back to the failures of the Turkish Empire, anti-Semitism, and the Balfour Declaration; and Israelis and Palestinians inevitably do.

Moreover, the more immediate antecedents of the "Gaza War" lie in struggles between the two peoples that turned the outcome of the Oslo Accords from a trade of territory for peace into a process of settlements for terrorism, and particularly by the fighting that began in 2000 when Arafat responded to Sharon's visit to the dome of the rock by choosing to respond with violence that escalated into an armed struggle. It was shaped by the failures and corruption with Fatah and the PLO that help prevent the Palestinian Authority from becoming an effective force for national unity and leadership; it was shaped by years of settlement activity and growing efforts at separation, and by divisions in both Israel and the Palestinian movement.

The Rise of Hamas in Gaza

The fighting from 2000 onwards not only discredited peace efforts in the eyes of many Israelis and Palestinians, it empowered Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, religious extremist movements that have called for the destruction of Israel and the creation of a Palestinian state that would absorb it. The corruption and divisions in Fatah and the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas's social programs, also allowed Hamas to win local elections in areas like Gaza, Qalqilya, and Nablus, and the Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006. Hamas won 76 of the 132 seats, and Fatah party won 43.ⁱⁱ

While the Palestinian Authority failed to unify and create effective security forces, Hamas steadily built up its paramilitary force, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, to a force that eventually reached some 6,000-10,000 fighters in Gaza, and thousands of additional part time forces. At least some elements of the Fatah forces in Gaza also came to support Hamas or stood aside as power struggles between Hamas and Fatah became more violent after the 2006 elections.

In June 2007, Hamas was able to exploit the near total collapse of incompetent Palestinian Authority forces in Gaza. It used force to take over control of the entire area – with many Fatah leaders only surviving by fleeing to Israeli protection. It is important to note that this victory occurred far more because of a lack of leadership and elementary competence on the part of the Fatah/Palestinian Authority Forces than any great skill on the part of Hamas. Unlike the Hezbollah, Hamas never had to develop the combat skills necessary to fight an effective opponent.

The result divided the Palestinian movement into the equivalent of two quasi-states or enclaves – a Hamas-controlled Gaza and a Palestinian Authority-controlled West Bank. Elected Hamas officials were removed positions in the Palestinian National Authority government in the West Bank after June 2007, and by members of Fatah and independents. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (Fatah) issued a decree outlawing the Hamas militia and executive force on 18 June 2007. In spite of meetings and negotiations, each side then continued the struggle for power, sometimes removing its opponents from power and sometimes killing or imprisoning them.

The Impact of Hamas's Seizure of Gaza

Hamas's victory in Gaza confronted Israel with a whole new set of opponents on its southern border only months after an indecisive war with Hezbollah in which Israel was unable to achieve any clear strategic objective, and exposed a wide range of weaknesses in its leadership and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

Many of Israel's political and military leaders came to see the outcome of the Hezbollah War in 2006 as having seriously undermined Israel's military "edge" and deterrence of both states and non-state actors. They also saw the Iranian and Syrian rearming of Hezbollah after 2006 as creating a steadily growing threat on Israel's northern border that a UN peacekeeping force could not halt, and as a sign that Iran was able to use proxies to become a (if not *the*) major threat to Israel.

Hamas was also a radically different actor from the Palestinian Authority and Fatah. There are debates over just how firmly Hamas is committed to Israel's destruction, but not over the position of its most hard-line leaders and spokesmen. The Hamas Charter calls for the Palestinians to, "'raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine, for under the wing of Islam followers of all religions can coexist in security and safety where their lives, possessions and rights are concerned." It also – like much Hamas literature – treats Zionists as illegal occupiers and the equivalent of Nazis.

The status of this charter is less official than the PLO charter, and Hamas's rhetoric does show some concern for humanitarian values. The key leader of Hamas, Sheikh Yassin, has said that "There can be no dialogue between a party that is strong and oppressive and another that is weak and oppressed. There can be no dialogue except after the end of oppression." Hamas also states that attacks on civilians can be legitimate under some circumstances, although it justifies this in the context of Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians.

Some Hamas leaders in Gaza have expressed a willingness to deal with Israel, as do some Hamas leaders in the West Bank – who focus largely on Palestinian domestic issues. Ismail Haniyeh, a key Hamas leader in Gaza, stated in 2008 that Hamas might be willing to accept a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, and accept a long-term truce. Other Hamas leaders like Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi made similar statements in earlier years.

The fact remains, however, that Hamas and similar movements continue to take formal positions that effectively called for Israel's destructions, and have a long history of violent or terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians.

Moreover, Hamas literature and speeches treat ceasefires with Israel as the equivalent of a Hudna, or temporary ceasefire that gives Moslems time to recover and build-up their power. It is striking that during the fighting in Gaza in January 2009, Nizar Rayyan, the Hamas military commander, stated that; "The only reason to have a hudna is to prepare yourself for the final battle. We don't need 50 years to prepare ourselves for the final battle with Israel. Israel is impossibility. It is an offense against God."ⁱⁱⁱ

The Israeli Response

Israel had too many enemies and potential threats for its leaders and most of its public to accept a presence on its borders that formally claims all of its territory, and whose more extreme public statements show little restraint. Israel responded to the Hamas takeover by imposing an economic blockade on Hamas and Gaza, sought and won US and European support in limiting aid to Gaza and in labeling Hamas a terrorist organization; turned to the Palestinian Authority to provide an anti-Hamas alternative; and sought support from Egypt in securing Gaza's southern border – the Philadelphia Corridor.

Israel used its control over the border crossings – and much of the Gazan economy, power, and water – to launch a political and economic war against Hamas that began in July 2007. It did so after nearly a half-decade of broader Israeli-Palestinian struggles that had already sharply isolated Gaza and crippled its economy. As some senior Israeli officers and officials stated in briefings at the time, the result was to place Gaza under a "state of siege" or make it a "prison." The decline in Gaza's already weakened economy as led the World Bank to warn of the collapse of the Gazan economy in December 2007. In practice, some 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza became hostages to the power struggle between Israel and Hamas.

Hamas Replies with Force

It can be argued that Palestinian leaders bear as much responsibility for this situation as those of Israel, but the result was that Hamas replied with force. It stepped up its smuggling of arms through tunnels under the 11-kilometer boundary between Egypt and Gaza, and efforts to move them through the Sinai or by sea and through the Gaza's 40-kilometer coastline.

Hamas established smuggling systems which extended in to the Sudan as well as Egypt and succeeded in getting 81/82mm and 120 mm mortars and began to make its own 82mm and 122mm rockets and fire them at Israeli settlements. It acquired more advanced rockets – including longer-range 122mm Grad rockets with ranges up to 43-kilometers. These were Iranian-made copies of Chinese weapons and had to be disassembled and smuggled into Gaza in four parts.

There were some reports that Hamas got even longer-range Fajr rockets from Iran, but these would have been hard to smuggle into Gaza, and the IDF did not publicly exhibit any parts from such rockets or report that Hamas had them even after the ceasefire on

January 17, 2009^t. Hamas also acquired light air defense missiles and weapons – including the SA-7 and HN-5, and RPG-29s and possibly anti-tank guided missiles obtained from Iran, Syria, and the Hezbollah.^{iv}

Hamas used its rockets and mortars to attack Israel while it followed the example of the Hezbollah, and create tunnels and strong points in Gaza, develop new booby traps and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and to create spider web of prepared strong points, underground and hidden shelters, and ambush points throughout urban and built up areas as defensive strong points.

The result became a series of relatively low-level exchanges between Hamas and the IDF that sometimes flared up into more serious clashes. Hamas sought to break out of its isolation and an economic stranglehold while Israel sought to restore its security by ousting Hamas and preventing short term attacks. This conflict paused beginning June 18, 2008, when Israel and Hamas announced a bilateral six-month ceasefire which formally began on June 19, and which had been reach with the help of Egyptian mediators in Cairo. The ceasefire did not, however, lead to any meaningful progress towards lasting accommodation.

Moreover, Hamas succeeded in smuggling in longer-range, Iranian-made rockets. There included 122mm rockets that could penetrate much deeper into Israel and potentially hit key infrastructure like its ports, a desalination plant (which also provided water to Gaza), and a main electric power plant. These rockets were made in Iran, and could be partially disassembled to move more easily through the tunnels into Gaza from Egypt. One Israeli source said that Hamas succeeded in firing 5,726 rockets before the war broke out on December 27th.

At the same time, the IDF went through a major set of reforms designed to restore its readiness, training proficiency, and create a joint capability to deal with nuclear, conventional, and asymmetric conflict. It also quietly prepared and trained for military action in the Gaza that involved at least three levels of fighting to suppress any Hamas use of force.

Senior Israeli officers and officials indicated during the fighting that these plans included an air attack phase, an air-ground phase to further weaken Hamas and secure areas in the north, and a contingency plan to seal off the Philadelphia Corridor and the Gazan-Egyptian border. All who were asked specifically stated that the IDF did not go to war with plans to conduct a sustained occupation, to try to destroy Hamas or all of its forces, or to reintroduce the Palestinian Authority and Fatah, although such contingency plans and exercises may have existed.

Triggering the "Gaza War"

There is no way to determine just how much Hamas's leaders felt the continued isolation and economic deterioration in Gaza during the ceasefire threatened Hamas's position and triggered its decision to use force once the ceasefire ended.

One senior Israeli official indicated that Hamas's decision coincided with acquiring enough long-range Grad (30 kilometers/ 18.6 miles maximum range) and Improved Grad rockets (40 kilometers/ 24.8 miles) from sources like Iran so Hamas could now strike at much of Southern Israel. Hamas previously could only use mortars (6 kilometers/3.7 miles), which could strike at only a few nearby targets in the Israeli towns near Gaza); and Qassam rockets (10 kilometers/6.2 miles), that could strike a few urban targets like Siderot and the outskirts of Ashqelon.

The patterns in these rocket attacks are shown in Figures 1 and 2. They show that the new Grad and Improved Grad rockets allowed Hamas to strike targets like all of Ashqelon, targets well beyond Ashdod, and up to the southern outskirts of Rehovot. This put far greater pressure on Israel to open up the Gaza, as well as seek some arrangement with Egypt to open up its border crossing.^v Some Israeli literature also indicates that this performance may have come as a partial surprise. Pre-war maps issued by the IDF only show the range of the Grad. The improved Grad was added to these maps only after the war began and the rockets were actually used. This may, however, have been a decision to keep Israel's knowledge of these systems from Hamas.

Triggering the "Gaza War"

The immediate trigger of the war was an Israeli raid that killed six Hamas gunmen inside the Gaza Strip on November 4, 2008. Hamas responded with a barrage of rockets, and Israeli sources report that some 190 rockets were fired into Israel in November. The ceasefire was due to expire on December 19th, and Hamas issued a statement that it would end the ceasefire on December 18, 2008. The statement claimed Israel had not honored the terms of the ceasefire or allowed humanitarian aid into Gaza. Hamas then continued its rocket and mortar attacks, firing some 200 rockets during November 4, 2009-December 21, 2009. On December 21st, it launched some 70 rockets, but issued a statement that it might renew the ceasefire, —"if Israel stopped its aggression" in Gaza and opened up its border crossings.^{vi}

It seems clear that Hamas did not understand the probable Israeli reaction, although it is clear from Egyptian officials that it received repeated warnings – including warnings from Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.^{vii} Instead, Hamas reacted during the fighting by attacking Egypt and other moderate Arab states for standing aside: "We call upon the Egyptian authorities to stop these strange positions which are not consistent with the positions of the Egyptian people and their historical positions in supporting the Palestinian cause." It was joined by Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, who stated that Egypt's government was "taking part in the crime," and who called up the Egyptian people to rise and open the Rafah crossing by force.

In spite of case after case since 1948, Hamas did not understand that it was confronting Israel with demands and uses of force where Israel would either have to respond decisively or be seen as having failed to defend itself against the same kind of threat it had faced from the Hezbollah during the fighting in 2006. Like the Hezbollah's leaders in 2006, Hamas fundamentally mischaracterized its enemy in terms of both its intentions and military capabilities.

Hamas's leaders did so in spite of Israel's well-known sensitivity to any attacks on its civilians and key facilities, the damage and civilian casualties Lebanon had suffered in 2006, and many articles that described the improvements the IDF had made in its military capabilities since the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict. At least in this sense, Hamas must bear responsibility for the key strategic and grand strategic mistakes that initiated the conflict. Israel began Operation Cast Lead on December 27-28, 2008. This was only days after Hamas had effectively issued its ultimatum and conducted a major rocket attack, and probably as soon as the IDF could react decisively to Hamas's action.

Technology versus "Human Shields"

The end result was that Hamas initiated the conflict as a weak non-state actor that could launch rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli civilians and civil facilities over an extended period of time but had little other warfighting capability other than using its own densely populated urban areas as barriers. It did so in part because it had no other real means of combat. At the same time, it seems to have relied on the population density of Gaza to both deter Israeli attacks, and as a defense against Israeli land and air attacks.

Guerrilla and insurgent forces have used human shields and the population as a key means of defense throughout history, and war between states and non-state actors has been seen as legitimate at some point in the history of every state that attempts to classify such tactics as illegal or terrorism. The human cost, however, soon became so high that it affected perceptions of Hamas in Gaza throughout the region and the world.

Israel responded as a state using modern weapons, conventional forces, and advanced technology. It exploited these capabilities to minimize its casualties, to attack Hamas in ways designed to produce maximum damage in a minimum amount of time, and in a form designed to deter Hamas and other threats to Israel by showing that even limited attacks on Israel would result in Israel's use of massive amounts of force. At the same time, Israel did take some steps to limit civilian casualties and collateral damage. There are no laws of war or historical precedents that say such an approach is not legitimate or necessary. The human cost, however, was again so high that it inevitably affected perceptions of Israel throughout the region and the world.

III. Beginning the War with Uncertain Israeli Objectives and a Divided Leadership

One key uncertainty surrounding any military analysis of the war is exactly what Israel's strategic and grand strategic objectives were in launching the war, sustaining it, and terminating it. As was noted earlier, senior Israeli officers and officials stated during the fighting that these plans included an air attack phase, an air-ground phase to further weaken Hamas and secure areas in the north, and a contingency plan to seal off the Philadelphia Corridor and the Gazan-Egyptian border. All who were asked specifically stated that the IDF did not go to war with plans to conduct a sustained occupation, to try to destroy Hamas or all of its forces, or to reintroduce the Palestinian Authority and Fatah, although such contingency plans and exercises may have existed.

Israeli media sources and think tanks did initially speculate about a very different and much broader campaign. While such reports differed in detail, they generally described a four-phase campaign and the last two phases were to destroy Hamas or all of its forces, and then to reintroduce the Palestinian Authority and Fatah, although such contingency plans and exercises may have existed.

Briefings by senior Israeli officials and officers indicate that Israel may have considered such broader options but rejected them because (a) they would have greatly increased IDF and civilian casualties, and the length of the war, without being able to fully destroy Hamas, (b) because the Palestinian Authority was felt to be so weak and ineffective that the IDF would have had to conduct a much longer occupation and effectively have made the Palestinian Authority seem to be an Israeli client or "stooge" in the process, (c) Israel would have ended in being fully responsible for securing Gaza's southern border and in effective contact with Egypt, and (d) Israeli would have suffered greater problems in terms of the reactions of Arab states and the international community and created more problems for the US.

Israel's leaders may also have rejected this level of escalation because they hoped that the terms of a ceasefire could cut off Hamas from major resupply and transfers of more advanced weapons, that Egypt would perform a larger role in security the Gaza's southern border, and that the Palestinian Authority could do more to restore a legitimate role in Gaza by playing a major role in controlling aid and shaping the reconstruction of Gaza that it could by replacing a defeated Hamas.

There seemed to be more consensus among Israeli officials, officers, and analysts over three other aspects of Israeli strategy and leadership:

- First, Israeli officers and officials, as well as military analysts and journalists, felt that Israel had to fight in ways that would restore Israeli deterrence, and show the Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria that it was too dangerous to challenge Israel by limited or asymmetric attacks. In short, Gaza and Hamas were only one objective of the war. Rebuilding deterrence was an equal objective and this could only be demonstrated by conducting a highly punitive air and ground campaign against Hamas with limited losses to the IDF and an unacceptably high price tag to Hamas and Gaza. One official went so far as to state that, Israel had make its enemies feel it was "crazy." Others stated, however,

that Israel did not escalate beyond clear limits, and was careful not to go to extremes, took account of civilian casualties, and provided humanitarian assistance were possible.

- Second, a number of Israeli officers, officials, analysts, and media made it clear that Israel's leaders did not have clear or detailed plans to obtain Egyptian and international action to secure the south when the war began, to obtain the kind of aid and reconstruction effort needed to weaken Hamas, to conduct an information campaign of the scale necessary to minimize the damage to Israel's reputation, to provide a coherent humanitarian effort to demonstrate Israeli restraint and embarrass Hamas, or to achieve any other major post war strategic or grand strategic objective. Such goals may have existed in broad terms, but there was no political or civil counterpart to the highly detailed war planning conducted by the IMF. While history may reveal a different conclusion in time, no Israeli leader gave a clear indication of the purpose and desired outcome of the conflict during the war or seemed to act to achieve clearly defined goals and objectives once the fighting began. At least in some ways, Israel's leadership seems to have repeated key mistakes made during the fighting in Lebanon in 2006.
- Third, there seemed to be broad agreement among Israeli officers, officials, analysts, and media that Israel's top three leaders – its Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Foreign Minister – disagreed over the length the conflict should last, the nature and priority that should be given to diplomacy, and how long the conflict should last before a ceasefire. Accounts differed over the nature and intensity of these differences, but Defense Minister Barak was generally credited with wanting to terminate the fighting once Israel scored major initial gains through air strikes and the air land battle, Foreign Minister Livni with wanting to extend the conflict until significant success could be achieved at the diplomatic level, and Prime Minister Olmert with seeking to extend the war until Hamas was weakened as much as possible and outside states – including Egypt – agreed to play a major role in securing Gaza.

Some Israeli analysts have already charged that Israel's political leadership went to war in ways that almost ensured that the fighting would lack a strategically meaningful outcome. For example, Brigadier General Zivka Fogel, a key artillery commander in the fighting, has been quoted as saying that Israel missed, "a historic opportunity... Hamas was really at the breaking point. We should have turned up the pressure."^{viii}

These are legitimate issues, but they are also debatable. If one looks at the Hamas actions that triggered the fighting, the Israeli actions that followed, the divisions in Israeli politics and the Palestinian movement, and the impact of regional and international politics; neither Israel nor Hamas may have had a clear and decisive endgame as an option. The most either side may have been able to hope for was to gain advantage, not any form of decisive victory. Nevertheless, both sides do seem to have "escalated to nowhere." Both either set unachievable objectives or failed to properly act to maximize the chances of achieving them and minimize damage to their own side.

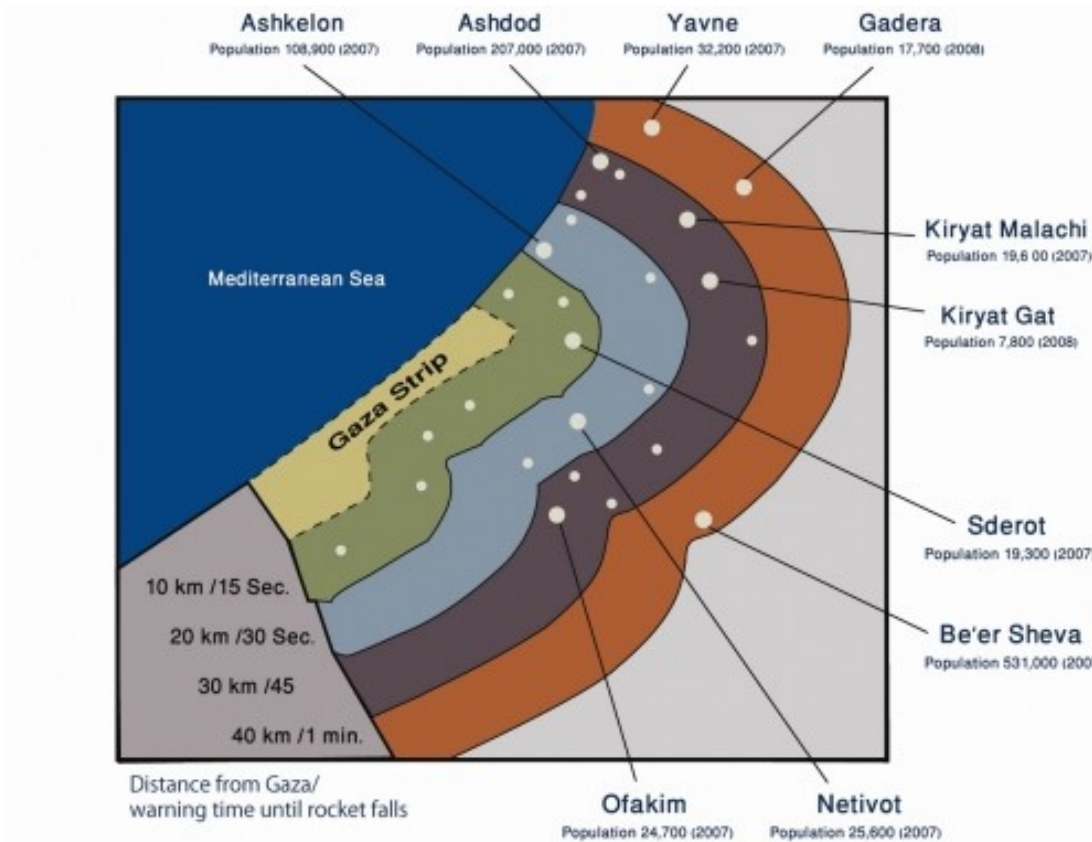
**Figure 1: Patterns in the Rocket and Mortar Attacks on Gaza
(Average)**

Year	Month	Qassams Fired	Mortars Fired	Grad Rockets Fired	Overall Rockets Fired
2005	September	190	-	-	-
2006	-	1,190	-	-	-
2007	January	30	5	?	-
	February	40	5	?	-
	March	35	5	?	-
	April	40	35	?	-
	May	310	85	?	-
	June	70	120	?	-
	July	100	140	?	-
	August	90	175	?	-
	September	80	210	?	-
	October	75	220	?	-
	November	120	220	?	-
	December	120	215	?	-
	Total		1,115	1,435	NA
2008	January	0	0	0	-
	February	310	225	10	-
	March	255	135	15	-
	April	165	375	-	-
	May	145	240	5	-
	June				
	(until 18.06)	90	155	-	-
	(until 19.06)	10	5	-	-
	July	5	15	-	-
	August	10	15	-	-
	September	5	2	-	-
	October	2	5	-	-
	November				
	(until 3.11) (4.11 on)	130	90	7	-
	December (until 21.12)	125	80		-
Total	1,500	1,600	40	3,400	

Note: Israeli did not make specific counts of the longer range Grad rockets until 2008. The IDF does not define the meaning of “average” in reporting rocket and mortar numbers.

Source: IDF Defense Spokesman

Figure 2: The Expanding Range of Hamas Rocket Attacks



Note: The final two bans show the impact of the Grad and extended range Grad rockets

Source: IDF Spokesman, <http://idfspokesperson.com/2009/01/21/rocket-and-population-map-21-jan-2009/>

IV. The Air Phase of the Israeli Campaign and Its Impact on Hamas: December 27th-January 3rd

The military side of the war was very different; Israel fought it with far more efficiency than it fought the war against the Hezbollah in 2006. Israel was able to go war after months of detailed planning based upon the lessons of the fighting in 2006; and after concerted efforts to adapt its air, ground, and naval forces to those lessons. It greatly stepped up its training and readiness, restructured its command to suit the needs of asymmetric warfare, and developed new approaches to both the initial air attack phase and to the air-ground phase that followed.

Senior Israeli officers and officials made it clear that Israel coupled these months of war planning and specialized training and development of new tactics and equipment with deliberate efforts to ensure that it could achieve both surprise and deception. Israel established high levels of secrecy and compartmentation to ensure that its war plans did not leak. It prepared a campaign that ensured that there would be minimal media coverage in an area where virtually any image or report could aid Hamas. It made sure that its forces did not bring cell phones into the area. Hezbollah's ability to listen to, and locate, cell phone traffic had been a major problem in the fighting with Hezbollah.

Israel's deception plan helped that Hamas did not have clear warning that Israel would attack and did not disperse its leaders and key assets. It visibly sent soldiers on leave, and carried out graduation ceremonies as the fighting began. It sent senior officials to visit the areas near Gaza in ways that seemed to signal that Israel was not preparing to fight. Foreign Minister Livni visited Egypt and the visit was publicized in ways that seem to send the same signal. The attack began at 11:30 on a Saturday, and aircraft flew in from the Mediterranean flying profiles similar to commercial aircraft.

Setting the Stage for Air Operations

There is no way to determine how accurate the intelligence and targeting picture the IDF developed before December 27th really was, but it seems likely that Israel did develop a "mosaic" of targets over a period of several years where highly detailed imagery and COMINT were supplemented by effective HUMINT to create a remarkably accurate picture of Hamas targets in Gaza that it constantly updated on a near realtime basis. The IDF also cooperated directly with Israel's civil intelligence branch – the Shin Bet – in developing its targets for the first time, which gave the IDF improved access to Palestinian HUMINT as well as technical intelligence.^{ix}

In some cases, the IAF was able to use small, hard to detect, UAVs to characterize targets and confirm that they had a military purpose. It is also possible that Israel could have supplemented its normal intelligence and HUMINT assets with unattended ground sensors, including seismic sensors to help find tunnels and shelters – although there are serious limits to the capability of such devices.

The IAF Targeting Plan

The end result was that the IAF developed a targeting plan that senior Israeli officers stated included some 603 major targets, and which treated virtually every known Hamas location or residence as a potential area of operations and part of the Hamas leadership and military infrastructure. Israel was able to focus locating and characterizing Hamas's dispersed networks and leadership, and its tunneling and sheltering activities, as a result of the lessons it learned from fighting the Hezbollah in 2006.

The plan had limits. According to senior Israeli officials, Israel decided that it could not effectively destroy Hamas without much more intense air and ground engagements, and a longer occupation, than it was willing to plan for. It also accepted the fact it could not suppress every rocket or mortar, and would have to rely on civil defense, rather than the ability of the air force and army to halt every attack. This simplified Israeli war planning and the air operation. It allowed the IAF to stay focused on high priority targets rather than disperse its efforts.

At the same time, every aspect of this plan was based on a detailed target analysis that explicitly evaluated the risk to civilians and the location of sensitive sites like schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, and other holy sites. Targeting was based on whether, "an object by which its nature, location, purpose, or use makes an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction in the circumstances ruling at the time gives a definite military advantage."^x Each strike was documented for future reference, as were artillery strikes later where this was possible. IDF specialists in operational validation were involved in planning, and in all phases of air and land operations.

IAF Advantages in Executing the Plan

Israel did, however, have major advantages in executing its plans as well as limits. It had total air supremacy, and faced limited threats from Hamas's primitive land-based air defense. It could take advantage of the most advanced combat aircraft in the world, and steady advances in command and control, intelligence, reconnaissance, and precision munitions which it could tailor to a specific threat having just fought a somewhat similar threat in 2006.

Virtually all IAF fixed wing strikes could be carried out from aircraft fully loaded with their maximum payload of precision weapons, and which could carry out multiple strikes per sorties on relatively soft targets. Combat aircraft could patrol while they were separated largely by area of operation and altitude of flight, and the target density was limited enough so that pilots could take the time to carry out each strike with great precision. Its attack profiles did not require complex flight patterns or attack profiles.

The Israeli Air Force could mix precision with extraordinary situational awareness, and intelligence that was provide in real time or near real time. It did not have to preplan its targets, although it certainly did in many cases – and in most cases during the first days of the fighting. The IAF could retarget aircraft patrolling the area that were on call and did not have to move to the target area.

The Israeli Air Force could also concentrate its assets over a small area, much of which was open or desert. Flight times were negligible and only limited assets have to be held in reserve to deal with the limited risk or intervention from outside states. The IAF's fixed wing aircraft could fly at high altitudes outside the line of sight, or where no one on the ground could know what or where a given aircraft could target. This allowed it to take full advantage of both advanced GPS and laser-guided munitions; and modern targeting avionics like synthetic aperture radar targeting pods, high resolution aerial imaging pods, and UAVs like the Shoval.^{xi}

The IAF could use a broad family of unmanned aerial vehicles to perform reconnaissance and targeting missions, and attack helicopters to perform support strikes or precision strikes in areas where it had a high degree of confidence it did not face a threat from short-range anti-aircraft guns, rocket launchers, or light surface-to-air missiles like the SA-7 and HN-5. This was particularly important in acquiring targets of opportunity during the air phase and combat targets during the land-air phase. A pilot could have some 15-20 seconds in which to acquire and strike at such a target and a permissive environment was important.

Limits on Civilian Casualties and Collateral Damage

The IAF did make a systematic effort to limit collateral damage. It developed detailed targeting plans to identify sensitive areas and targets. It prepared for fighting in an urban environment by developing highly detailed maps that tracked Hamas movements, facilities, shelters and tunnels against civilian facilities, and the location of sensitive facilities like schools, hospitals, and religious sites. It planned and executed strikes using the smallest possible weapon, and coordinated both air strikes and the use of artillery weapons using GPS to try to deconflict military targeting from damage to civilian facilities.

It used large numbers of 500-pound, 250-pound and other small precision guided bombs, and limited the size of the bombs it directed against tunnels and shelters as much as possible. It evidently was able to use 500-pound JDAMs to destroy most of the tunnels and hard points that the IAF attacked, rather than the much larger munitions that would have been used in previous conflicts. It developed small 10-20 kilogram bombs that could be used as both warning shots – sometimes referred to a "knocking on the roof" -- and as weapons that could be used against small open targets.

Once the campaign began, Israel also distributed hundreds of thousands of leaflets and used its intelligence on cell phone networks in Gaza to issue warnings to civilians, including phone calls to some families in high-risk areas and families of Hamas personnel.

At the same time, the use of these lighter weapons sometimes had to be mixed with the use of the equivalent of larger bombs in order to strike successfully at larger, hardened, and sheltered targets. Imagery shown in the IDF Spokesman's web site also shows the many Hamas targets were so deeply embedded in densely populated areas and located so close to civilian buildings that it was impossible to avoid collateral damage – reporting

confirmed by at least some Palestinian maps and media reporting.^{xii} Hamas fighters did make use of civilian cover, and IDF forces almost certainly were correct in reporting that Hamas used mosques and other sensitive sites in combat, although there is no way to determine how many such reports were correct or how many suspect sites were not actually being used by Hamas and still were struck in the heat and uncertainty of combat.

This latter problem became far more acute once the air phase became dynamic and during the air-land phase. The time window for striking at military forces in a given building can sometimes range from 15-60 seconds. Angles of fire are not precisely identifiable either through line of sight or even a dense mix of UAVs and other sensors. IDF forces moved rapidly, used urban cover, and used suppressive fire to deny Hamas the ability to repeat the kind of successful short range strikes and swarming of multiple firings of such weapons that the Hezbollah had carried out in 2006. For all of the advances that technology made in IS&R and situational awareness, they scarcely eliminated the fog of war.

No matter how careful planners are, some targets will be empty or misidentified. No matter how careful pilots are, any large-scale use of ordnance will – and did – lead to significant numbers of misidentified targets, misfires, and weapons that do not hit their target with the intended precision. US experience indicates that anywhere from 5-10% of precision weapons might hit the wrong target in a closely packed urban environment, even with “best effort” target planning, rules of engagement, and pilot release and guidance.

The Continuing Role of the Israeli Navy

It is also important to note that the Israeli Navy played a role in both securing the coast of Gaza and in providing support in attacking land targets. This support is described in detail in each of the chronologies that follows. It included the use of naval UAVs and the Typhoon stabilized remotely controlled guidance system for its cannons. It may have also used a naval version of the IDF's Spike anti-tank guided weapon to support operations by the Paratroop brigade once the air land phase of the fighting began.^{xiii}

The Air Campaign Begins

Once the fighting began, the Israel Defense Spokesman issued statements explaining the reason for initiating the operation, and describing its scope. It should be noted that at no point did the IDF state that it had the goal of destroying all Hamas forces, of being able to stop all rocket launches, of occupying Gaza, or of reintroducing rule by the Palestinian Authority or its forces:

- The Air Force activity came as a result of the continuation of terror activity by Hamas terror organization from the Gaza Strip, and the duration of rocket launching and targeting Israeli civilians.
- The targets that were attacked were located by intelligence gathered during the last months and include Hamas terror operatives that operated from the organization's headquarters, training camps and weaponry storage warehouses.
- The Hamas government leaders and operatives, who activate terror from within civilian population centers, are the sole bearers of responsibility for Israel's military response.

- This response is crucial for preserving Israel's security interests.
- The IDF Spokesperson wishes to emphasize that anyone sponsoring terror, hosting terror in his house, housing terror in his basement and sending his wives and children to serve as human shields- is considered a terrorist.
- The IDF will continue its activity against terror activities according to operational assessments held by the Chief of the General Staff.
- The IDF is ready to widen and deepen its activity against all terror organizations in the Gaza Strip, as long as it is necessary.
- In addition, the Homefront Command and emergency authorities, took all necessary measures for preparing the civilian population.

At this writing, the IAF has not issued full details on the number of sorties flown, consistent data on the numbers of strikes by given day, analyses of the targets hit and destroyed by type, or detailed estimates of what the IAF felt it accomplished during the first days of combat. Media sources indicate, however, that Israel initially struck at some 150 target groups using aircraft that often carried 4-6 precision weapons each, and that the number then dropped to some 90 target groups the second day and then levels of 40-70 per day.

One senior Israeli officer stated that the IAF was so successful during its first 3-4 days that it achieved its basic objective of inflicting critical damage to Hamas. Another officer went so far as to say that the IAF began its attacks at 11:30 and could have ended them at 11:40. High-level Israeli officers also gave briefings that indicated that the deception plan worked and Hamas was exposed and vulnerable -- particularly during the initial waves of attack.

A senior Israeli officer also noted that the air phase of Operation Cast Lead was somewhat similar to the IAF's success in 1967 in that it was able to implement decisive damage in the initial days of combat, and do so with almost complete surprise. He claimed that the IAF achieved decisive results against much of Hamas's target base in the first four minutes of its air strikes -- much as its attacks have devastated Egyptian and Syrian air forces in 1967. The IAF then had to shift to attacking six sets of less critical targets as Hamas increasingly dispersed its forces and resources:

- Infrastructure
- Manufacturing capabilities
- Storage areas.
- Rocket sites, including buried positions.
- Tunnels and sheltered underground facilities,
- Homes of Hamas leaders and combatants -- "knocking on the roof."
- Mobile Hamas combat forces.

He claimed that the IAF had successfully hit all 603 of its key target sets in the prewar bank of targets during the first 3-4 days. The IDF spokesman made less ambitious claims, but confirmed that Israel had hit 450 Hamas targets in the Gaza strip by the afternoon of December 31st -- some four days into the conflict.

Other reports indicate that Israel used 88 strike aircraft to strike at some 100 preplanned targets in an initial wave that lasted only 220 seconds. They also indicate that the IAF had flown at least 555 fixed strike and 125 helicopter missions by January 2nd, and had destroyed more than 500 targets.

These initial targets included some 100 "tunnels." The IDF had estimated before the fighting that there were some 300 "tunnels" in Gaza, some more than 40 feet underground and 250 feet long.^{xiv} Accordingly, the IAF hit was roughly one-third of the underground passages built by Hamas and other militant groups to smuggle in arms; shelter command sites and personnel, and to store weapons and supplies before the air phase ended.^{xv} In contrast, Israel had started the Lebanon War with only 150 preplanned targets and the IAF took about 10 days to destroy them all. It then had serious difficulty in acquiring new major targets.

Day-By-Day Fighting During the Air Phase of Operation Cast Lead

The air phase of the campaign lasted from December 27th to January 3rd. During this period the IAF spokesman provided daily statements that described the targeting and intended outcome of Israeli air strikes. These reports provide considerable insight into the air campaign, Hamas's response, and the role civil defense played in response to its rocket and mortar strikes on Israel:

December 27

- Since this morning, the IDF attacked dozens of targets affiliated with the Hamas terror organization in the Gaza Strip. The targets included command centers, training camps, various Hamas installations, rocket manufacturing facilities and storage warehouses.
- The vast majority of the casualties are terror operatives; most of whom were wearing uniform and working on behalf of terror organizations.
- The operation is ongoing and will continue for as long as is necessary, pending security assessments by the General Staff the IDF Chief of Staff.
- The IDF wishes to emphasize that secrecy and the element of surprise were central to the implementation of the operation.
- The IDF also wishes to inform the Israeli public that it must prepare itself for continued rocket fire by Hamas. The patience and resilience of the Israeli public is required.
- The Israeli public is requested to listen to IDF Spokesperson Announcements and follow directions given by the Home Front Command in order to ensure their safety.
- Israeli Communities Within Range of Rocket Fire – Emergency Instructions for Civilian Population
 - The firing of rockets at Israeli communities around the Gaza Strip is expected to continue over the next few days, and may expand to additional area. Therefore, residents are requested to follow directions for preparing a protected room and to act in accordance with the instructions at the sound of an alarm, an explosion, or a "Color Red" alert.

- Residents of villages adjacent to the security fence are asked to remain within shelters tomorrow, in close proximity to protected areas, and are requested not to assemble in groups.
- All schools and commercial centers will remain closed, with the exception of vital services, such as medical centers; grocery stores and public transit will operate on a limited schedule.
- Residents in the rest of the villages within range of up to 10 km of the Gaza security fence are directed to ensure that they are no more than 15 seconds from a protected area. Public gatherings in this perimeter are forbidden.
- Residents of towns in the range of 10 to 20 kilometers of the Gaza Strip, must be able to enter sheltered areas within 30 seconds. This area includes the cities of Ashkelon, Netivot and the surrounding towns. In these towns, gatherings of up to 100 people are allowed to be held only under reinforced ceilings. Commercial activity will only be allowed to take place in reinforced buildings.
- Residents of towns in the range of 20 to 30 kilometers of the Gaza Strip, must be able to enter sheltered areas within 45 seconds, and gatherings of up to 500 people are allowed to be held only under reinforced ceilings. This area includes the cities of Ashdod, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Mal'achi, Ofakim, Rahat, and the surrounding towns. Only schools that are reinforced buildings will open. Commercial activity will only be allowed to take place in reinforced buildings.
- A number of important issues for the civilian population: The Homefront Command has advised the local authorities to open the public shelters. Entrance to the shelters is advised only if they are reachable within the aforementioned time frames. Gatherings near rocket attack sites should be avoided. Unidentifiable objects and rockets should not be approached. In such instances the police should be notified.

December 28th

- ... the IAF attacked over 40 tunnels in the Rafah area. The tunnels were a part of the tunnel network used by the Hamas terror organization for smuggling weaponry and transferring terror operatives in the Gaza Strip.
- The IDF will continue operating against terror operatives and anyone involved, including those sponsoring and hosting terrorists, in addition to those that send innocent women and children to be used as human shields.
- Late Sunday night (Dec.28), IDF forces struck dozens of Hamas targets including weapons manufacturing and storage facilities, outposts, tunnels, missile launching pads and equipment warehouses.
- Among the targets hit was the office of Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, in Gaza City. The IAF also targeted a weapons research and development center that was used as a laboratory to develop and manufacture explosives and was an integral part of the Qassam rocket manufacturing infrastructure.
- Naval forces also struck a number of targets, including Hamas vessels and posts, and reported direct hits.
- More than 150 rockets and mortar shells have been launched at Israel since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead.

- The IDF Spokesperson wishes to emphasize that the IDF will continue to act against anyone who harbors terrorists in their residence, provides support to terrorists and their activities, and forces their children and spouses to act as human shields.
- The Home Front Command has deployed soldiers to assist the residents of the communities surrounding the Gaza Strip. Together with the emergency authorities, they are doing as much as possible to prepare the population. The residents of the Gaza periphery are requested to follow the directions provided by the Home Front Command.

December 29, 2008

- The Israeli Air Force attacked a number of Hamas targets during the night, including Hamas outposts, weapon manufacturing facilities and a center for weapon research and development.
- The center, located in the Rimel neighborhood of Gaza City, was targeted in a combined IDF and the ISA operation, the IAF struck buildings that were used as meeting places for senior leaders of Hamas.
- One of the structures struck housed explosives laboratories that were an inseparable part of Hamas' research and development program, as well as places that served as storage facilities for the organization. The development of these weapons took place under the auspices of senior lecturers who are activists in Hamas.
- Among the weapons that have been developed and manufactured at this site are Qassam rockets. Hamas has been working tirelessly to extend the range of the rockets, as has been shown during the past few days.
- In February 2007 the Fatah Presidential Guard raided the facility and uncovered many weapons including approximately 100 Qassam rockets, 250 RPG launchers, hundreds of assault rifles, lathes, and materials used for rocket manufacturing.

December 30, 2008

- Israeli air and naval forces attacked dozens of Hamas targets throughout the Gaza Strip during the early morning hours on Tuesday. The targets included three buildings in the Hamas government complex in the Tel Al-Hawa neighborhood, Hamas training camps and outposts, stations held by the Islamist group's naval force, a vehicle transporting a stockpile of Grad missiles, rocket launchers, a weaponry manufacturing facility and sites used as headquarters by terror cells.
- Three of the buildings attacked last night in the Hamas Gaza city government complex were severely hit and are no longer fit for use. The buildings were the center in which Hamas concentrated its leadership as well as the administrative mechanisms that provided the funding and support for its terrorist activities.
- The offices of the ministers, vice ministers and senior personnel of Hamas's Finance Ministry, Foreign Ministry, Labor Ministry and the Construction and Housing Ministry were targeted and destroyed.
- The targeting of strategic governmental targets follows the continued firing by Hamas of rockets at Israel civilians, and as a part of the IDF operation against Hamas infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.
- Additional targets have been attacked today. The operation will continue as long as needed on the basis of ongoing security assessments.

- Two civilians and an IDF soldier were killed, and several civilians and soldiers were wounded from rocket and mortar attacks on Israel since Monday. In all, more than 70 rockets and mortar shells were launched from the Gaza Strip during that time.
- Due to the incessant rocket attacks against Israeli towns, the IDF Home Front Command has revised and expanded its emergency directives for Tuesday to include all communities within a 30 kilometer radius of the Gaza Strip. The instructions call for all schools to remain closed, the limiting of 100 individuals per fortified shelter and the discouraging of large gatherings outdoors.
- A short while ago, the IAF struck dozens of tunnels in the Rafah area that are a part of the tunnel network used by the Hamas terror organization. These tunnels were used for smuggling weapons as part of their terror activity in the Gaza Strip. Accurate hits were reported. The tunnel network was also used for the passage of terror operatives between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. These tunnels play a major role in supplying Hamas with the means of strengthening its ability to carry out terror activity.
- Thirty additional targets throughout the Gaza Strip were also targeted today, including tunnels throughout the northern and southern Gaza Strip, seven Grad missile and five Qassam rocket launchers, rocket launching squads, rocket launching sites, weapons manufacturing facilities, Hamas outposts, and armed terror operatives.
- Secondary explosions were seen in many of the attacks proving the presence of large amounts of ordinance, explosive materials, and weapons in the area.
- Israel also transferred dozens of humanitarian aid trucks into the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing.
- The IDF will continue operating against terror and anyone involved, including those sponsoring and hosting terror, and those who send innocent woman and children to be used as human shields.
- Two civilians and an IDF soldier were killed, and several civilians and soldiers were wounded from rocket and mortar attacks on Israel since Monday. In all, more than 70 rockets and mortar shells were launched from the Gaza Strip during that time.
- Due to the incessant rocket attacks against Israeli towns, the IDF Home Front Command has revised and expanded its emergency directives for Tuesday to include all communities within a 30 kilometer radius of the Gaza Strip.
- The instructions call for all schools to remain closed, the limiting of 100 individuals per fortified shelter and the discouraging of large gathering outdoors.

December 31, 2008

- Last night (Dec.30), the IAF struck the offices of the Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh located in Gaza City. The office was used as a center for the planning, support and financing of terrorist activities against Israel. In addition, the offices of other Hamas ministers in the same area were attacked.
- The IDF has attacked three structures in Hamas' government complex in the al-Hawa neighborhood of Gaza City over the past few days, including the Finance Ministry, Foreign Ministry, Labor Ministry and the Construction and Housing Ministry. The buildings have been destroyed as a result of the attacks.
- These attacks on strategic government offices, as well as the offices of Haniyeh, come as a direct response to the continuous firing of missiles toward communities in the South. The IDF will continue its mission, attack the Hamas terrorist infrastructure, and will operate against terrorist organizations and anyone who provides support to terrorists.

- The IAF attacked 35 additional targets, including: tunnels in the Rafah border area, weapon storage facilities, Hamas outposts and an armed rocket launcher.

Naval forces also attacked a number of targets in the Gaza Strip, including Hamas outposts, training camps, guarding vessels used by Hamas naval forces and rocket launching posts.

- The IDF will move forward with its mission, attack the Hamas terror infrastructure, and will operate against terrorist organizations and anyone who provides support to terrorists.
- IAF targeted a mosque in the Tel El Hawwa neighborhood in Gaza City on Wednesday afternoon that was used by Hamas as a Grad missile and Qassam rocket storage site, as well as a staging ground for rocket and missile launches. The most recent rocket launching from the mosque occurred this morning.
- The strike set off numerous secondary explosions, caused by the munitions stockpiled in the mosque. In recent days, joint IDF and ISA intelligence efforts produced information that terrorists were hoarding weapons in the mosque and carrying out rocket attacks against Israeli communities from its grounds, as well as using it as a hiding place.
- The IDF will continue to attack any target used for terrorist activity, and will not hesitate to strike those involved in terrorism against the citizens of the State of Israel, even if they cynically choose to operate from locations of religious or cultural significance.
- Operation Cast Lead, which aims to reduce Hamas' capacity to launch rocket attacks against communities in southern Israel, is now in its fifth day. The IDF is engaged in a battle with Hamas and other terror organizations in the Gaza Strip and does not aim to target the Palestinian civilian population.
- Since the early morning hours on Wednesday, the IDF has attacked over 25 targets in the Gaza Strip. These include the following:
 - A mosque in Gaza City used as a storage site for Grad missiles and Qassam rockets, as well as a staging ground for launches. The strike set off numerous secondary explosions caused by the munitions stockpiled in the mosque.
 - Weapon manufacturing and storage facilities in southern Gaza, including a storage site in the Khan Younis area where Amar Abu Ghalula, a senior commander of the Islamic Jihad's rocket infrastructure, was present. Three additional Islamic Jihad operatives were in the facility at the time of the IAF strike.
 - A tunnel in the Khan Younis area that was used for the smuggling of operatives and weaponry.
 - A Hamas outpost and training camp in Gaza City, which was also used as a weaponry manufacturing site and place of assembly for senior members of the terror organization.
 - Rocket launching sites, several of which were underground, as well as a number of loaded Grad launchers.

January 1, 2009

- *Summary of Overnight Events*
- The IAF and Israel Naval Forces struck around 20 Hamas targets throughout the Gaza Strip during late night and early morning hours (Dec. 31).
- Among the sites targeted were:
 - The buildings housing Hamas' Ministry of Justice and Legislative Assembly, both located in the Tel El-Hawwa government complex. Hamas Government sites serve as a critical component of the terrorist groups' infrastructure in Gaza.

- Over five smuggling tunnels along the 'Philadelphi Route' used by Hamas to transport arms and terrorists in and out of Gaza.
- A weaponry manufacturing and storage facility in central Gaza, under which a tunnel was also located.
- A command center of Hamas' police force in Rafah, as well as a Hamas coastal authority outpost on the shore adjacent to Gaza City.
- In addition, the Israel Navy targeted a number of Hamas outposts and rocket launching sites.
- From Thursday the Home Front Command reserve forces trained in search and rescue will be stationed in southern Israel to assist the civilian population.
- The IDF will continue to target infrastructure utilized by Hamas and the other terror organizations in Gaza, and will not hesitate to strike those involved both directly and indirectly in attacks against the citizens of the State of Israel.
- *Today (Jan. 1), the IAF struck a number of targets based on IDF and ISA intelligence information: Among the targets were:*
 - The house of Muhammad Fuad Barhud (a senior terror operative in the Popular Resistance Committees) in Jabaliya. Barhud is responsible for a large amount of Grad and Qassam and mortar shell attacks that are perpetrated from northern Gaza Strip. These activities are funded and supported by Hamas. Among other locations, his house was used as a storage site for various weapons including anti-tank missiles, rockets, and explosive devices used by both the Resistance Committees and Hamas.
 - The house of another terror operative, Hasin Drairy, was also attacked in the Sabra (northern Gaza Strip). The house was used as a storage site for rockets and mortar shells. The house was also used as a lathe for rocket manufacturing.
 - In addition, a weapon storage facility was attacked in the house of Taufik Abu Ras. Abu Ras is a Hamas terror operative from A-Nusseirat. His house also served as a manufacturing laboratory and a storage site for a wide array of weaponry, including rockets and explosive devices.
- More than 20 targets were attacked since this morning, including weapons storage facilities, rocket launching sites, Hamas terror operatives, and a tunnel used by Hamas.
- Operation Cast Lead will continue and will go on for as long as necessary.
- The IAF attacked the house of Nizar Rayan, a senior Hamas terror operative, in Jabaliya. The attack was carried out based on IDF and ISA intelligence. Many secondary explosions were identified as a result of the attack, thus proving that the house was used for storing weaponry. It was also used as a communications center. In addition, a tunnel was located under the house and was used for the escape of terror operatives.
- The IAF forces struck the house of Nabil Amrin, a senior Hamas terror operative, in Sheih Radwan. Amrin is a senior military terror operative and is Battalion commander for the Hamas military bodies. The house contained a large amount of weapons and ammunition. Large secondary explosions were seen following the attack.

January 2, 2009

- Following a decision made by the Minister of Defense and according to security assessments, a general closure will be implemented in Judea and Samaria. The closure will begin today, Thursday, January 1st at 23:59pm and will be lifted on Saturday, January 3rd at 23:59pm.

- During the closure, the passage into Israel of those in need of humanitarian or medical aid, as well as other specific incidents will be authorized by the District Coordination and Liaison offices.
- Late Thursday night (Jan. 1), IAF aircraft struck a mosque in Jabaliya used as a terror-hub by the Hamas terror organization. The mosque was used as a weapons storage facility for a large amount of Grad and Qassam rockets, and additional weaponry. The strike set off a lengthy series of secondary explosions and a large fire, caused by the ammunitions stockpiled in the mosque. The mosque was also used as a operations center for Hamas, as a meeting place for Hamas's operatives and a staging ground for terror attacks.
- The IDF will continue to attack any target used for terrorist activity, and will not hesitate to strike those involved in terrorism against the citizens of the State of Israel, even if they deliberately choose to operate from locations of religious or cultural significance.
- *Summary of Overnight Events*
- Israeli air and naval forces attacked some 20 Hamas targets throughout the Gaza Strip during late night. Israeli air and naval forces attacked some 20 Hamas targets throughout the Gaza Strip during late night and early morning hours (Jan. 2).
- Among the sites targeted by the IDF:
 - A mosque in Jabaliya used as a terror hub by Hamas. The mosque was used as a storage site for a large amount of Grad missiles and additional weaponry. The strike set off a lengthy series of secondary explosions and caused a large fire, due to the munitions stockpiled in the mosque. The mosque was also used as a Hamas operational center, as a meeting place for its operatives, and as a staging ground for terror attacks.
 - Headquarters of the military wing of Hamas
 - A vehicle transporting anti-aircraft missiles
 - A tunnel used to smuggle weaponry
 - Rocket launchers armed and prepared for use
 - Weapons manufacturing and storage facilities
- The IDF will continue to target the Hamas infrastructure and the infrastructure of other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip. The IDF will not hesitate to strike those involved both directly and indirectly in attacks against the citizens of the State of Israel.
- *Summary of Today's Events*
- The IAF recently attacked the house of Muhammad Madhun, a terror operative responsible for firing rockets into Israel. Madhun's house was also used as a laboratory for the manufacturing of rockets and explosive devices and as a storage facility for rockets, mortar shells, and various weapons. The attack was carried out based on joint IDF and ISA intelligence information.
- In addition, the IAF struck the house of Imad Akel in Nuseirat. Akel is a senior Hamas terror operative and his house was used as a large storage facility for weapons. Akel is a leader of the Hamas terror organization and is a leader of the Hamas rocket (Grads and Qassams) and mortar efforts, in addition to being a weapons manufacturer. Large secondary explosions were seen following the attack due to the presence of large amounts of weaponry.
- The IAF has struck 35 in the Gaza Strip since this morning. Among the targets were the following:
 - Five tunnels in the Rafah border area.

- Three weapons storage facilities including a rocket lathe in Han Yunus.
- Five Hamas outposts.
- A number of rocket launchers including the specific launcher used to fire rockets into Ashkelon this morning.
- A number of launching sites.
- Over 30 rockets were fired into Israel and pounded both Ashkelon and the Western Negev. Over 500 rockets were fired into Israel over the last week.
- 64 trucks loaded with humanitarian aid were transferred into the Gaza Strip today.
- The IDF will continue operating against Hamas terror infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.

The Military Impact of the Air Phase of the Campaign

This chronology provides some important insights into the details of the Israeli air operation. There are not enough data, however, to provide a picture of how the number of actual air strikes varied over time, the extent to which the IAF exhausted its base of key targets, how well it dealt with steadily better dispersed Hamas forces, or when (or if) the IAF began to approach the point of diminishing returns.

Israeli senior officers and officials took somewhat different positions on these issues. IAF officers seemed to feel that they had completed the core of the air campaign well before the week was over, although they made it clear that Israeli air strikes did score continuing gains. IDF officers felt that the air attacks laid the groundwork for a necessary ground phase.

There is no doubt that the IAF did immense damage to Hamas infrastructure and facilities, and hit important leadership targets. At the same time, Israeli senior officials noted that Hamas had some 6,000-10,000 core fighters and up to twice that number in part time volunteers. They felt that the IAF had at most killed several hundred Hamas fighters by the end of the air campaign. This left Hamas's military forces largely intact. IAF experts also felt that Hamas had succeeded in dispersing and concealing much of its stocks of weapons and munitions, although it took significant losses in these areas.

Israeli officials and officers also stressed the fact that they felt that Israel had already done much to reinforce its deterrence by the end of the air campaign and send a signal to Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran – as well as Hamas. They felt Israel had shown it could fight an air campaign successfully in crowded urban areas, and was willing and able to use decisive force even if this had political liabilities. They also felt that while the fighting might anger the Arab street, the more moderate Arab regimes welcomed the damage to a radical extremist movement like Hamas, and the deterrent impact on rivals like Iran.

It is important to note, however, that Israel had not demonstrated that its ground forces, and air-land capabilities, had overcome the problems and limitations they had revealed during the fighting in Lebanon or demonstrated that they had either defeated Hamas's forces or forced it to accept any meaningful terms for a ceasefire. The IAF might have achieved most of its tactical objectives in attacking its prewar target base, but it did not achieve any major strategic or grand strategic objective.

Critical Divisions in the Israeli Political Leadership

Throughout the conflict, there seems to have been an ongoing argument between the "troika" of Israel's top leaders over how to conduct and end the war. Barak and Livni repeatedly disagreed with Olmert over the point at which the operation should end. Barak and Livni wanted to halt Operation Cast Lead long before Olmert, although Barak seems to have wanted to end the attacks earlier than Livni. They thought that the air and ground campaign had accomplished all it could and that a continuation of Cast Lead would yield not only diminishing marginal returns to Israeli security, but might also actually undo what the operation had accomplished so far.

This may help explain why Israeli and foreign media had already reported significant differences in the views of Israel's political leadership, and between acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Tzipora "Tzipi" Livni, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak.

By extending the ground campaign into the more densely populated areas of Gaza it is likely that there would be an increased chance of the IDF accidentally killing civilians, thus creating further diplomatic problems for Israel.

Livni is reported to have thought that continuing the offensive would be gambling with the gains the campaign had made towards Israeli deterrence and would create unnecessary diplomatic problems.^{xvi} Livni is reported to have believed that the IDF had been successful in demonstrating that they had learned new ways to fight against asymmetric warfare since the 2006 Lebanon war, and Livni felt that Israel should quit while it was ahead.

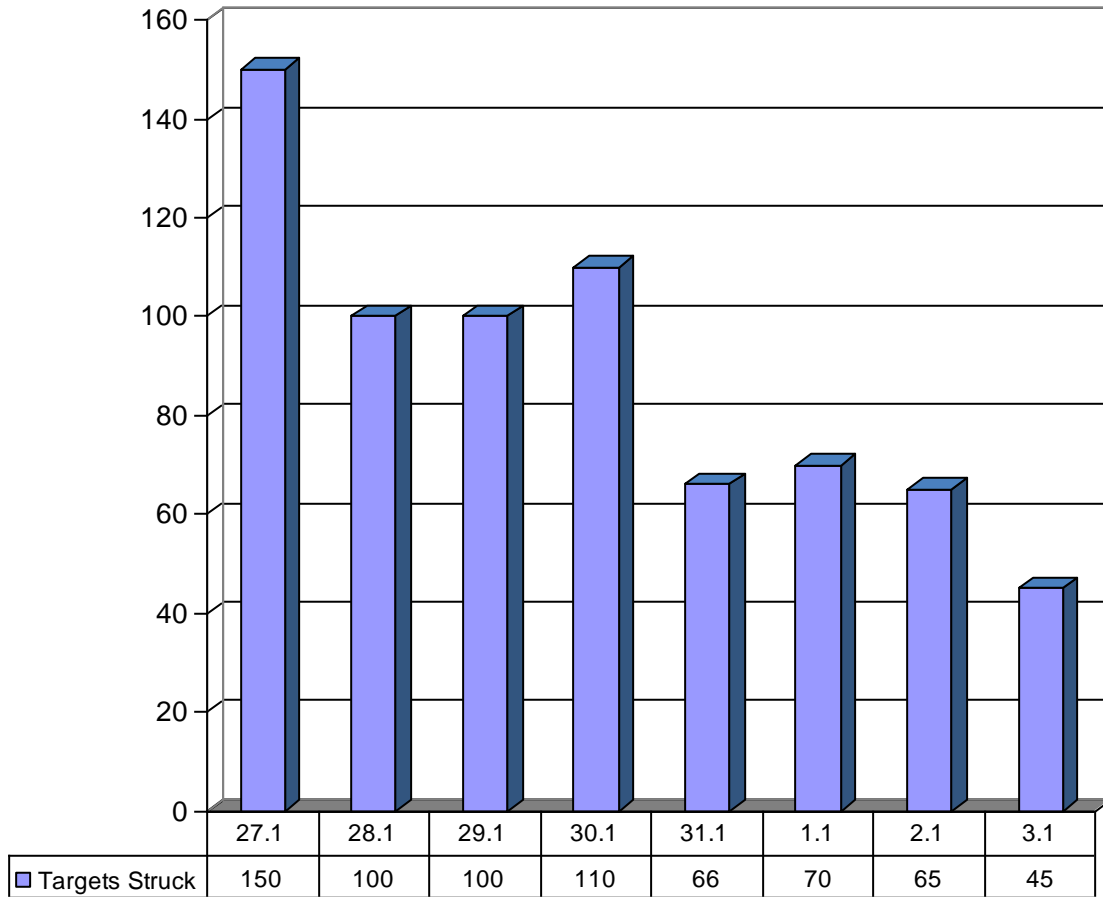
These reports also indicate that Livni feared that they were not quitting while they were ahead by continuing the conflict, but instead extending the amount of time for something to go wrong. Furthermore if the IDF went deeper into Gaza they would be likely to suffer greater casualties due to the close quarter nature of the combat and would allow Hamas time to adapt to the IDF's new tactics. Thus to Livni, Israel should halt the conflict and accept what gains it had made, continuing the campaign might lead to events that could undo the gains made so far. It also would mean that there would be an increased chance of accidentally killing civilians, thus creating further diplomatic problems for Israel.^{xvii}

Barak seems to have viewed the war in military time, and felt that IDF gains had reached the point of diminishing military returns and where they were creating political liability in the outside world.^{xviii} Other reports indicate his primary concern was that it was a mistake to send ground troops into the densely populated areas of Gaza. Such action would jeopardize soldiers and the demonstration of Israeli force.^{xix}

Other Reports indicate that Olmert and the majority of the Israeli Security Cabinet strongly disagreed with Livni and Barak.^{xx} Olmert thought that the operation had to continue regardless of the cost to the IDF soldiers or Israeli diplomatically because the

point of the conflict was deterrence, to show weakness would temporarily solve some of Israel's immediate problems but would undermine the point of the entire operation.^{xxi}

Figure 3: Targets Struck in Gaza: December 27th-January 3rd



Source: IDF Defense spokesman, Washington Post, January 4, 2007, p. A14.

The Growing Impact of the War of Perceptions: Hamas, Regional, and Broader Perspectives

The military situation at the end of the air phase was further complicated by the war's growing impact on other states and actors. Israel had already lost the battle of perceptions outside Israel and the United States by the time the air phase ended. It also had begun to trigger serious diplomatic problems in the region.

The Israeli air attacks led to a firestorm of criticism in the Arab world, and were quickly exploited by Hamas, the Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria. European media and humanitarian organizations became steadily more critical, as did the UN agencies operating in Gaza

and organizations like the Red Cross. US media also increasingly criticized Israel, although they generally were less critical. Similar criticism emerged elsewhere in the developing world and Asia.

The Human Cost of the Air Phase

There is little evidence that the IAF struck deliberately against civilian targets, or that the air campaign deliberately violated the laws of war. At the same time, no war can be fought in a densely populated urban area where civilians have no clear place to flee, and essentials goods and services cannot be provided, without a high human and economic cost.

There are no credible estimates of the level of the overall impact of the fighting on civilian life in Gaza at the end of the air campaign. Gaza Health Officials claim that the Air Strikes caused the death of 430 Palestinians^{xxii}. Israel is currently conducting an investigation into the number of casualties as a result of the war. Thousands more Palestinians in Gaza were displaced, and suffered at the war and near embargo of Gaza interfered with food distribution and virtually all services, paralyzed ordinary movement, and devastated an economy that had already collapsed as a result of the near closings of the border crossings and industrial zone in the border area and the end of job opportunities in Israel.

The air strikes increasingly damaged civilian facilities that were not associated with Hamas, although Palestinian sources reported after the war that most of the damage that occurred during the entire conflict was concentrated in specific areas of Gaza City and in the south near and in the Philadelphia corridor. While sources disagree over the level of damage, the Israeli government also reported after the fighting that the strikes during the air phase had a major impact on power and water. Before the operation, Gaza received 70% of its usual electrical supply, due to lack of fuel. Israel supplied 62% of this 70% (124 MVA supplied in 10 lines from Israel) and Egypt 8%(17 MVA supplied by 2 lines). The supply of electricity was reduced to 25% during the first days of the operation, due to damages caused by the fighting. This loss of power also prevented key water pumps from operating and sharply reduced the supply of water.^{xxiii}

As has been noted in the introduction, there are no magic formulas that can weigh these costs to the Palestinians against the benefits to Israeli security. It is also clear that Hamas was not ready to negotiate on favorable terms at the end of the air campaign, and Israeli experts felt that the damage done to Hamas had not yet reached the point where it could deter Hamas in the future, or restore Israel's military credibility on a broader level as an unacceptable threat to outside movements like the Hezbollah or to Iran and Syria.

Israeli Failures to Properly Prepare for, and Conduct, the War of Perceptions

For all of its prewar planning, Israel did not prepare for the near certainty that all of these reactions would take place or act effectively to minimize their impact. The previous chronology shows that Israel did carry out some humanitarian activities during this period, but they were limited and often consisted of allowing the UN and NGOs to carry out limited action and shipments into Gaza. Israeli government literature only begins to

document a major humanitarian effort in the week beginning January 5, 2009, after the ground campaign was already well underway.^{xxiv}

States do not have an obligation to provide humanitarian relief to their enemies or to enemy populations in wartime. It can also be argued that if an opponent uses civilians as a key defense mechanism, an attacker cannot provide such relief without compromising its objectives in going to war. At the same time, Israel's overall diplomatic position was also a key strategic objective, and Israel was fighting to reduce popular support for both Hamas and violence in Gaza, and to create conditions that could lead to a stable ceasefire and strengthening the Palestinian Authority. Israel also was reactive rather than proactive in explaining how it fought the war, and did little to explain the steps it was taking to minimize civilian casualties and collateral damage on the world stage.

As events showed during the air-land phase, Israel was forced to steadily provide humanitarian relief with time, and eventually to make it a major part of the campaign. It did so, however, far too late to be effective in terms of winning the war of perceptions or minimize the strategic damage done to its relations with outside states. Like the war in Lebanon before it, and the fighting against the Palestinian Authority from 2000 until Arafat's death, Israel did not plan for, or effectively execute, the political dimension of war.

Israeli officials and officers explained, or rationalized, these failures in a number of ways:

- Israel is in a no win situation. It will be judged equally harshly by Arab, European, and most outside media regardless of what it does.
- Hamas uses such aid and relief as political weapons, allocating them for its own purposes and taking credit for the result. Unless Israel can either control the flow of aid, or have it controlled by a friendly or neutral provider, it will get no credit among the Palestinian population. The time to win the war of perceptions in setting the terms for a ceasefire and in controlling the way in which reconstruction and humanitarian aid is allocated after the fighting.
- Deterrence is dependent on the Arab and Iranian perception that attacks on Israel will lead to a level of retaliation that has an unacceptable cost, and whose scale is unpredictable and cannot be limited by efforts to manipulate world opinion. A failure of deterrence threatens Israel's security and ultimately leads to new rounds of fighting and even more damage to Arab civilians.
- Israel cannot base its policy on the Arab street, European public opinion, and the concerns of humanitarian organizations and NGOs. The key is how governments perceive Israel and react. Key Arab states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia also see Hamas as a radical threat, as well as the growth of Iranian influence. European governments are actively fighting a terrorist threat. Regimes quietly support Israeli reaction even when they appear to criticize it.
- Israel must publicly behave as if a peace process is possible, but it faces the reality that the most it can hope for – at least for the foreseeable future -- is some degree of stability resulting from a largely unilateral two state solution that creates a separated Palestinian regime that will not truly accept Israel's right to exist and be a partner in any meaningful sense. Israel lives in a world where it reach an awkward accommodation with moderate Arab states like Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, but faces an existential threat from radical non-state actors and an Iranian-led coalition of regional states that will at best see any peace as time in which to increase the threat to Israel and at worst reach the point where Iran becomes a nuclear threshold state and then a nuclear power.

Several senior Israeli officials commented that there also was an inevitable lag between the pact of the war and diplomacy that began during the air campaign and lasted virtually to the end of the air-land campaign. Israel could achieve its military goals in attacking key Hamas targets relatively quickly, but this was never the strategic purpose of the war. This level of tactical success could not force Hamas to accept a ceasefire or quickly mobilize international action. They felt that this gave Israel no other choice than to pursue the war until it could achieve at least some promise of a successful ceasefire, more security on its borders, and some hope that Hamas would not dominate the postwar environment in Gaza.

The Hamas and Arab Reaction at the End of the Air Phase

As for Hamas, it remained defiant, and had launched over 500 rockets and mortars into Israel by the end of air campaign. There were reports that representatives of Hamas went to Egypt to discuss a ceasefire, and that Egypt acted as an intermediary between them and Israel.

Israel's actions had also already provoked a steadily rising firestorm of anger and protests in Arab countries, Europe and other countries, and Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran were actively attempting to exploit the situation. The strategic and grand strategic impact of the fighting on Hamas and the Arab and Islamic world are analyzed in depth later in this analysis, but it was clear within a day after the start of IDF operations that every moment the fighting went on presented a growing problem for moderate Arab states, and allowed the Hezbollah, Iran, Syria, and outside movements like Al Qa'ida to capitalize on the situation without taking any substantive risks or action.

Strategic Dilemmas

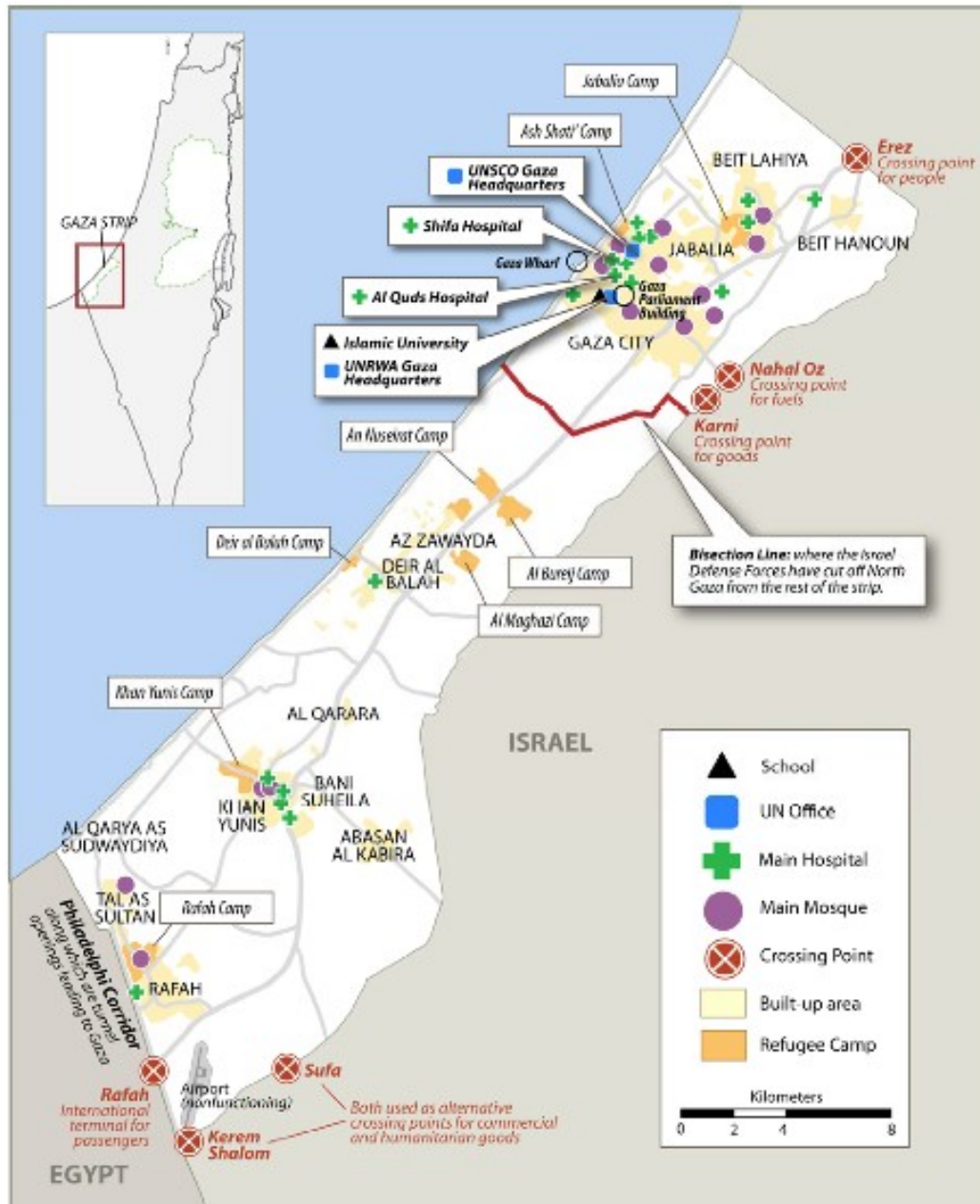
In short, most of the strategic dilemmas that confronted both sides, as well as outside actors, were already apparent by the end of the air phase and the first week of the fighting. Israel had not chosen to fight a war to destroy or replace Hamas, or control the Gaza, or to establish a presence to secure its borders. It was fighting to achieve a ceasefire and a political solution that could deter and provide improved security. This could only be achieved by prolonging the war until such a solution could be reached – if it could be achieved.

Hamas could score some kind of victory simply by surviving, but if it accepted a ceasefire and a growing role from Egypt or any international body in securing its access to arms without breaking out of its political and economic isolation, it would face a steadily deteriorating situation in Gaza and possibly a growing political backlash in both Gaza and the West Bank. Prolonging the war risked creating a similar backlash, but also meant that Palestinian and Arab anger against Israel became more and more intense and Israel's international reputation suffered more with each day of fighting.

Both sides suffered by prolonging the war, which became steadily more political with time. Both faced the problem that civilians were a weapon of war that they could potentially exploit but simultaneously threatened their position. Both were locked into a position very similar to the one they faced before Hamas began its rocket attacks and

Israel began to retaliate. "Victory" of any kind was victory in winning the ceasefire and its aftermath; not the tactical or military outcomes that would not fundamentally change the military position and capabilities of either side.

Figure 4: The Fighting in Gaza



Sources: U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (including for the Bisection Line) and UNOSAT, with additional data from UNRWA; adapted by CRS.

Note: All locations are approximate.

Source: Jim Zanotti, Israel and Hamas: Conflict in Gaza 2008-2009, Congressional Research Service, January 15, 2009, R40101.

V. The Air-Land Phase of the Israeli Campaign and the Hamas Response: January 3rd-January 18th

IDF land forces joined the battle during January 3rd, and the air land battle continued until January 17/18th. The IDF spokesman described the air-land phase as the "second stage" of Operation Lead, and announced its beginning in ways that again carefully avoided any language that implied that Israel had the objective of reoccupying Gaza, destroying Hamas, or replacing it with the Palestinian authority:

A short while ago (Jan.3), IDF forces began to implement the second stage of Operation Cast Lead. Ground forces have begun to maneuver within the Gaza Strip. The objective of this stage of the operation is to destroy the terrorist infrastructure of the Hamas in the precise area of operation, while taking control of some of rocket launching area used by the Hamas in order to greatly reduce the quantity of rockets fired at Israel and Israeli civilians.

The IDF Spokesperson emphasizes that this stage of the operation will further the goals of Operation Cast Lead as communicated till now: To strike a direct and hard blow against Hamas while increasing the deterrent strength of the IDF, in order to bring about an improved and more stable security situation for residents of southern Israel in the long term.

A large number of IDF forces are taking part in this stage of the operation including infantry, tanks, engineering forces, artillery and intelligence, along with the support of the Israel Air Force, Israel Navy, Israel Security Agency and other security agencies.

The operation is in accord with the decisions of the Security Cabinet. This stage of the operation is a part of the IDF's overall operational plan, and will continue on the basis of ongoing situational assessments by the IDF General Staff.

The forces participating in the operation have been highly trained and were prepared for the mission over the long period that the operation was planned. The Commander of the operation is Maj. Gen. Yoav Galant, GOC Southern Command.

The IDF and the Home Front Command has taken the necessary steps to protect the civilian population. All residents of Southern Israel are requested to follow the guidelines of the Home Front Command as communicated via the media.

The IDF Spokesperson wishes to reiterate that the residents of Gaza are not the target of the operation. Those who use civilians, the elderly, women and children as human shields are responsible for any and all injuries to the civilian population. Anyone who hides a terrorist or weapons in his house is considered a terrorist.

Based on a situational analysis, The IDF is taking steps to raise the level of alert for its forces in other areas of the country. Journalists are required to submit materials to Government Censor before publication or use.

The Israeli Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, issued an additional statement that stressed that Israel had humanitarian concerns, but would act decisively in self-defense. At the same time, he too described only a limited set of objectives and signaled that Israel would only take military action on its Northern border if attacked:

A few hours ago, Israeli ground forces entered the Gaza Strip as part of Operation Cast Lead against the Hamas terrorists, their affiliates, and their infrastructure in Gaza. So far, the Israel Defense Forces have dealt an unprecedented heavy blow to Hamas. In order to complete their mission, we have now launched the ground operation.

I have said all along that our military activities will widen and deepen as much as needed. Our aim is to force Hamas to stop its hostile activities against Israel and Israelis from Gaza, and to bring about a significant change in the situation in southern Israel.

We have carefully weighed all of our options. We are not war hungry but we shall not, I repeat – we shall not-- allow a situation where our towns, villages and civilians are constantly attacked by Hamas. It will not be easy or short, but we are determined.

We are well aware of the humanitarian concerns; we are doing and will continue to do everything possible to provide all humanitarian needs to the residents of Gaza.

While we are fighting in Gaza, we keep watch on the sensitive situation on our northern border. We have no aggressive intentions there. We hope the situation there will remain calm; nevertheless, we are ready to face any unwarranted development in that area.

We are peace seekers. We have restrained ourselves for a long time, but now is the time to do what needs to be done. We are determined to afford our citizens what any citizen anywhere in the world is entitled to – peace, tranquility and freedom from threats".

Israel made two other important announcements at this time. It announced that it was calling up its reserve forces, and that, "the IDF has begun to draft numerous reserve units in order to allow for the expansion of the operation. The majority of the reservists called up belonged to combat units. There also were reservists from Home Front Command, and the remainder belonged to various other military units. The reserve units are being drafted in accordance with the law and will be reporting for duty after having undergone extensive training over the past two years. At a number of the recruitment centers, the IDF is already implementing a project that is designed to replenish and renew emergency stores and military equipment. Emphasis is also being placed on logistics support for the reserve units."

It also announced that it was now enforcing a naval blockade for 20 miles from the Gaza Strip, which it had declared earlier on the 3rd. The explanation was that, "Gaza's shore is used by the Hamas terror organization, and the presence of its operatives on the shoreline and in the open sea constitutes a threat against the citizens of southern Israel."

Goals and War Plans for the Air-Land Phase

The IDF began to restructure its command system, training, and readiness almost immediately after the end of the fighting in 2006, and had had more than two years in which to execute and test its plans. The IDF no longer was focused on low-level police type actions of the kind it had fought against the Palestinians in 2000-2005. It had resumed large-scale, realistic ground force training, exercises and command at the divisional level, and organized for the full spectrum of combat: nuclear, conventional, and asymmetric.

The IDF had learned both the strengths and limits of airpower, and the risks of both static frontal warfare and of failing to maneuver in unpredictable ways. It understood the costs of failing to exercise its original war plan to fight the Hezbollah in the north by beginning with a heliborne envelopment from the Litani River. It had carried a major divisional exercise (the 91st or Northern Division) to test its concepts and readiness and had returned to realistic and demanding training of its reserves.

The IDF had also relearned important lessons from the fighting 1973, which showed the risks of receiving surprise as well as inflicting, and the political costs of high casualties and delay in reacting. It saw the dangers of the fighting in 1982, where a prolonged occupation not only trapped the IDF in southern Lebanon, but also created a whole new enemy that learned how to fight the IDF through years of practice.

While the IDF's political leadership was somewhat divided, it began with a set of well-defined battle plans that had examined a range of options, and which took account of one of the key lessons in the Vinograd Report: The need to set clear and well defined goals for military action before combat began.

As a result that air-land phase – like the air phase before it – set tangible and achievable goals: reinforcing deterrence, weakening Hamas, sharply reducing or ending the threat from smuggles and rockets over time. The plan also, however, was flexible and modular. It did not have rigid schedules and phase lines, and offered Israeli decision makers a range of options: Securing key routes of communication in the entire Gaza strip and isolating Hamas while defeating any Hamas forces the IDF engaged, securing Gaza City and the north, seizing Gaza City and defeating Hamas in detail, and securing the Philadelphia corridors.

These goals did involve major potential escalations, but all the options were designed to avoid a prolonged occupation, high Israeli casualties, and creating a level of conflict that would be politically unsustainable in Israel and create a prolonged international crisis and potential problems with the new US Administration. The IDF sought to keep the duration of the air-ground phase limited to around 7-10 days. It did so because it calculated that the war would begin to reach a point where serious negative consequences began to build up after about two weeks from the beginning of the first air strikes.

These negative consequences included steadily higher casualties as Hamas and its supporters learned how to fight and the IDF's actions became more predictable, the political problems caused by regional and global reactions to the fighting, and the fact that as the IDF moved forward, the ratio of Hamas fighters to civilians steadily declined and the level of civilian casualties steadily increased. In practice, the pace of diplomacy continued to lag behind the pace of air-land operations. As one Israel senior officer put it, "the marginal benefits declined every day." He also stated that the war could have ended 5-8 days earlier and have achieved virtually the same military result if it had been possible to achieve an acceptable ceasefire – a fact that eventually pushed Israel towards a unilateral ceasefire without open Hamas acceptance of defeat or concessions.

This helped create further tension between the views of Israel's political leaders where there was already considerable disagreement as mentioned earlier. There is no way to confirm how deep the differences in the Troika reported by the press went, or how they related to the reports by the IDF and Israeli intelligence on just how much the IDF had accomplished at a given point, the level of civilian casualties and damage, and the impact of the growing firestorm of Arab and international criticism. Senior Israeli officials and officers did indicate, however, that press reports of these differences were real, and that

the Israeli leadership had begun the war without a clearly defined plan for its termination, and repeated at least some of the mistakes made in 2006, where there was no clear consensus over how long to fight the war or how to end it. No report on the war available at this writing disagrees with these views, or indicates that the top Israeli political leadership approached or fought the "Gaza War" with competence and effectiveness matching that of the IDF.

Israeli Tactics and Organization

The war was fought largely by the Southern Command using brigade teams that operated with a high degree of independence and freedom to adapt and innovate. In the past, the IDF had managed operations through central command in Tel Aviv. This had created serious problems in 2006, and serious tensions between the commander in the Northern Command and the IDF high command. In this war, combat was managed and controlled by the Southern Command in coordination with the central command in Tel Aviv.

The Role of IDF Ground Forces

Israel was able to limit its combat operations to roughly 10,000 men, and three brigade equivalents, in actual combat at any given time with contingency support from the equivalent of another division, with three brigades, in reserve. The key division that did most of the fighting was the "Gaza Division," or 162nd Armored Division. The 162nd Armored Division is one of two full-time IDF armored divisions; the other is the 91st Armored Division in the north. The Parachute Brigade also played a key role.

The IDF had another division in reserve which would have replaced the Gaza division to secure the positions it won in the north if the IDF had had to execute plans to secure the Philadelphia Corridor in the south or had encountered by serious fighting. It also called up its reserves and put forces on a higher state of readiness to ensure that it could deter any probes or attacks in the north.

The IDF divided the division into three separate brigade task forces with their own artillery. This allowed it to effectively envelop Gaza City before it penetrated into it, with one brigade to the north a second on the edge of the center, and a third to the south. This both secured part of a rocket launching area near the northern border, and sealed off most of Hamas's forces in the Gaza City area.

This limited the extent to which they could shelter and disperse, at least to some degree, and helps explain why Palestinian maps of the damage during the fighting show this damage was heavily concentrated around Gaza City as well as in the tunnel areas to the south in the Philadelphia corridor – where the attacks were made almost exclusively by air.

Newly Developed Approaches to IDF Ground Tactics

IDF Ground operations took advantage of several newly developed approaches to the fighting in Gaza:

- The IDF used night warfare for most combat operations because Hamas did not have the technology or training to fight at night.

- Heavy use was made of infantry to penetrate a given area rather than relying on exposed heavy armor.
- More advanced digital systems were available at every major level of combat, as well as better access to intelligence, including UAVs and other imagery, SIGINT, and COMINT. The IDF fought with greatly improved plasma displays and ergonomic, operator-friendly software.
- Robotic and TV-aided, remote controlled guns – systems like the Roah-Yorah and “See-Shoot” system -- helped secure the border against Hamas attacks and infiltration.^{xxv}
- Actual combat operations involved “constant fire” to suppress Hamas ambushes, although this did increase risk to civilians.
- IDF Hummers were equipped with guns with stabilized machine guns with day-night sights that could be fired on the move to reduced exposure of the vehicle to counterfire while maintaining accuracy. The IDF also made its first use of the Cardom 120mm recoiling mortar, which was mounted on upgraded M-113s.^{xxvi}
- IDF forces did not use predictable routes during the combat approach phase. They used techniques like armored bulldozers to smash their way through building and bypass Hamas booby traps, IEDs, and ambush points.
- As noted earlier, media were not allowed into Gaza and soldiers were forced to surrender their cell phones. This greatly improved communications security.
- Operations maneuvered quickly, without prolonged rests or stationary positions. The IDF quickly learned that Hamas, like the Hezbollah in 2006, were slow to move and react and create new ambush and concentration points.
- Where possible, IDF forces remained away from narrow areas and tight zones of fire of the kind that could aid Hamas. The IDF was aided by the fact Hamas did not have – or did not use – significant numbers of anti-aircraft missiles or anti-tank guided weapons, although it seems to have used some advanced rocket propelled grenades like the RPG-29.^{xxvii}
- Where possible, IDF forces attempted to use quick rapier thrusts designed to achieve a given effective or effect, rather than prolonged thrusts with predictable lines of advance and targets.
- Israel used its Tsefa mine clearing system – a “rocket-launched chain of small charges designed to breach minefields” – to clear the narrow roads through Gaza.^{xxviii}
- As the chronologies in this paper and Figure 5 show, the IDF was not able to stop Hamas rocket fire. At the same time, the IDF were able to operate in an environment where these rocket attacks did not cause panic or create political pressure to halt or alter its operations. Israel had already developed an effective warning and civil defense system. While Israeli civilians scarcely wanted to live under such attacks, a combination of warning and shelters gave them considerable security. This was aided by a Color Red warning system originally developed to detect snipers during the fighting in Beirut, but adapted to provide warning against rocket and mortar attacks. It integrated two types of radar – one developed for the Nautilus tactical high energy laser program – to detect even small rockets, calculate the broad angle and impact of the attack, and give warning in a small enough area to avoid having pin prick attacks paralyze activity in a broad civilian area. It could cover rockets with ranges as short as 3 kilometers. As a result, Israelis got 15 to 60 seconds of warning, depending on the range of the rockets whose warheads were small enough so that even light shelter provided a high degree of protection.^{xxix}

Continuing Air Operations and New Approaches to "Jointness"

Other advances took place in "jointness." The IDF deployed ground forces into battle as tightly organized brigade teams that had direct control over air assets. In the past, the IAF had retained command over all fixed wing air assets through its central command in Tel Aviv. The central command retained control over some of the assets used during the air-land phase, but each brigade had its own attack helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as on-call strike aircraft. The chief of the IAF kept operational control (OPCON), but practical control of forward air operations (FAO) went to a brigade commander who was directly supported by an Air Force colonel and who was "mentored" by a retired senior Israeli officer with prior combat experience.

This allowed the IAF to maintain a constant pressure of additional air attacks on rear area and fixed targets outside the combat zone while giving the ground force dedicated and immediate air support. The combination of precision weapons like the JDAM and total air supremacy again meant that IAF could take the time to provide that support with exceptional flexibility and accuracy, and advances in the IDF's battle management, C4, and IS&R systems provided the ground force with exceptional situational awareness at long distances and the ability to work closely with pilots in precisely identifying given targets.

The continuing role of airpower is indicated by the fact that Lt. General Gabi Ashkenazi stated that the IAF flew 2,300 successful air strikes from December 27 to the end of the fighting.^{xxx} Another senior IAF officer estimated that the IAF had flown some 3,000 successful sorties over a small dense area during three weeks of fighting without a single accident or loss. The Israeli forces reported a total of "over 2,744 sorties."^{xxxi}

Day-By-Day Fighting During the Air-Land Phase of Operation Lead

These tactics, and setting clearly defined and feasible objectives, allowed IDF ground forces to make rapid gains. Infantry forces enveloped Gaza City from the north, center, and south, and the IDF carefully pushed to sea in the south, cutting Gaza City off from the rest of the Gaza Strip. IDF forces were able to bypass Hamas strong points in the urban area, and carefully remove booby traps. The use of night combat crippled the Hamas response, and operational security further limited its comparatively slow reaction times. When the IDF did close in built up areas, it not only took advantage of night, but also used tools like D-9 bulldozers to penetrate through buildings and deny Hamas forces a clear line of sight for short range weapons wherever possible.

By the third day of the air-land phase, the IDF was able to move forward to the point where it could begin to attack Hamas forces in detail. These operations continued to be conducted at the brigade level, rather than at the division level as in the past. This gave the forward commander much more freedom of initiative, particularly from second guessing that had sometimes reflect more concern over the risk of casualties than rapid, decisive action. It was also supported by the air and artillery assets dedicated to and on-call to the brigade commander, and the brigade's UAV assets. The next impact was to

free soldiers in operations in ways that both improved their effectiveness and reduced casualties.

The dynamics of this combat are described in the daily statements issued by the IDF spokesman. These now described both land and air operations, and increasingly described Israel's steadily more active role in humanitarian operations. The following chronology is excerpted from this IDF reporting, and gives a much clearer picture of the intensity of the fighting on the ground and the continuing role of airpower until the end of the campaign. It is important to note that while many intense clashes took place, sustained ground fighting was limited, and Hamas protected itself by avoiding direct engagements. In contrast, the IAF kept up a steady round of attacks, as did Israeli artillery. This kept Hamas under constant pressure even when it did not engage in direct combat.

January 4, 2009

Summary of Overnight Events

The IDF operation continued overnight with large infantry, tank, engineering, artillery and intelligence forces operating throughout the Gaza Strip with the assistance of the Israel Air Force and Israel Navy. During exchanges of fire overnight dozens of armed Hamas operatives were hit by the IDF. IAF planes struck over 45 targets including tunnels, weapons storage facilities, mortar shell launching squads, and a number of mortar shell launching areas. Israel Navy boats assisted the ground forces and attacked a number of targets including the Hamas intelligence headquarters in Gaza City, rocket launching areas, and Hamas marine forces outposts.

An IDF officer and an IDF soldier were severely wounded during the night. The families of the injured officer and soldier have been notified. In addition 28 other soldiers were injured moderately and lightly. The soldiers received initial medical treatment at the scene and were transported to hospital for further treatment.

The IDF will continue to operate against the Hamas terror infrastructure in the Gaza Strip according to plan, in order to reduce the rocket fire on the south of Israel.

Summary of events since this morning

Approximately 30 rockets were launched today from the Gaza Strip into Israel. At least 12 of the rocket attacks were Grad rockets.

IDF forces, including infantry, tanks, combat engineers, artillery, and intelligence forces, continue to operate throughout the Gaza Strip with the assistance of the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy. Dozens of armed Hamas terror operatives were hit in different exchanges of fire with IDF forces since the beginning of the ground operation.

Furthermore, the IAF targeted over 15 sites, including rocket-launching sites and launching squads, armed gunmen, and a smuggling tunnel, in addition to three senior members of the Hamas terrorist organization:

- In Han Yunes, Husam Hamdan was targeted. Hamdan was directly responsible for firing rockets at the Israeli cities of Be'er Sheva and Ofakim.
- Also in Han Yunes, Mohamad Hilu was targeted. Hilu was responsible for Hamas' commando forces in Han Yunes as well as for long range rocket launching against Israel.
- In Jebaliya, Mohamad Shalpoch was targeted. Shaploch was a member of Hamas' commando forces and was involved in the launching of rockets. The attacks were a joint IDF and ISA operation.

The IDF stresses that the residents of Gaza are not the target of the operation. The Hamas terror organization operates amongst civilians, using them as human shields. Hamas is solely

responsible for all injury caused to them. Anyone who assists terror activity by hiding a terrorist or weaponry might be hurt. We call all civilians to keep away from rocket launching grounds.

January 5, 2009

The IDF operation continued overnight with many infantry, tank, engineering, artillery and intelligence forces operating throughout the Gaza Strip in conjunction with the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy.

IAF aircraft struck over 30 targets including:

- A mosque used to store mass amounts of weaponry
- An underground bunker in the area of Gaza city. The attack caused secondary explosions indicating there were explosives inside. Tunnels in the area collapsed.
- A number of smuggling tunnels, near Rafah, used by the Hamas terror organization as passages for terrorists in and out of the Gaza Strip and that formed part of the purchasing and supply system of the organization
- 4 houses of Hamas operatives used to store weaponry
- A rocket launcher
- A suspected anti-aircraft missile launcher

Israel Navy boats assisted the ground forces and attacked a number of targets including rocket launching sites, a bunker and Hamas naval outposts.

The IDF will continue to operate against Hamas terror infrastructure in the Gaza Strip according to plans in order to reduce the rocket fire on the south of Israel.

January 6, 2009

Summary of Events, As of 17:30

IAF planes have recently targeted dozens of tunnels used by the Hamas terror organization, located along the Rafah border. The Hamas tunnel network is used for the smuggling of weapons, for the movement of Hamas terror operatives from the Gaza Strip and back, and is an integral part of the operations in which Hamas purchases and is supplied with weaponry. During the operation, IDF forces hit dozens of terror operatives.

The aerial and artillery forces also assisted the Ground Forces by attacking armed gunmen approaching the Ground Forces and striking launching areas from which Hamas fired rockets at the IDF and at Israeli civilians.

In addition, the IAF attacked over forty additional targets throughout the Gaza Strip. These targets included a tunnel rigged with explosives, a number of weaponry storage facilities, among them houses of Hamas terror operatives-- one of which housed an underground tunnel, a number of weapons manufacturing sites, rocket launching areas, and a rocket launcher itself.

Also today (Jan.4), 80 trucks with humanitarian aid were transferred into the Gaza Strip via the Kerem Shalom crossing.

More than 30 rockets have been launched at Israel since this morning, landing in heavily populated areas and damaging a number of structures, including a kindergarten in Ashdod, which was closed at the time by the Home Front Command due to the rocket attacks perpetrated over the past week by Hamas.

Three IDF soldiers were killed, one was critically wounded, three were severely wounded and 20 soldiers were lightly to moderately wounded as a result of an IDF tank shell explosion fired in error during an operation in the northern Gaza Strip. The shell hit a structure where the soldiers were located.

A structure was struck in a joint IDF and ISA operation, in Jabaliya. Iman Siam, head of the Hamas rocket launching program, was present in the house. Siam is one of the senior Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip. He founded the organization's rocket launching program, and is also the head of Hamas' artillery program throughout the Gaza Strip.

An initial inquiry by forces about their operation in the area of the incident in Jabaliya, indicates that a number of mortar shells were fired at IDF forces from within the Jabaliya school. In response to the incoming enemy fire, the forces returned mortar fire to the source.

This is not the first time that Hamas has fired mortars and rockets from schools, in such a way deliberately using civilians as human shields in their acts of terror against Israel.

January 7, 2009

IDF forces-- including infantry, tanks, combat engineers, artillery, and intelligence-- continue to operate throughout the Gaza Strip with the assistance of the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy. Throughout the day (Jan. 6), IDF forces operating in Gaza uncovered several weapons caches, rockets, roadside bombs, and tunnels used by gunmen to ambush soldiers.

The IAF has attacked over 40 targets since the morning, including:

Eight smuggling tunnels used by Hamas to bring weapons into the Gaza Strip.

- More than 10 groups of gunmen, including one identified as planting a bomb.
 - Approximately 16 weapons storage and weapons production facilities.
 - Approximately five rocket launching spots, including one hidden underground.
 - A vehicle carrying an anti-aircraft missile launcher.
- **Summary of Overnight Events**

IDF Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps and Intelligence Corps forces continue operating throughout the Gaza Strip with Israel Air Force and Israel Navy support.

Throughout the night Ground Forces in Gaza clashed with several groups of gunmen and neutralized booby-trapped structures. Soldiers also uncovered a number of weapon storage facilities, large stores of explosives, and smuggling tunnels. A soldier was lightly injured during the operations.

The IAF struck over 40 targets throughout Gaza, including:

- Rocket launching sites and bunkers used by armed terrorists
- Squads of armed Hamas operatives
- Various structures used by Hamas terror operatives
- Over ten smuggling tunnels used by Hamas, some of them located under the homes of operatives

Large secondary explosions were observed following some of the air strikes, indicating the presence of explosives inside the tunnels.

IDF Opens Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Center (HACC)

Today, the IDF opened the Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Center (HACC) in Tel-Aviv. The center's aim is to coordinate between the different organizations operating in the Gaza Strip and the involved IDF factors and will not replace existing structures. The center will place highest priority to the evacuation of foreign nationals and to coordinating the flow of food, fuel and supplies of goods to the humanitarian organizations.

Organizations represented include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Food Programme

(WFP), the European Commission, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), UNRWA, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as Israeli governmental agencies and IDF departments.

In addition to that over twenty rockets were launched today from the Gaza Strip to Israel, wounding two people.

IDF Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineer Corps and Intelligence Corps forces continued to operate throughout the Gaza Strip. The Israel Air Force, Israel Navy and Artillery Corps all provided assistance and struck groups of Hamas terrorists that were approaching the forces to attack them. Rocket launching sites that were used for attacking IDF forces were also struck. On a number of occasions, the Ground Forces came under fire from armed Hamas gunmen and responded with direct fire.

IAF aircraft attacked over 40 additional targets throughout the day, including a number of smuggling tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip, 14 rocket launching sites, four groups of armed terrorists, a Hamas outpost, nine smuggling tunnels dug under houses and a weaponry storage facility.

January 8, 2009

Summary of Overnight Activity

The operation in the Gaza Strip continued throughout the night, with Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps and Field Intelligence Corps forces operating in large numbers throughout the Gaza Strip, with air and naval support of the IAF and the IN.

The IAF attacked a number of targets, based on IDF and ISA intelligence, including the house of Yaser Natat, who was in charge of the rocket firing program in the Rafah area, and the house of Muhammad Sanuar, the commander of the Hamas Han Yunus Brigade.

In addition, the IAF struck approximately 60 targets throughout the Gaza Strip, including:

- A mosque used as a weapons storage facility and as a meeting place for Hamas terror operatives
- A Hamas Police structure
- Fifteen tunnels used by Hamas terror operatives against IDF forces, some of which were located under houses
- Ten weapons storage facilities
- A number of armed operatives
- Fifteen launching sites and underground launching pads used to fire mortar shells at IDF forces

The Navy, Air Force and Artillery Corps continued to support the Ground Forces throughout the Gaza Strip, striking Hamas targets, groups of gunmen and terrorists identified in rocket launching areas and located near the forces.

One mortar shell was fired into the western Negev overnight.

The IDF will continue to operate against the Hamas terror infrastructure in the Gaza Strip according to its operational plans in order to reduce the rocket fire on the south of Israel.

Summary of Today's IDF Operations

Thursday morning, in a precise operation conducted by IDF forces in coordination with the ISA, soldiers targeted and identified hitting a number of Islamic Jihad operatives who in recent days launched rockets into Israel: Nasser Halil Hassan Ouda, 21; Muhammad Faez Yadeb Hanedi, 24; Anwar Abed al-Hafiz Abu Salem, 23.

The IAF attacked approximately 25 targets, including:

- Nine weaponry storage facilities, most of them hidden under Hamas operatives' homes
- A number of weaponry smuggling tunnels
- Four rocket launching sites
- A junction rigged with explosives, which operatives had planned to detonate against IDF forces
- A vehicle carrying a rocket launcher
- Two Hamas outposts
- Five cells of armed operatives, some of which fired at IDF forces

Ground forces encountered and shot armed gunmen in several different incidents.

IAF, IN and Artillery Corps forces continued to support ground forces operating in Gaza, striking groups of gunmen approaching IDF units, as well as gunmen identified at rocket launching sites.

January 9, 2009

Summary of Today's Events as of 00:00

During today's three hour ceasefire, held in order to create a humanitarian aid corridor for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, four Grad rockets and two Qassam rockets were launched at Israel, in addition to the fourteen other rockets and mortars launched throughout the day.

Overall, Israel transferred 89 humanitarian aid trucks to Gaza via the Kerem Shalom Crossing. 315,000 liters of fuel, along with 143 tons of natural gas were transferred through Nahal Oz Terminal, and 223 foreign nationals were permitted entry to Israel following requests from their respective governments.

IDF forces, including the Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Combat Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps, and Intelligence Corps, continue to operate throughout the Gaza Strip with the support of the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy.

In one incident this afternoon, Paratrooper Brigade forces operating in the northern Gaza Strip uncovered an explosives lab and in the lab large amounts of explosives connected to two tunnels. The force detonated the tunnels in a controlled environment.

In another incident, Infantry Corps forces uncovered a tunnel containing various weapons including RPG missiles, AK-47 assault rifles, IED detonators, grenades, and knives.

During a joint IDF and ISA operation, IDF forces targeted and hit Islamic Jihad operative Tarek Abu Amshev, 22 from Beit Hanoun, who was involved in planting explosive devices against IDF forces and in the daily launching of rockets against Sderot and other communities in the region. Another terror operative, Mohamed Najjar, 26 from Jebalya, was also hit in the attack.

The IAF struck over 40 terror sites, including:

- Three weapons storehouses, some of which were located in houses of Hamas operatives.
- One tunnel used by Hamas operatives.
- Seven rocket launching sites
- Various sites pinpointed by ground forces

Summary of IDF Operations Overnight

Four Grad rockets hit the Beer Sheva region.

IDF Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps and Intelligence Corps forces continued to operate against Hamas terrorist infrastructure throughout the Gaza Strip during the night.

Yesterday Israel transferred 89 humanitarian aid trucks to Gaza via Kerem Shalom Crossing. 315,000 liters of fuel and 143 tons of natural gas were transferred through Nahal Oz Terminal, and 223 Gazan foreign nationals were permitted entry to Israel following requests from their respective governments.

The IAF attacked more than 50 terrorist infrastructure sites throughout the night, including the following:

- Five rocket launching sites, one of which next to a mosque
- A weapons storage facility
- A vehicle garage and an office, both used for terrorist operations
- Five weapon manufacturing sites
- Groups of armed gunmen
- Hamas operational centers and outposts

The Israel Navy operated in the area of Deir El Balah in the central Gaza Strip, targeting Hamas rocket launching sites in order to thwart attempts to fire rockets at Israeli communities.

Two Day Curfew on the Judea and Samaria Region

Following a decision made by the Minister of Defense after assessing the current situation, the Judea and Samaria Region will be under a general closure beginning midnight, January 8. The closure will be lifted at midnight, January 10, 2008.

Various humanitarian, medical and other exceptional cases will be permitted to cross throughout the closure, assessed by the Coordination and Liaison District.

Summary of Today's Events

IDF Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps and Intelligence Corps forces continue to operate throughout the Gaza Strip with the support of the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy.

Throughout Friday (Jan. 9) IDF forces operating in the Gaza Strip hit armed terror operatives in different incidents. An IDF ground force located a house rigged with land mines. Another force identified anti-tank missiles being fired at them, answered with precise fire and identified hitting the terror operatives having fired the missiles. In addition, a house used by the terrorists who shot and killed Sergeant Amit Robinson on Thursday (Jan. 8) was targeted by IDF forces.

The IAF attacked over 70 targets since the morning, including:

- Fifteen rocket launching sites
- A charged launcher
- A number of launching squads that launched rockets to Ashkelon earlier during the day
- Three houses of Hamas terror operatives also used as weapons storage facilities
- Two tunnels used for the smuggling of weaponry
- Twenty terrorist sites targeted to support the Ground Force
- A disguised mortar shell
- Twenty terror operatives
- Four weapons storage facilities
- A vehicle with armed terror operatives

IN forces hit at least ten armed terror operatives during Thursday night's (Jan. 8) operation. They continued giving support to the Ground Forces throughout the night.

An IDF soldier was moderately wounded and two additional soldiers were lightly wounded during the day.

More than thirty rockets were fired at Israel throughout the day.

Forty-one trucks loaded with humanitarian aid were transferred into the Gaza Strip.

The IDF will continue to operate against the Hamas terror infrastructure in the Gaza Strip according to its operational plans in order to reduce the rocket fire on the South of Israel.

January 10, 2009

Summary of IDF Operations Overnight

IDF Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps and Intelligence Corps forces continued to operate during the night against Hamas terrorist infrastructure throughout the Gaza Strip.

IDF Ground Forces were involved in a number of incidents in which several armed Hamas operatives were hit. In one of the incidents, snipers opened fire at IDF forces which returned the fire and identified hitting the gunmen. In a separate incident mortar shells were fired at an IDF forces, the force responded with gunfire and targeted the squad of five terror operatives with the support of the IAF.

The IAF attacked over 40 targets throughout the Gaza Strip, including the following:

- Ten rocket launching sites
- One anti-aircraft missile launcher
- Fourteen weapon manufacturing and storage facilities
- Five weapons smuggling tunnels
- A number of armed gunmen

Ground Forces reported about 15 terrorists hit in exchanges of fire. The Israel Navy continued supporting the Ground Forces throughout the night. A mortar shell was fired into Israel during the night.

Amir Mansi, the commander of the Hamas rocket launching program in the Gaza City area, was killed today by IDF fire with assistance of the ISA. Mansi was also the leading Hamas authority on the long range Grad missile launching program. Mansi directed and actively fired dozens of rockets at Israel, among other things, killing and wounding Israeli civilians. Mansi was spotted firing a rocket in the Jabel Rise area during a ground force operation today. The forces opened fire, killing Mansi and injuring two additional terror operatives.

Summary of Today's Events

IDF forces, the Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Combat Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps, and Intelligence Corps, continue operating throughout the Gaza Strip with support from the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy.

IDF forces operating in the northern Gaza Strip struck a number of armed Hamas operatives, including a would-be suicide bomber strapped with an explosive belt. Ground troops aided IAF aircraft identifying the location of several rocket launching squads and terror cells planting roadside bombs.

The IAF struck over 60 targets since the morning, including:

- Two rocket launching squads near Jabaliya, shortly after they fired rockets towards the Ashdod region
- Ten launching sites, several of which were hidden underground

- Seven weapons smuggling tunnels
- An anti-aircraft missile launcher
- Approximately ten weapons storage and weapons manufacturing facilities
- Two vehicles used to store and transport weaponry
- Three Hamas outposts

January 11, 2009

Summary of IDF Operations Overnight

IDF Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps and Intelligence Corps forces continued on Saturday night (Jan. 10) to operate against Hamas terrorist infrastructure throughout the Gaza Strip.

IDF Ground Forces were involved in a number of incidents in which several armed operatives were hit. In one of the incidents, IDF forces identified a group of armed operatives and directed IAF forces to the group and struck them. In a separate incident IDF forces in the northern Gaza Strip identified an armed operative planting an explosive device, and fired at him.

The IAF struck over 60 targets throughout the Gaza Strip, including the following:

- A mosque in the city of Rafah used for storing weaponry, such as machine guns and sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles. The mosque was also used as a training camp and a meeting place for Hamas members
- 10 weaponry storage facilities, some in houses of Hamas operatives
- 10 squads of armed operatives
- 9 tunnels used to smuggle weaponry in the Rafah area
- 3 launching areas
- An underground rocket launcher
- The house of the head of Hamas's military wing, Ahmed Jabri
- A Hamas police station

The IDF will continue its operations against all terrorists and those who support them.

This morning (Jan. 11), a meeting was held between the head of the Joint Humanitarian Coordination Center, Brig. Gen. Baruch Spiegel, the Deputy Head of COGAT, the Gaza Division Commander, and representatives of the international organizations including the Red Cross, UNWRA, and UNSCO. Over the course of the meeting, working guidelines for humanitarian issues were agreed upon in order to increase the cooperation and coordination between the organizations and the IDF, as well as to assist the organizations in carrying out and improving their work with regard to the civilian population in Gaza.

Summary of IDF Operations Today

IDF forces operating in the Gaza Strip shot and hit more than 40 armed Hamas operatives throughout the day. Ground forces clashed with gunmen in various incidents during the day. In several cases, ground forces directed the Air Force in targeting armed operatives that were firing at them. Meanwhile, Paratrooper Brigade forces uncovered weaponry, camouflage uniforms and communications equipment during searches.

"We continue to face the insane reality of booby-trapped tunnels and booby-trapped schools. In one neighborhood of 150 homes, over 30 homes were found to be rigged with explosives," IDF Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Avi Benayahu said. "Hamas is booby-trapping every home that is abandoned by its residents."

Armored Corps forces struck various weapons storage facilities, some of them located in the houses of terror operatives. In one case, a tank squad identified a group of operatives planting an explosive device, fired and confirmed hitting them.

The IAF targeted nearly 60 Hamas targets in Gaza throughout the day, including:

- More than 20 smuggling tunnels along the Rafah border
- Approximately 15 cells of armed operatives
- Seven weapons production and storage facilities
- Several rocket launching sites, including the launcher used to attack Be'er Sheva this the morning

Among approximately 20 rockets and mortar shells launched into Israel today, one Grad missile directly hit a kindergarten in Ashdod, causing severe damage.

January 12, 2009

Last night (Jan.11), IDF forces, including infantry forces, tanks, combat engineering forces, artillery forces, and intelligence forces, continued to operate against the Hamas terrorist infrastructure throughout the Gaza Strip.

In one incident, forces from the Golani Brigade reported hitting a number of armed gunmen during clashes in the northern Gaza Strip. Forces from the Giv'ati Brigade uncovered one mortar shell. In addition, ground forces assisted the aiming of aerial attacks against groups of armed gunmen.

The IAF struck over 10 targets overnight including five armed Hamas operatives, four weaponry storehouses in the houses of Hamas operatives, two smuggling tunnels located under houses of Hamas operatives, one smuggling tunnel located under Gaza's border with Egypt, and one rocket launching site.

The Israel Navy ships accompanied the ground forces, provided assistance, and attacked Hamas terrorist sites.

The IDF will continue to act against all terrorist organizations and those who support them.

Summary of Midday Events

Since this morning (Jan. 12), IDF Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineering Corps Artillery and Intelligence Corps forces continued to operate against Hamas terrorist infrastructure throughout the Gaza Strip.

Ground Forces were involved in a number of incidents in which several armed gunmen were hit. A squad of terror operatives opened fire at Ground Forces from a mosque. The forces directed aerial forces that attacked the squad, and then searched the mosque, uncovering Qassam rockets and mortar shells. In a different incident, forces identified a number of armed gunmen and opened fire towards them. The forces later searched the area and uncovered a large amount of weaponry including anti-aircraft missiles, mortar shells and machine guns.

In addition, forces uncovered a tunnel and destroyed it while searching a house in the northern Gaza Strip. Other forces identified a terror operative planting an explosive device and opened fire at him.

The IAF attacked over 25 targets throughout the Gaza Strip, including the following:

- Eight squads of armed gunmen
- Two mortar shell launchers
- Four launching sites
- Three terrorist structures
- Two vehicles in which Hamas terror operatives were driving
- Different targets as assistance to Ground Forces
- 165 trucks loaded with humanitarian aid are now being transferred via the Kerem Shalom and Karni Crossings.

Summary of IDF Operations Today

During Monday's (Jan. 12) operations, IDF forces uncovered a tunnel built to allow terrorists to enter Israel and carry out large scale terror attacks. The entrance to the tunnel was located in a house 300 meters from the security fence.

120 trucks loaded with humanitarian aid entered the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom and Karni Crossings. These trucks carried 3,100 tons of food, medical equipment, and other basic supplies.

Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, approximately 920 trucks of humanitarian aid and over 1,000,000 liters of diesel fuel were transferred to the Gaza Strip

IDF Ground Forces hit a number of armed operatives in several incidents:

- IDF forces hit a female terrorist who was about to carry out an attack against the forces
- Other forces discovered a house rigged with explosives in eastern Gaza City. The house was detonated in a controlled manner
- Armored Corps forces identified a squad of armed operatives launching mortar shells at IDF forces and responded with fire, hitting the squad.
- Ground Forces directed the IAF in striking squads of armed operatives during a number of clashes

The IAF targeted over 60 Hamas terrorist sites in Gaza on Monday (Jan. 12), including:

- Over 20 smuggling tunnels along the Rafah border
- 9 squads of armed operatives
- 2 mortar launchers
- 9 rocket launching sites

Approximately 20 rockets and mortar shells were launched into Israel today. Two rockets directly hit houses in Ashkelon and Sderot, causing severe damage.

January 13, 2009

Summary of IDF Operations Overnight

Overnight, IDF forces, including the Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Combat Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps, and Intelligence Corps, continued to operate against the Hamas terrorist infrastructure throughout the Gaza Strip.

Two rigged tunnels located near the security fence were uncovered by forces in the northern Gaza Strip. The forces fired at three terror operatives and uncovered many weapons in the area. In addition, forces uncovered a number of additional tunnels used by Hamas in the area.

Ground forces were involved in a number of incidents in which several armed operatives were hit. Throughout the night, approximately 30 terror operatives were hit. Fire was opened at IDF forces from the yard of a mosque, the forces returned fire.

Forces also spotted a number of terror operatives planting explosive devices in the outskirts of Gaza City and directed aerial forces that struck them.

Different weapons were uncovered in a number of incidents including four mortar launchers, an explosive device, a vest and a camera.

IAF aircraft attacked over 60 targets throughout the Gaza Strip, including the following:

- A hotel in which terror operatives were gathering in order to fire at IDF forces
- A number of Hamas terror operatives who were rigging a house
- A number of terror operatives located in the yard of a mosque
- Fifteen tunnels in the Rafah border area
- More than ten rocket launching sites
- Ten Hamas outposts
- Approximately fifteen squads of armed operatives
- Seven weapons storage facilities
- A weapons manufacturing facility located in the house of a Hamas terror operative
- A rocket launching squad
- Dozens of additional targets were struck in assistance to ground forces

Israel Navy boats assisted in enforcing the marine closure on the Gaza Strip in preventing the entering of boats that might arrive in the area.

100 trucks loaded with humanitarian aid are expected to be transferred via Kerem Shalom Crossing.

Forces were hurt after an explosive device was detonated against them in a booby trapped house that they were searching. Additional weaponry was uncovered while searching the house including a machine gun and a vest.

Summary of IDF Operations Today

IDF forces-- including infantry forces, tanks, combat engineers, artillery forces, and intelligence forces-- continue to operate throughout the Gaza Strip with the assistance of the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy.

A total of 18 rockets and mortar shells were fired into Israel today; no injuries were reported.

Four fuel containers and 102 trucks transporting humanitarian aid to Gaza passed through the Kerem Shalom crossing today, bringing the total of humanitarian aid trucks allowed into the Gaza Strip since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead to 1,028.

The IAF attacked over 100 targets since the early morning hours, including:

- 55 weaponry smuggling tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip
- 20 rocket launching sites
- 22 cells of armed gunmen, some of which were targeted in coordination with ground forces

Troops operating in the northern Gaza Strip encountered several gunmen armed with anti-tank missiles and light weapons. The troops directed the IAF in targeting the gunmen, who were hit successfully.

Working with infantry troops in northern Gaza, combat engineering forces carried out the controlled detonation of a tunnel that led to Israeli territory, in the vicinity of the Nahal Oz terminal. The tunnel, uncovered on Monday in a joint IDF and ISA operation, was apparently intended to be used to kidnap Israeli citizens or soldiers.

The IDF will continue its operations against all terrorists and those who support them.

January 14, 2009

Summary of IDF Operations Overnight

IDF forces—including Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps and Intelligence Corps - continue to operate throughout the Gaza Strip with the support of the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy.

The IAF attacked approximately 60 targets in Gaza overnight, including:

- Hamas police headquarters in Gaza City:
- An area rigged with explosive devices intended for detonation against IDF forces
- Five rocket launching sites, including a squad of gunmen who fired mortar shells into Israel. Three gunmen were identified to have been hit
- Eight cells of gunmen, some in coordination with Ground Forces
- Nine weapons manufacturing and weapons storage facilities, including one in the home of a Hamas operative in Gaza City
- Approximately 35 weapons smuggling tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip

The Navy continued to support ground forces operating in Gaza, striking Hamas targets. The IDF continues to enforce the naval blockade in the area.

Rockets Launched Into Northern Israel

A number of rockets were launched into northern Israel this morning (Jan. 14). There were no casualties or damage as a result of the attack. The IDF responded to the source of fire.

The IDF Northern Command is holding ongoing security assessments in light of the situation. The IDF holds the Lebanese government and military responsible for preventing such attacks.

Summary of IDF Operations Since This Morning

104,000 liters of fuel and 111 humanitarian aid trucks are now in the process of being transferred into the Gaza strip via Kerem Shalom Crossing.

More than 12 Qassam and Grad rockets were fired from Gaza today at Israeli communities, including Grad rockets that hit the Be'er Sheva area and the Ashdod area.

The IAF struck the Grad launcher that fired at Be'er Sheva. Overall, approximately 20 terrorist sites were attacked by the IAF since this morning, including:

- Nine rocket launching sites, most of them armed and ready for launch and some of them located underground
- A number of armed operatives
- Three smuggling tunnels
- Five weapon storage facilities

IDF ground forces in the Gaza strip reported a number of ground clashes with armed operatives today. In one incident, Paratroopers Brigade forces on a reconnaissance mission identified a suicide bomber. The forces fired and hit the suicide bomber, detonating the explosive belt. No harm was reported to the IDF forces.

In another incident, an armed operative was identified in close proximity to an IDF tank force. The force fired and reported hitting the operative.

In a third incident, Combat Engineering Corps forces, in a joint operation with Armored Corps forces uncovered a stockpile of 20 rockets inside a civilian house in Gaza City. The rockets were detonated in a controlled manner.

In a number of additional incidents, ground forces identified armed operatives and assisted in directing aerial strikes against them.

The IDF will continue its operations against all terrorists and those who support them.

Summary of IDF Operations Today

IDF forces, including Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Combat Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps, and Intelligence Corps, continue to operate throughout the Gaza Strip with the assistance of the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy.

A total of 14 rockets were fired into Israel today, no injuries were reported.

104,000 liters of fuel and 108 trucks transporting humanitarian aid to Gaza passed through the Kerem Shalom Crossing today.

The IAF attacked over 50 targets since the early morning hours, including:

- Two company commanders in the Hamas terror organization, in the area of Zaytun. Walid Za'abud and Muhamad Dash, were both involved in launching rockets at Israel and attacks against IDF forces.
- The armed terror cell responsible for launching an anti-tank missile at an IDF force, wounding even soldiers.
- 15 weapons smuggling tunnels used to transfer Grad and Qassam rockets.
- 10 cells of armed operatives, including a terrorist identified placing an explosive device aimed at IDF forces. Some of these targets were identified in coordination with ground forces.
- 10 rocket launchers, including a launcher located next to a cemetery and an armed Grad launcher ready for use.
- A weapon storage facility.
- Underground launching sites, some armed and ready for use.

Troops operating west of Gaza City uncovered weaponry, including explosive devices, hand grenades, flak-jackets and communication equipment, in a mosque west of Gaza City.

Reserve forces identified a mortar shell launcher aimed at Israel and fired at the terrorist responsible and identifying hitting him.

January 15, 2009

Summary of Overnight Events

At least ten rockets and mortars fired from Gaza hit Israel this morning.

More than 195,000 liters of fuel and 170 humanitarian aid trucks are expected to be transferred to Gaza today. The trucks' contents include medical equipment and medicine, food and other supplies.

IDF forces operating in Gaza hit approximately 35 armed gunmen during the night, mostly in aerial attacks directed by ground forces.

The IAF attacked approximately 70 terrorist sites, including:

- A mosque in Rafah used to stockpile rockets that served as an assembly area for senior operatives involved in launching rockets.
- 14 cells of armed operative.
- 14 rockets launching sites used to and mortars at Israeli communities and cities.
- Five weapon storage facilities located in houses of Hamas operatives.
- One tunnel located under the house of a Hamas operative.

The Israel Navy accompanied the ground forces and provided assisted in attacking Hamas outposts.

11 IDF soldiers were lightly wounded during the night's operations.

The GOC of the Southern Command, Maj. Gen. Yoav Galant, has issued an order to create a special team to support humanitarian and infrastructural efforts that will assist the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip to rebuild the infrastructure needed to conduct a regular life. The team, headed by Brigadier General (res.) Shimi Daniel, was instructed to gather and coordinate all commands and operations concerning humanitarian matters, in accordance with the decisions made by the General Staff. The team consists of representatives from the Coordination and Liaison office, Military Advocacy- International Jurisdiction specialists, medical and logistical personnel and members of other units.

In a joint IDF and ISA operation in the Gaza Strip early Thursday evening, the IAF targeted a building in which the following senior Hamas operatives were residing – Said Siam, Ia'ad Siam and Salah Abu-Sharah. The forces reported a direct hit. Said Siam, born in 1957, served as a minister of interior affairs in the Hamas government and oversaw its armed forces – including the Hamas Executive Force, its police force and its naval force. Siam was a zealous extremist, who liaised directly with Hamas's military wing and the terror organization's senior leadership in Gaza and abroad. Ia'ad Siam is the brother and the right-hand-man of Said Siam. Salah Abu-Sharah is the head of Hamas's interior security apparatus.

Since the early morning hours the IAF has attacked over 40 targets, including nearly a dozen armed cells, 21 rockets were launching sites, 2 mortar launching sites and 2 weapons storage facilities.

More than 25 rockets were launched at Israel today.

The GOC Southern Command, Major General Yoav Galant, has extended the validity of the December 29, 2008 order declaring parts of the western Negev a closed military zone. The jurisdiction of the order includes the following regions: the area west of Route 34, from the Yad Mordechai Junction to the Sha'ar HaNegev Junction, the area west of Route 232, from the Sha'ar HaNegev Junction to Kerem Shalom. This is a result of the concentration of forces in the area.

The order prohibits the entrance of anyone who is not a resident of the region in question, unless otherwise authorized. The order does not pertain to soldiers and policemen in the line of duty. The IDF emphasizes that there is no limitation on roads not specified in the decree.

Following a decision made by the Minister of Defense and according to security assessments, a general closure will be implemented in Judea and Samaria. The closure will begin today, Thursday, January 15, 2009 at 23:59 and will be lifted on Saturday, January 17, 2009 at 23:59. During the closure, the passage into Israel of those in need of humanitarian or medical aid as well as other specific incidents will be authorized by the District Coordination and Liaison offices.

January 16, 2009

Summary of IDF Operations Overnight

IDF forces, including the Infantry Corps, Armored Corps, Engineering Corps, Artillery Corps, and Intelligence Corps, continue to operate throughout the Gaza Strip with the assistance of the Israel Air Force and the Israel Navy.

In a joint IDF and ISA operation in Gaza City yesterday evening, the IAF targeted a building in which the following senior Hamas operatives were residing – Said Siam, Ia'ad Siam and Salah Abu-Sharah. The forces reported a direct hit.

In one incident, a ground force identified a mortar launching squad launching a rocket at Israel and directed aerial forces that attacked the squad, reporting a direct hit.

The IAF struck approximately 40 targets in Gaza overnight, including:

- A mosque used as a weapons storage facility that housed a tunnel
- A house of a Hamas terror operative
- Six squads of armed operatives
- Four smuggling tunnels
- Eight launching sites, including one in which an armed launcher was destroyed

- Three weapons storage facilities, including a structure in a Hamas training camp
- A number of explosive devices
- Two Hamas outposts
- Additional targets as assistance to ground forces

The Israel Navy continued to support ground forces operating in Gaza, striking Hamas targets while it continues to enforce the naval blockade in the area.

75 trucks loaded with humanitarian aid are expected to be transferred via the Kerem Shalom Crossing. An additional 60 trucks are expected to be transferred via the Karni Crossing, as well as fuel via the Nahal Oz fuel terminal.

The IDF will continue its operations against all terrorists and those who support them.

January 17, 2009

IDF forces operating in Gaza identified two armed gunmen hiding in a residential building and targeted them with tank fire. In a subsequent sweep of the building, troops uncovered a stockpile of ammunition, including an explosives belt, grenades, and other weapons. The troops carried out a controlled detonation of the explosives.

In a separate incident taking place in the Northern Gaza Strip, troops identified a gunman armed with an anti-tank missile, and relayed information regarding his position to the IAF, which then carried out a precision strike.

Since the morning of January 17th, the IAF targeted over 120 Hamas targets in Gaza, including:

- More than 100 tunnels in southern Gaza
- 10 rocket launching points, including several launchers that were already primed and loaded
- 5 cells of gunmen
- 3 Hamas outposts
- Additional strikes carried out in order to assist Ground Forces

A total of 20 rockets and mortar shells were fired into Israel, no injuries were reported.

January 18, 2009

In accordance with the Israeli cabinet's decision to accept the Egyptian proposal and the announcement of a unilateral ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the IDF is currently taking the necessary measures to implement the decision. The cabinet's decision was made after the IDF achieved the objectives it set for Operation Cast Lead, chiefly dealing the Hamas terror organization a heavy blow to its infrastructure, weaponry stockpiles, rocket launching program and its terror operatives.

As the decision goes into effect, the commander of the operation, GOC Southern Command Maj. Gen. Yoav Galant, will order the redeployment of IDF forces within the Gaza Strip in accordance with security assessments. Furthermore, the forces will be briefed on the specifics of the ceasefire rules of engagement.

The IDF emphasizes that its forces will respond to any attack against Israeli civilians and IDF soldiers, and that any such attack will be met with a harsh response. The IDF stresses that the current Home Front Command safety instructions to residents of southern Israel remain in effect in light of the possibility that the rocket fire will continue as Hamas cynically seeks to "have the last word."

As ordered by IDF Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, and Maj. Gen. Galant, the operation has not yet ended, and the IDF's air, naval, ground and intelligence forces will remain alert so as to be ready for any situation. The IDF will continue to assess the situation and emphasizes that it

sees Hamas as responsible for the stability of the ceasefire and the resumption of daily life for the residents of the Gaza Strip.

The IDF Spokesperson's Office reiterates that the IDF began this operation following an extended period of restraint as Hamas continued to terrorize the residents of southern Israel with daily rocket barrages against towns and villages that destroyed the daily life of people in the south.

Hamas alone is responsible for creating the situation in Gaza and is accountable for its consequences.

January 21th, 2009

This morning, the last IDF soldiers left the Gaza Strip and returned to Israel. The forces are now redeployed outside the Gaza Strip, and are prepared for any development.

The End of the Air-Land Phase

The air-land phase of the fighting scored continuing tactical gains, but it also exacerbated the political, strategic, and humanitarian problems that had arisen during the air phase. At the same time, it showed that the IDF could fight an extended land battle against a non-state actor employing many of the same tactics that the Hezbollah had in 2006, and do so with considerable tactical effectiveness. Israeli officers and senior officials also felt that the air-land phase of the campaign showed that the IDF had recovered its readiness and had mastered many of the lessons of the fighting against Hezbollah in 2006.

IDF Gains and Hamas Losses

By the time of the January 18th ceasefire, the IDF had been able to secure key routes in the center and the north of Gaza, and surround Gaza City and carry out limited penetration into the core of the city. Israel also was able to keep up a constant pressure of land-air attacks on Hamas, further damage its forces and infrastructure, and avoid more than minimal IDF casualties – a major military and political goal in Israel. At the time of the ceasefire, the Israeli side had only lost 10 soldiers in combat between December 27th and January 18th, although dozens were wounded. Four of the IDF dead seem to have been killed as the result of friendly fire – a risk made much higher by the speed of IDF operations and constant use of quick reaction suppressive fire. Israel lost 4 civilians killed and 84 injured.

The IDF also suffered very limited equipment losses. Hamas did make selective use of the RPG-29, which has a tandem warhead, one of which was able to penetrate through the armor of a D-9 armored bulldozer. It also made extensive use of IEDs. The IDF, however, had fitted its Merkava Mark 2, 3, and 4 tanks with additional belly armor. A few had this armored penetrated by massive ground charges – which penetrated the engine compartment at the front of the tank. Unlike the fighting in Lebanon, however, there were no IDF casualties from such attacks on Israeli tanks.^{xxxii}

In contrast, Hamas took between 300 and 1,100 casualties, depending on the estimate and whether wounded are counted as well as killed. These casualties were limited because Hamas soon learned that it took heavy losses if it engaged IDF forces under anything other than the most favorable conditions, and could score any meaningful successes in terms of IDF casualties or losses of aircraft or armor. As a result, Hamas forces did not

sustain engagements, used fire and run tactics, and steadily improved their dispersal and avoidance of known sites associated with Hamas before the fighting began.

Nevertheless, IDF experts estimated immediately after the ceasefire that Hamas lost some 40-50 killed a day during the land fighting, and lost some 600 dead by the time of the ceasefire -- plus a large number of wounded. Some 50 of the groups' top explosive experts reported to be among these casualties.^{xxxiii} These figures seem far more credible than the PCHR and UN estimates of such losses, which were part of the overall civilian casualty totals. They were, however, often based on the names of specific fighters, many of which were experienced and sometimes mid and high level cadres. (One Hamas source put the number of Hamas wounded at 5,000, but this seems to have included all civilians and be little more than a guess.^{xxxiv})

Final estimates of the total number of casualties and fatalities that the conflict caused is still hotly contested between the IDF, Hamas, and other groups. While the IDF is still conducting an investigation to determine the total number killed by Operation Cast Lead, the IDF has stated some unofficial estimates. The IDF now estimates that around 400 Hamas gunmen had been killed by the 10th day of fighting. By the end of the operation the IDF estimated that 1,300 people, as many as 2/3rds of them Hamas gunmen, had been killed. Of the 900 fatalities the IDF had investigated so far, they have stated that 750 of them were Hamas, 150 of them being civilians.^{xxxv}

Hamas lost a leading cleric, Nizar Rayyan, who was a key liaison between the political and military branches of Hamas, and Siad Siam, its Minister of Interior. Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and other top officials, however, survived. IDF experts also estimated that most Hamas "brigade" commanders survived because they remained in shelters and tunnels in urban areas that the IAF could not locate and/or attack because of the risk of collateral damage, but they lost many battalion and company commanders.

Hamas lost significant facilities and stocks of weapons. One source indicates that Hamas was estimated to have some 3,000 rockets in inventory at the start of Operation Cast Lead, that it fired some 600 into Israel during the fighting and that the IDF air and ground forces destroyed another 1,200. This left an inventory of some 1,200 at the time of the ceasefire, but Israeli experts believed that smuggled Iranian rockets were already being supplied to Hamas forces in Gaza by late January 2009.^{xxxvi}

Israeli experts did not provided detailed estimates of most other losses, but they did cite a steady decline in Hamas command, control, and communications (C3) capabilities as well as the forced dispersal of Hamas fighters outside their prewar facilities. According to one expert, the IDF concluded that some of the rockets fired after Hamas announced its one-week ceasefire in response to the Israel unilateral ceasefire were only fired because of a breakdown in Hamas C3 capabilities.

According to Palestinian reports, these losses, and Hamas's failure to inflict serious casualties on the IDF, led Hamas to conduct a detailed review of every aspect of its failures after it agreed to a ceasefire. Some of this review may have been triggered over

debates as to whether to accept a ceasefire between factions under Khaled Mashal, who opposed a truce, and Mahmoud Zahar, who felt that Hamas could not continue the fighting.

Hamas commanders also seem to have felt that their defense tactics and use of IEDs had been far less successful than they anticipated, that their defensive plans did not make effective use of buildings and terrain in many cases (including the failure to defend part of Tel al-Hawa, that homemade explosives failed more often than expected, and that Hamas forces had unanticipated difficulties in resupply. Other problems were reported to include troubles with Fatah informants that gave key targets to the IDF, a poor C3 system, and delays in command decisions and reaction.^{xxxvii} While such problems are normal among forces with no real prior combat experience – regardless of how much training they may have had from groups like Hezbollah or Iranian and Syrian experts – they do seem to have further increased IDF effectiveness.

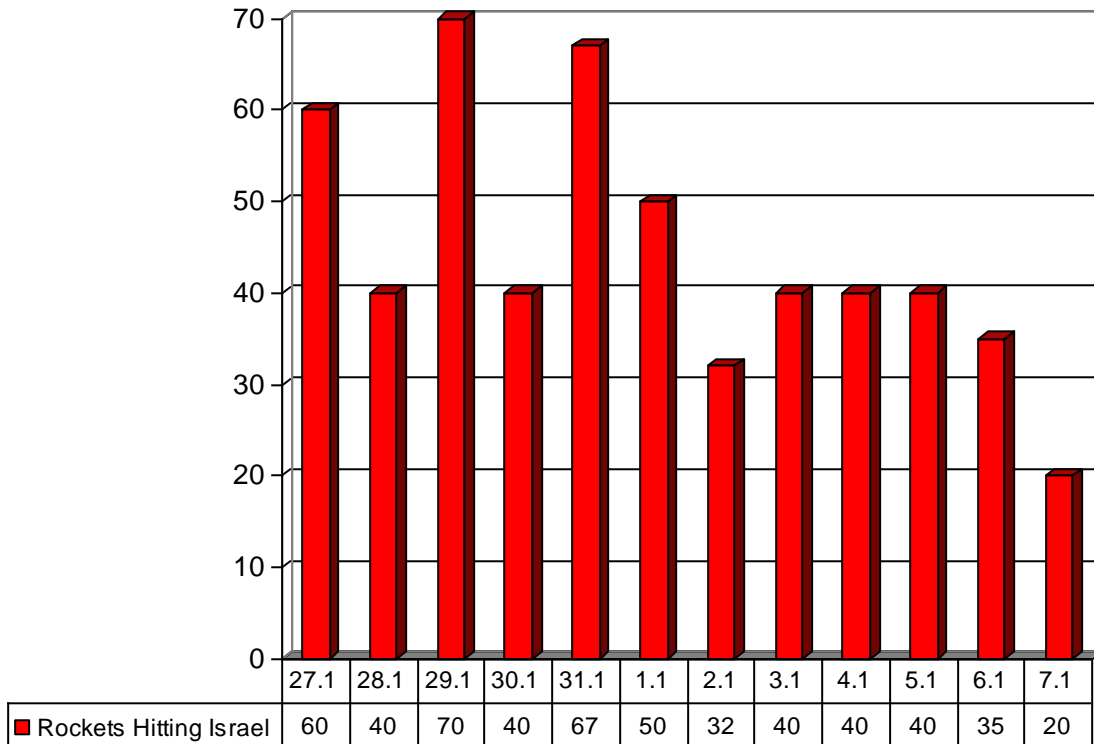
No Israeli expert, however, felt that Hamas was crippled by the war, lost all of its manufacturing capabilities, was short on weapons or ammunition, or had run out of rockets and mortars. Hamas forces emerged large intact. The IDF estimate of 600 dead is a small part of a force of roughly 10,000 fighters. The loss of Hamas's equivalent of company and battalion commanders may well have been offset by the fact that the more skilled fighters tend to survive, Hamas also began the fighting without real combat experience and gained it, and Palestinian anger against the IDF almost certainly provided an important recruiting base. Hamas was able to identify and kill a number of its Fatah and other opponents, a process that it continued after the ceasefire. It also was able to quickly begin rebuilding its tunnels, and US intercepts of Iranian ships and Israeli intelligence indicated that it also was soon able to at least begin rebuilding its military stocks.

It also is questionable as to how much Palestinian resentment was actually directed at Hamas in addition to Israel by the end of the fighting, and whether this will have any practical or lasting meaning. Israeli experts felt that Hamas would suffer politically when they briefed at the time of the ceasefire, but they had no real empirical data or examples to give. They also hoped that the Palestinian Authority would be put in charge of the post-conflict aid and reconstruction effort, although no arrangements have been made that guarantee this, or that Hamas cannot take credit for international aid if it remains in power. So far, there is little evidence that Hamas's control of Gaza, or its popularity, has suffered a major blow – but the ceasefire remains unstable, the reconstruction process is just beginning, and it simply is too early to tell.

In short, Israel's unilateral ceasefire may have been delayed by the diplomatic time necessary to exploit Israel's tactical successes, but it did not produce a clear outcome in Israel's favor. Hamas only could have been largely or definitively defeated or deterred by the war that Israel's political leadership did not want to fight. The IDF would have had to go on to conduct a systematic occupation and sweep through every urban area in the Gaza Strip and series of searches, raids, and detentions that could find and identify most Hamas fighters.

Figure 5: Continuing Hamas Rocket Attacks During the Fighting: December 27th- January 7th

Source: IDF Defense spokesman, *Washington Post*, January 8, 2007, p. A10.



Going Deep by Air, Not Land

The IDF also seems to be divided about the practicality and merits of this option. Some IDF combat units wanted to go deeper into urban areas and stay longer during the fighting, and senior Israeli commanders in the operation later publicly criticized the government for halting the IDF and limiting its objectives. At the same time, other Israeli senior military officers stated at the time of the ceasefire that senior IDF commanders had calculated that the benefits would often be negligible, IDF and civilian casualties would rise, and IDF units might become trapped in having to occupy an area as a static and more targetable force. As one Israeli officer put it, “They went into the center to recover. We did not go into the center with land forces, and there were sharp limits on our ability to use air strikes.”

Israeli experts also stated that that urban areas did not give Hamas a de facto sanctuary even though the IDF largely avoided penetrating into them, and did not conduct sustained operations in the center of Gaza City. The IAF could hit many targets, and a combination of its IS&R assets and ongoing HUMINT from Palestinians hostile to Hamas did allow it to score continuing hits.

They also, however, confirmed that battle damage assessment became a steadily more serious problem early in the war. Once the surprise phase of the air campaign was over, Hamas was able to move, shelter, and disperse. Furthermore, HUMINT presented problems because Hamas began to hunt down and kill suspect supporters of Fatah – although more to remove a potential post-conflict rival than for security purposes.

While some Hamas movements could sometimes be targeted and struck, there was no way to confirm the impact in terms of who was killed unless they were a known cadre whose death led to Hamas or other local reports and there normally was no way to see inside tunnels, shelters, and structures and estimate the damage hits did to supplies, weapons, and manufacturing capabilities. UAVs could sometimes do this, but rarely. Most data on these kinds of weapons effects – and a great deal of useful data on Hamas activities – came because Hamas communications discipline was poor – far poorer than that of the Hezbollah. In contrast, Israeli experts again reiterated that removing IDF cell phones and denying media access to Gaza made a massive improvement in operational security over what one described as the “disaster of 2006.”

The Civilian Cost

One thing is clear. Palestinians civilians in Gaza lost far more than either group of combatants. The Gaza War came after years of fighting between Israel and the Palestinian Authority had already created a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. By 2008, 1.5 million people were crammed into a tiny enclave of only 360 square kilometers, isolated by a 51 kilometer border with Israel and an 11 kilometer border with Egypt, and with a 40 kilometer coastline with no real port and whose waters are controlled by the Israeli navy.

Gaza had experienced a steady decline in educational standards and career opportunities for an extraordinarily young population. Some 45% of its population was 14 years of age or younger, and roughly 40,000 men and women became eligible to enter a labor force each year that the CIA estimates totals under 300,000 mature working adults. Unemployment had averaged at least 40% since 2006, and most who had work only had work because of aid and subsidies. Israel's economy had become virtually independent of Gazan labor and was being structured to eliminate future economic ties. Water and other problems severely limited Gazan agriculture, which had been severely affected by past fighting and only provided some 8% of the GNP before this fighting took place.

While such claims are political and biased, pro-Palestinian sources claim that the average per capita income in the Gaza Strip was around two US dollars a day before the fighting began; that the unemployment rate had reached 70 percent while the poverty rate had risen to 80 percent. They also claimed that one million Palestinians in Gaza lived on

assistance provided by the UNRWA and FAO in addition to other Arab and Islamic charitable organizations; that 60 percent of Gaza children suffered from diseases caused by malnutrition; and 70 percent of the population obtained water for only eight hours every two days a week. They also claimed that 140,000 Palestinian workers in Gaza had joined the unemployment line, and 3,900 factories, workshops and stores were shut down, since the Israeli-Palestinian Authority fighting had begun 2000.

The Gaza War piled tragedy on tragedy. Every estimate of casualties in the Gaza War has serious uncertainties.

- Hamas claimed that 1,314 died in the conflict of which 412 were children and 110 were women while only 48 were Hamas members. Hamas estimated the wounded at 5,300, of these Hamas claimed 1,855 were children and 795 were women.^{xxxviii}
- The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) estimated that there were 1,251 Palestinian dead at the time of the ceasefire -- of which 179 were armed Hamas combatants, 168 were policemen (many of which may have been Hamas fighters), 292 were children, and 97 were women.^{xxxix}
- Jaber Wishah, the Deputy Director of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights later issued claimed another slightly different set of numbers. He listed the dead at 1,285 of which 280 were children and 111 were women. He claimed that 82% (1,062 people) of those who died were civilians, 168 were policemen who were not involved in the fighting, and only 50 Hamas members. He placed the number of wounded at 4,356 of which 1133 were children and 735 were women.^{xi}
- The Palestinian health ministry issued its own numbers, listing the total dead at 1,193 of which 410 were children and 108 were women. It lists the number of wounded at 5,300 of which 1,600 were children.^{xii}
- UN estimates differed. One indicated that the 22-day offensive, which Israel launched on 27 December with the stated aim of ending Hamas rocket attacks, claimed over 1,300 lives, 412 of them children, and wounded more than 5,450, 1,855 of them children. It should be noted, however, that many Israelis feel that such UN sources are strongly biased in favor of the Palestinians.^{xiii} UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon referred to 6,600 killed and injured in a speech in Davos asking for \$613 million in emergency relief funds.^{xliii}
- An independent reporter for *Corriere della Sera*, an Italian newspaper conducted his own investigation into the death count. His numbers place the total dead at between 500 and 600. He claims that the number wounded was less than 5,300 and that the majority of those killed or injured were 17-23 year old men who were part of Hamas.^{xliv}

Tragic as direct civilian casualties are on either side, the physical and economic damage impact affected the entire population. Again, sources are contradictory and sometimes produce figures that cannot possibly be based on credible data and methods. The Palestinian Authority claimed, however, that the war did \$1.9 billion worth of damage to an already crippled Gazan economy, and damaged 14% of all the structures in the Gaza Strip: roughly 20,641 buildings out of a total of 147,437.^{xlv} An estimated 4,100 homes were totally destroyed, 25 schools, 31 structures for the security forces, and 17 structures housing government offices. The Palestinian Authority claimed damage was done to 1,500 businesses and factories, 10 generating stations, and 10 major water and sewage

facilities, Agricultural damage was estimated at \$90 million, with 80% damage of some kind to agriculture infrastructure and crops. It estimated the average daily cost to Gazans in terms of economic activity at \$4 million a day -- a figure that is more striking when one considers that unemployment was estimated at some 40-70% when the war began.^{xlvi}

One must be careful about such estimates. Other Palestinian reporting indicates a much lower level of damage, concentrated in Gaza City and the Philadelphia Corridor area, as does satellite photography. Some of the data on Palestinian casualties may be exaggerated. Israel also provides a wide range of overhead photos showing how many Hamas facilities were embedded in civilian areas.^{xlvii} Many of the charges against Israel also ignore decades of failure on the part of the international community and Palestinian leaders to build an effective Palestinian economy, and make honest and effective use of aid. See the Palestinian plight in terms of three weeks of fighting in Gaza, rather than these decades of joint failure to give 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza, and 2.4 million in the West Bank, a decent life is scarcely an adequate standard for humanitarian concerns

The exact numbers, however, are less important than the fact that Palestinian civilians suffered far more than either the IDF or Hamas, and that images of civilian deaths and suffering were seen throughout the world for some three weeks. Regardless of the wars tactical impact, perceptions became a steadily more important aspect of the war's impact and outcome with each passing day.

Israeli Humanitarian Efforts

At the same time, it is important to keep Israel's humanitarian actions in perspective. Israel was slow to react to the humanitarian impact of the war, and often failed to publicize its actions effectively. The IDF did decide to use "decisive force," and this had high human costs. But, the IDF's use of decisive force in its efforts to reinforce deterrence is a legitimate military objective as long as the targets it selected were military and/or could reasonably be expected to have a military presence.

Israel did plan its air and air-land campaigns in ways that clearly discriminated between military and civilian targets and that were intended to limit civilian casualties and collateral damage. In general, the IDF made systematic and comprehensive use of its IS&R assets, careful mapping, GPS ability to provide precise locations, and guidance from targeting experts briefed in the laws and conventions of war. Moreover, Hamas did made de facto use of human shields in ways that violated the spirit, although not the letter, of the applicable laws and conventions. Accordingly, this aspect of the IDF's actions met the key legal test that the anticipated military advantage did not outweigh the risk to civilians.

As the chronologies show, the IDF admits that it did hit some purely civilian targets, including important UN targets like an UNRWA school where 42 Palestinians died. It is not clear, however, that Hamas or other combatants were not in or near such targets, and the laws of war only require an effort to discriminate – not perfect success. There is no evidence that any abuses of the other narrow limits imposed by laws of war occurred, aside from a few limited cases. A month after the end of the war, the only significant incident that had as yet emerged was the possible misuse of 20 phosphorus shells in built

up areas in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza. (Another 180 shells were fired, but outside built up areas and in orchards where the use of such shells was fully legal.)

War is inherently horrible. Given the nature of the fighting, there is no evidence that Israel made more mistakes than NATO did in Kosovo or that the US and its allies made in dealing with targets in populated areas in Iraq and Afghanistan. The tempo and pace of modern war virtually ensure such mistakes, and when they are made in populated areas, they will kill civilians. TV images of precision weapons going straight to the right target are good television, but real war is far from perfect.

Israel did sometimes seem to minimize the political and strategic cost of its actions; its humanitarian efforts did begin slowly, and often led to tension with UN agencies and international organizations. Discussions with Israeli experts indicate there were delays and mistakes that Israel should have avoided, and that the IDF sometimes gave priority to operations against Hamas that it should have realized either produced marginal benefits or disproportionate humanitarian costs.

Yet, the previous chronology shows a growing pattern of humanitarian efforts over time, and a wide range of humanitarian activities did take place by the time of the ceasefire. Israeli Ministry of Defense claims seem to be accurate in listing the following actions:^{xlviii}

- 37,159 tons of humanitarian aid on 1503 trucks transferred via Kerem Shalom and Karni crossings (food, medication and medical supplies).
- 1,535,750 liters of heavy-duty diesel for the Gaza power station.
- 234 tons of gas for domestic uses.
- 188,000 liters of diesel for UNRWA vehicles and needs.
- 3896 tons of grain, on 98 trucks, was transferred via Karni conveyor belt.
- 20 Ambulances donated by the governments of Turkey and Jordan, and 10 ambulances that were transferred to the Gaza Strip by the ICRC in order to meet the needs of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.
- 449 Dual nationals were evacuated via Erez Crossing.
- 68 chronically ill people and their escorts made their way from Gaza to Israel, the West Bank and Jordan.
- 37 employees of Intl. Orgs. And medical staff entered Gaza via Erez Crossing.
- A forward medical clinic was established at Erez by MDA.
- Numerous medical movements took place via Rafah, including at least 25 ambulances.

The IDF also claims that 1,150 Palestinian families were evacuated from the combat zone in the North Gaza area, along with 382 wounded, and 61 bodies. It coordinated the movement of 833 trucks. 186 ambulances, 21 fire trucks, and 80 infrastructure repairs. There is no doubt that the throughout of food and supplies was often delayed or limited, but significant resupply did still take place.

A total of 1,503 truckloads, 706 truckloads and donations (total of 37,159 tons) of supplies were delivered to the Gaza Strip between December 27/28, 2008, and January 17/18, 2009. This included 1,039 tons (111 trucks) of medical supplies, and animal feed

as well as some 30,000 tons of food.^{xlix} It is important to note, however, that the IDF often was coordinating aid provided by international organizations and countries other than Israel. Some 706 trucks (48% of the total amount of aid) came to Gaza from various international organizations and donors to Gaza via Israel.

Key sources were UNRWA (310 trucks), WFP (127 trucks), and Jordan (116 trucks). This flow continued after the ceasefires. A total of 453 trucks moved into Gaza during 18-23 January carrying 27,653 tons of humanitarian aid, raising the total to 61,233 tons since the beginning of the fighting.

The IDF also made a major effort to deal with the impact of wartime damage during and after the fighting. As of mid-January 2009, these steps included:

Electricity:

- Before the operation, Gaza received 70% of its usual electrical supply, due to lack of fuel. From those 70%, Israel supplied 62% (124 MVA supplied in 10 lines from Israel) and Egypt 8% (17 MVA supplied by 2 lines).
- During the first days of the operation, due to damages caused by the fighting, the supply of electricity was reduced to 25%; by the end of the operation electricity supply reached 77% (19/1).
- During the operation 9 out of 10 lines from Israel were damaged. By the end of the operation, and with the help and coordination of COGAT, all but one damaged line were rehabilitated.
- One of the two lines from Egypt was damaged and was fixed twice during the operation.
- On the 10.1.09, the Gaza power plant resumed its activity and is now producing 25-30 MVA.
- As of the 19.1.09: electrical supply is 77%. (7% more than when the operation started).

Water and sewage:

- Due to the lack of electricity in the first days of the operation, some of the pumps and wells stopped operating, in order to meet the needs, 4 trucks with 98 tons of personal water bottles were transferred through Karem Shalom into Gaza on the 11.1.09.
- On 13.1.09, 5 trucks with equipment for the water infrastructure transferred into Gaza.
- On the 15.1.09, the pump in the damaged waste water treatment plant in Shikh-Ajlin was supplied with fuel. On the 18.1.09, a CMWU team was coordinated to the area in order to fix the damage.

Communication

- The communication problem in Nahal Oz was fixed.

Israel's actions must also be placed in the broader context of how Hamas chose to deploy and use the equivalent of human shields. Israel is correct in claiming that Hamas must share responsibility for what happened. Hamas took steps that sharply limited what Israel could do and Hamas did sometimes abuse humanitarian efforts:

- Use of ambulances to mobilize terrorists.
- Terrorist tunnel aimed at disrupting the Nahal Oz & Karni crossings.
- Launching and firing from the immediate vicinity of international installations (UNRWA/Hospitals etc.).

- Launching and shooting from within populated areas, schools and homes.
- Terrorist activities and formulated and carried out from Mosques, including storage of rockets.
- Abuse of the humanitarian recess to launch increased amount of rockets.
- Prevention of medical evacuation of Palestinians to Israel.

Military Time versus Diplomatic Time

The level of humanitarian suffering was also driven by the fact the both sides refused to reach a rapid political settlement to the extent they ever reached such a settlement at all. Senior Israeli officers and officials stressed that "diplomatic time" did lag behind "military time." While IDF officers did not agree with some IAF officers who thought that Israel could have stopped after 3-4 days of air strikes, there did seem to be a consensus that Israel reached the point of diminishing returns roughly two weeks into the war. Whether Israel, Hamas, or both should be blamed for the fact the fighting continued -- or whether diplomatic delays were inevitable given the differences between the two sides -- remains debatable. Unfortunately, the human cost does not.

VI. Uncertain Strategic and Grand Strategic Outcome

The broader impact of the war is remains uncertain. Unlike the fighting with the Hezbollah in 2006, the fighting in Gaza was highly popular when the war ended. This popularity, however, was based far more on tactical successes, and low casualties, than any clear outcome. In fact, the Gaza War ended without a clear or decisive result in virtually every important aspect of strategy and grand strategy:

- Both Israel and Hamas were able to claim victory, although for very different reasons.
- Hamas took serious losses, but may have already replaced them during the fighting as new volunteers took their place. It could continue to launch rockets and mortars -- and did, although at far lower levels.
- The ceasefire did not define clear conditions binding either side. Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire. Hamas did not accept the Egyptian ceasefire proposal and instead declared that it would grant a one-week ceasefire for the IDF to leave the Gaza. Hamas soon threatened to resume its rocket fire if Israel did not open the border crossings. Egypt issued yet another invitation to Israel and Hamas to negotiate a meaningful cease-fire on January 19, 2001 – roughly a month after the end if the fighting.
- The security of Gaza's borders was not made part of a clear, well defined, and enforceable agreement.
- No clear changes were made in the status of the border crossing issue, and tunneling activity resumed days after the ceasefire.
- Hamas remained in control of the Gaza Strip. It was able to hold victory demonstrations in Gaza on January 20th, and quickly claimed that it had shown that IDF troops were unable to penetrate into the center of Gaza City
- Although Israel made the tunnels in Gaza, and between Egypt and Gaza, a major military objective and struck at well over 100, the conflict ended without new security arrangements, and there were reports of new tunnel construction by mid-January.¹
- No clear arrangements existed that gave one side control over aid funds and the reconstruction effort.
- Israel did not recover its captive soldier, Gilad Shalit.
- The IDF probably did enhance some aspects of its deterrence of non-state actors and neighboring states like Iran. Its action also, however, created broad anger in the Arab and Islamic world and this could help provoke future tensions and terrorism.
- Hamas's reputation and popular support may have eroded, but this is controversial. Other Palestinian, Arab, and regional anger at Israel was clearly far greater than against Hamas.
- There were even fewer prospects for any form of real peace between the two sides than when the fighting began.
- The outcome may have strengthened moderate Arab states like Egypt by weakening Hamas and strengthening deterrence of Iran and the Hezbollah. It also may have weakened them by motivating other radical movements and states that supported Hamas, and weakening popular support for moderate regimes in their own countries. Many moderates state took strong stands against Israel for the first time in years.
- The Palestinian Authority seemed weak and corrupt before the fighting. The war could do nothing to change this, and gave Hamas the opportunity to attack Fatah fighters and personnel in Gaza the movement the IDF attacked.ⁱⁱ

The Failure to Properly Fight the War of Perceptions

At least some of these problems might have been avoided if Israel had gone to war, or managed the conflict, with a political and diplomatic strategy that it shaped and prepared as well as it did its military actions. Israeli certainly could -- and should -- have done far more to show its level of military restraint and make it credible.

Israel also should have had clear humanitarian plans from the start, began to implement them the moment it decided to go to war, carried out feasible steps throughout the fighting, and made tangible and immediate efforts at humanitarian recovery a key element of winning the ceasefire and any peace. Instead, Israel sometimes seems to have concluded that its actions will be so unpopular in any case, or that they are so justified in Israeli eyes, that these efforts are not necessary.

The Uncertain Enhancement of Deterrence

It is also unclear that Israel went to war with a clear picture of how much its actions would reinforce deterrence and how much they would provoke anger and future problems. Israeli officials and experts stressed that the Israel acted so decisively in part to deter other threats like Iran and the Hezbollah, and most felt that Israel had had this impact. A retired Israel officer, Major General Giora Elad, put these views in a more balanced context, "This hasn't solved the problem...But it has introduced a completely different cost calculation for Hamas." He also noted that Hamas face new challenges: "not just rebuilding, but rebuilding their political standing and legitimacy."^{lii}

It is not clear this is the case. The IDF did demonstrate that its ground forces have the military superiority or "edge" in fighting asymmetric wars in the edges of a densely populated urban area, but the IDF did not pursue the ground war to any major tactical conclusion inside these areas. It also is not clear that any opponent of Israel felt Hamas was really strong enough to be a serious test of Israeli ground forces. Moreover, no regime in the region could have ignored the fact that Israel's air attacks in Lebanon in 2006 had already sent stronger signals against an opponent with at least some air defenses than operations in Gaza.

The Lack of A Clear Political and Diplomatic Strategy and Plan for Conflict Termination

More broadly, the differences and tensions between Israel's leaders seem to be reflected in the fact that Israel lacked a clear plan for a ceasefire, and largely relied on Egypt as an intermediary. Israel also does not seem to have had any plan to try to enhance the status of the Palestinian Authority during or after the fighting. It not only did not have a humanitarian plan for the war, it seems to have lacked any clear plan for post-conflict reconstruction.

In short, Israel's leaders do not seem to have learned key lessons from the fighting in Lebanon. They attempted to improvise conflict termination and went to war with half formed and conflicting strategic and grand strategic objectives. It is not clear that Israel's leaders could have achieved all their goals if they had a clear set of objectives and a better-defined plan to achieve them. Nevertheless, when Olmert declared that, "the

objectives of the operation have been fully reached” on January 17,th his words sounded suspiciously like “mission accomplished.”^{liii}

Any leadership that goes to war without clearly defined goals for conflict termination fails its country. If – as now seems the case – Israel consistently set limited goals for the war, it should have made it clear from the start that they were limited and does so at the level of its political leadership. Instead, the ambiguities in its statements led to widespread discussion of goals like destroying Hamas, securing the southern border or all of Gaza, and bringing the Palestinian Authority back to power in Gaza.

The failure to clearly and publicly define Israel’s strategic and grand strategic goals helped give Hamas the ability to claim that it achieved a kind of victory by surviving. It may well have extend the fighting by at least a week, and helps raise questions as to just how much the war really did reinforce Israel’s deterrence of other movements and states.

Any war which ends with both sides able to claim victory, without clear guarantees of a defined outcome, and leaving many of the conditions that led to the conflict as they were before it began is scarcely a decisive victory. Moreover, by late January, Hamas attacks and Israeli air strike had resumed, and Israeli Minister of Defense Ehud Barak had to cancel a planed trip to Washington and an Israeli defense spokeswoman had issue an all too familiar warning: “If Hamas escalates, we are ready to respond in a harsh manner. We don’t want to return to where we were a month ago.”

“Mission accomplished” already sounded all too much like “déjà vu.” This was even truer of a warning that Olmert gave on February 1st. The threat of new Hamas rocket attacks has already risen to the point where he stated that,^{liv}

“We've said that if there is rocket fire against the south of the country, there will be a disproportionate Israeli response to the fire on the citizens of Israel and its security forces...We will not agree to return to the old rules of the game and we will act according to new rules that will guarantee that we are not dragged into an incessant tit-for-tat war that will not allow normal life in the south of the country...The situation... in recent days has increased in a manner that does not allow Israel not to retaliate in order to make sure that our position... is understood by those involved in the fire...The response will come at the time, the place and the manner that we choose.”

The Key Strategic Lessons of the “Gaza War”

In short, there are certain lessons of the Gaza War that are all too familiar from the similar mistakes the US and its allies have made in Iraq and Afghanistan:

- *No responsible or competent political leadership initiates a conflict without first having developed a clear and detailed plan for conflict termination, without defining the tools necessary to implement such a plan and adapt it to the emerging realities of war, and without seeing conflict termination and the post-conflict outcome as the primary purpose of war.* Regardless of the success of a nation’s military, or the tactical outcome, any failure in these areas is unforgivable.
- *There is nothing new about the gap between military and diplomatic time identified by senior Israeli officials and officers, but reducing it to a minimum is a key aspect of planning and executing modern warfare.* Like conflict termination, however, explicit plans and actions are needed to minimize the risk that diplomacy may lag behind the tactical purpose and outcome of the fighting. War should not be extended beyond the point of military necessity through a lack of consensus in leadership or inadequate preparation for the diplomatic phase. If this is forced upon a combatant, then every effort must be made to ensure that the blame for any lag is placed on the enemy

- *The humanitarian dimensions of war are now a critical aspect of warfighting, military planning, and the practical execution of warfare for modern states.* This is not a matter for lawyers or international law. It is not simply a matter of the common moral values of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Executing the humanitarian dimension is vital to meaningful military success. It is critical in shaping the strategic and grand strategic outcome. In the case of war in failed or broken “states,” it also means that both conflict reconstruction and post conflict reconstruction are critical dimensions of a successful battle plan.
- *Wars of perception, and “information dominance,” cannot be won by demonizing an opponent, claiming a war is just, or making vague statements about one’s own military restraint.* Modern states must demonstrate that they pursue valid military objectives, and must make their restraint and caution in targeting and conducting military operations far more transparent than in the past. This does not mean compromising security or the effectiveness of military operations. It does mean communicating the key details of methodology, providing daily reporting during actual operations, and making rethinking every aspect of public information campaigns. It also means steadily tailoring every aspect of military development to reduce civilian casualties and collateral damage where this is practically feasible and communicating the nature of such efforts.
- *Vague claims about enhancing deterrence are no more valid as a reason for a given military strategy or plan than grandiose ideological slogans or narrow punitive action.* If a key purpose of limited war is to deter, then there must be explicit plans and calculations to accomplish this goal, and they must take account of the reality that war provokes as well as deters and that the impact of conflict on outside states and movements can offset narrow gains in dealing with a given opponent – particularly when war involves different religions, cultures, and other critical values.
- *Dominating or shaping the postwar or post-ceasefire outcome of the conflict is critical.* This includes stability operations and postwar reconstruction, and affects development, governance, rule of law, and political systems – not just the security situation. The US attempted to internationalize the effort in Afghanistan and failed. It did not make meaningful preparation for the post conflict phase in Iraq and saw a major insurgency rise and the nation split into low-level civil war. Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire with no clear arrangements for who would control aid to the Palestinians in Hamas, and with Hamas in charge and UN agencies still forced to work through Hamas. UNRWA had contacts with Hamas “even at ministerial level”, although it said this was strictly on technical issues related to the delivery of its humanitarian services in line with wider UN policy. Some World Food Program’s food aid distributions in Gaza had to be carried out by civil servants at the Ministry of Social Affairs, which is controlled by Hamas.^{lv} The Quartet did not recognize Hamas but there was no Palestinian Authority presence or mechanism it could work through and no plans to create one at the time of the ceasefire. Every war ends differently, but no war other than one of sheer survival is a victory unless one “wins” the peace.

Grand Strategic Costs: The Reactions of Hamas and Outside States

The “Gaza War” raises equally serious questions about Israel’s overall grand strategy in dealing with its neighbors and its efforts to search for some form of lasting peace. Israel’s leaders, and many Israeli officials and regional experts, seemed to downplay the diplomatic impact of the fighting – at least immediately after the ceasefire. These impacts, however, were often highly negative and Hamas and its supporters made serious efforts to exploit them during and after the fighting.

Throughout the conflict, there was almost constant negative coverage of Israel in the Arab and Islamic world, as well as in much of Europe. Some of this coverage reflected longstanding biases and opposition to Israel. Much, however, came from voices that supported peace efforts or which are less biased. The end result was to mobilize Arab popular opinion even more than the fight against Hezbollah in 2006, and to polarize and

divided Arab regimes over support of Hamas. Even moderate Arab regimes – which regarded Hamas largely as a terrorist organization and barrier to peace and any real future for the Palestinians – showed serious anger at

The attitudes of some key actors and states can be summarized as follows:

Hamas

Hamas claimed victory, and that it had effectively forced the IDF to leave without winning. On January 18th "In a speech broadcast ...on Hamas's Al Aqua television, the Hamas leader Ismail Haniya, who has been in hiding for the past three weeks, claimed victory against Israel."^{lvi} Hamas also said "it would fight on despite Israel's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire in the Gaza Strip."^{lvii} Hamas's representative in Lebanon, Osama Hamdan, told Al Jazeera: "If the Israeli military continues its existence in the Gaza Strip, that is a wide door for the resistance against the occupation forces."^{lviii}

Hamas also immediately began taking advantage of the conflict by making appeals to the international community for support and attempting to paint itself as a victim. A "Hamas spokesman said that the decision to declare a unilateral cease-fire showed that the war was also a unilateral move on the part of Israel against the Palestinians."^{lix} He said that "this war had nothing to do with the rockets or the presence of Hamas in the Gaza Strip...This war against children, women and the elderly was part of the upcoming Israeli election campaign."^{lx}

Hamas propaganda both rejected Hamas responsibility for the fighting and used it to attack the Palestinian Authority. A commentary on the "Voice of the Palestinians web page of the Palestinian Information Center provides a clear picture of such efforts,^{lxi}

There is no doubt that a great calamity has hit our people in the Gaza Strip. But by no means was that evil aggression a victory for Israel unless the Zio-Nazi entity views the mass killing of innocent civilians and the mass destruction of residential homes and public buildings as an act of heroism. Well, if so, then we should view Adolph Hitler as the greatest hero of all times.

Non the less, we should refrain from whipping ourselves too much or try to score propaganda points one against the other. Israel did try to decapitate Hamas, destroy its legitimate government (legitimate because Hamas was elected by the Palestinian people) and give the Gaza Strip back to PA leader Mahmoud Abbas on a silver platter.

The fact that Israel couldn't achieve the criminal goal was not due to Israeli magnanimity. Zionists are too thuggish and too criminal minded to know the meaning of magnanimity. After all, magnanimity requires at least a modicum of humanity and Zionism has none of that.

In truth, Hamas and other Palestinian resistance factions earned this spectacular steadfastness, this legendary resoluteness, in the face of overwhelming criminality, hideousness and firepower. Hence, one can only view with utter contempt the cheap canards and calumnies coming out of Ramallah and accusing the resistance of responsibility for the widespread death and destruction in Gaza, as if the murderous pilots who were raining bombs and missiles and white phosphor on the heads of our children and civilians were members of Hamas, not Israeli war criminals.

To be sure, such cheap accusations are made by two categories of people, ignoramuses who don't know the facts, and bona fide traitors who are doing Israel's work. The former can be somehow forgiven by virtue of their ignorance or stupidity. However, the latter are willful Judases who

ought to be silenced and punished. And if the time is not conducive to dealing with them the proper way, they should be isolated in disgrace.

This should be one of Hamas's key tasks in the coming weeks and months. Otherwise, the Fifth columnists within Fatah and the PA, the very people who committed national adultery in broad daylight by collaborating with the Shin Beth and the CIA for the purpose of raping the Palestinian people's will and achieving America's morbid goals in this tortured part of the world, will continue to create mischief and try to rock the collective Palestinian boat.

These must be ejected, isolated, exposed, disgraced, and made to pay for their treachery and perfidy. But Fatah is not a movement of traitors, and it is not in the Palestinian people's interests to see Fatah catapulted into the laps of the likes of Muhammed Dahlan, Nimr Hammad and al-Tayeb Abdul Rahim who probably were dreaming, even loudly, of an Israeli victory in Gaza.

Hence, it is both right and wise for Hamas to get closer to true patriots within Fatah. And the time to do is now.

There is no doubt that despite the enormity of the genocidal Zionist blitzkrieg against our people in Gaza, Hamas has not only managed to remain intact, but has also earned overwhelming respect and admiration from around the world.

Hamas shouldn't treat lightly this earned outpouring support which many movements, parties and governments even dream of receiving a fraction of... Hamas should show enlightened flexibility toward re-establishing national unity.

It is this national unity that will eventually dump the government of Fayadh into the dustbin of history and do away with the whoring practice known as "the security coordination." The restoration of national unity will also impose an early retirement on people like Keith Dayton and other CIA officers who have taught hundreds, if not thousands, of our beguiled and naïve young sons that the enemy is Hamas, not the Zionist thugs who have just murdered and maimed thousands of our children and civilians in the Gaza Strip and who have been stealing our land and narrowing our horizons.

At the same time, Hamas politicians in Gaza did reveal some of the same splits in Hamas views towards Israel after the fighting that that Hamas had exhibited before the war.^{lxii} Hamas leader Ghazi Hamad told an Associated Press reporter at the Gaza-Egypt border, where he was coordinating Arab aid shipments, that, "We want to be part of the international community...I think Hamas has no interest now to increase the number of crises in Gaza or to challenge the world..." "We accept a state in the '67 borders," said Hamad. "We are not talking about the destruction of Israel."

Yet, another Hamas leader, Mushir Al-Masri, stated that, "We won this war...Why should we give in to pressure from anyone?" He also said that, "We have our hands open to any country ... to open a dialogue without conditions, but made it clear that he did not include Israel. Another hard-line Hamas politician, Yehiel El Abadsa, stated that Hamas should not reconcile with Fatah and that Hamas "will be the ones to rebuild Gaza."

Syria

Syria took a strong stand against Israel from the start of the fighting. On the day the fighting began, the Syrian Foreign Ministry called the IDF strikes in Gaza a "barbaric crime", and called on the Arab League to hold a meeting on the subject immediately. "Syria is concernedly following the barbaric Israeli aggression against Palestinian citizens in Gaza and sees it as a horrid act of terror."^{lxiii} It supported Qatar in calling an Arab summit meeting which was structured to give maximum influence to Hamas and

which effectively divided the Arab world into those states that took a hard-line reaction to the fighting in support of Hamas and moderate states seeking a solution that would actually help the Palestinian people and move towards peace/

Syria had long provided a sanctuary for some Hamas leaders, and joined Iran in supporting their hard-line positions on any kind of ceasefire, more lasting accommodation with Israel, and serious negotiation with the Palestinian Authority. Syria also called for naming Israel a terrorist state. The Syrians also proposed putting the peace plan on hold at the Doha conference. This seemed to put at least a temporary end to any Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations, and align Syria more closely with Iran.

After the fighting, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad held a meeting of Damascus-based leaders of the Palestinian factions, and congratulated them on their "victory." "Israel's inability to achieve its objectives despite using the deadliest of weaponry is proof of the devotion of the Palestinian people to its territorial rights and its deep belief in victory against occupation and aggression. (It) should be exploited politically to maintain Palestinian rights, including the right of return," according to official sources. The nine leaders of anti-Israel factions based in Syria included Hamas Politburo chief Khaled Mashaal, Secretary General of the Islamic Jihad Movement Ramadan Abdullah Shallah and Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) Ahmad Jeb.^{lxiv}

Iran

Iran strongly supported Hamas's demand before, during, and after the fighting that Israel be forced to lift blockade of Gaza, and put pressure on Egypt to open the border crossing points into Gaza. Iran also actively supported Hamas hardliners in opposing any role for the Palestinian Authority (PA) in opening the Egyptian or Israel border crossings and reconstruction.

Once the fighting began, Iran joined Syria, the Hezbollah, and Hamas in exploiting the fighting and hostile Arab public opinion— although it took no risks in the form of action and prevented Iranian “volunteers” from even attempting to go to Gaza.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad issued his usual extreme populist statements. On January 14, 2009, he stated that that had shown that it was "not feasible" for the "Zionist regime" to continue to exist in the region, and that the fighting has been "a great lesson for all" that revealed "the absolute defeat and desperation of this (Israeli) regime...even for the supporters of the occupying regime and its leaders, it has become clear that the continuation of the Zionist regime's life in the region is not feasible."^{lxv}

A day later, he attacked Arab states for not supporting Hamas, and stated that,^{lxvi}

"They can break off all kinds of relations with this entity. They can make use of their political abilities and pressure the supporters of the Zionist entity. They can threaten U.S., England and other countries. They can also benefit from their economic strength to make the change... They can, at least, allow their people to interfere and express themselves."

He went further when presenting a bill on economic development to the Majlis on January 30th. According to Iran's Fars news agency, he said that Israel had committed war crimes in Gaza that could lead to definitive annihilation of the regime.^{lxvii}

"He strongly condemned the massacre of innocent civilians, including women and children, blocking food supplies and medicine to Gaza Strip in the lunar month of Muharram (the month in which Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) infallible household and his 72 companions were martyred). He reiterated that Israeli crimes against humanity in Gaza would be a prelude to great developments in the region, stressing that the resistance movement of the Palestinian people and the Gaza inhabitants would be victorious in the near future. President Ahmadinejad added that the Zionist regime and its allies have currently faced dead-end in all political, cultural, and economic areas."

Other Iranians made their views equally clear. Former president, Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, said during Friday prayers that, "The oppressed Palestinian people can stand up to Israel if they get political and financial support, as well as weapons." Ali Larijani, the speaker of the Iranian majlis (parliament), warned that Gaza would turn into a "graveyard" for Israeli forces. "The Zionist attacks have been countered with full defense and resistance of the Palestinian combatants...the Zionists must know that Gaza will become a graveyard for their forces."

A senior Iranian national security official, Saeed Jalili, held talks with the leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, in Beirut, and both seemed to have leaked warnings from Israel that the Shia militia might try to open a second front. In practice, the Hezbollah at most fired a few rounds and did nothing, but Syria, Iran, and the Hezbollah all gained in propaganda terms from being able to say they supported Hamas while moderate Arab leaders did nothing or only offered weak verbal support because of popular pressure from their own peoples.

Jalili also traveled to Damascus meeting the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, and with the Hamas leader Khaled Meshal and the smaller Islamic Jihad faction, He stressed Iran's ties to Syria and the Hezbollah during the visit, and warned that, "The failure of some countries to move effectively regarding Israeli terrorism, as well as silence over this terrorism will have negative effects on the status of these countries."

As for arms shipments, Israel experts claimed that Iranian-supplied weapons had begun to move through the tunnels in the Philadelphia Corridor within weeks and the ceasefire, and the IAF had begun a major new bombing effort by the start of February.^{lxviii}

Hezbollah

The Hezbollah exploited the fighting without taking risks that might have compromised its growing power in Lebanon. It instead, sought to exploit the fighting to attack moderate Arab regimes, and strengthen its own position. These efforts continued throughout the fighting, but a speech by Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah gave Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV on December 28, 2008 – the day after the fighting began -- provides a particularly good example of such efforts, and the kind of propaganda lines that Hezbollah pursued in attacking both Israel and moderate Arab regimes,^{lxix}

"As Lebanese, we can understand what is happening in Gaza well. It is the same as what happened here [i.e. the 2006 war with Israel]. The same choices are offered, the same battle, the same collusion and, God willing, the same consequence and result...

"Brothers and sisters... It is clear that there is an ongoing American-'Israeli' project in the region that wants to impose an unequal settlement on the rest of the Arabs, after Egypt and Jordan [have] signed so-called peace treaties with 'Israel.' Palestine, Lebanon and Syria remain, and the Americans and Zionists want to settle the issue according to their conditions. Palestinians, Lebanese and Syrians are to obey and surrender to these conditions, and are not allowed any other option.

"[The] Americans and Zionists work to impose these conditions by force - through pressure, blockade, internal strife [instigated in order] to trap resistance movements in internal sedition, through media, political and psychological warfare, [and through] assassinations and wars. [The goal] is to subdue those who have not yielded so far to [the] American and 'Israeli' conditions [to their] and will.

"Some Arab regimes are true partners and part of this project. It is not [just that] there is Arab silence - there is real and complete partnership in this. I do not mean all Arabs or all Arab regimes, but particularly [those] that have signed so-called 'peace treaties' with 'Israel.' They are working today at every level - politically, psychologically, socially, culturally and [through] media, security and the military [apparatuses] - on preparing the [ground] for the surrender of [those who resist] the American-Zionist project [regarding] the Palestinian question and the Arab-'Israeli' conflict.

"So let us be very clear, we are [facing] a partnership and the complicity of some Arab countries in what is happening in our region.

"The 2006 war was waged against us in Lebanon with Arab consent, at certain times upon Arab request. The 'Israelis' were crystal clear when they revealed this, and the Arab regimes cannot deny this because the 'Israelis' might possess evidence [of] their collusion - [proof] that the 'Israelis' were contacted [by Arabs] and asked to '[get] rid of Hezbollah. When the war started, [the Arabs] were comforting the 'Israelis' after their initial failure in the first few days, yet those Arab regimes continued to demand 'Israel' to eliminate Hezbollah and 'cut Hezbollah's head off.'

"[The same thing] is happening in Gaza today. Those same sides are asking 'Israel' to eliminate Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and the rest of the resistance factions, to [chop off] the heads of the mujahideen and resistance fighters, to do away with [them] and settle this battle once and for all. In fact they are helping the Zionist entity in this, and this is the truth...

"I even say to you that some of these Arab regimes are the real and original cause behind [the] internal Palestinian division and fighting. These regimes contributed, instigated, financed and armed, [until] the situation [deteriorated to the point] of fighting between [the] Palestinian factions, just as they did before in Lebanon...

"[These Arabs] are not neutral, they are not even uncomfortable - they are convinced of what they [are doing] and are doing [it out of] commitment to the project, and this is a very unfortunate thing. Then, when infighting and internal division in Palestine or Lebanon happen, these same Arab regimes use that as [an] excuse to pull out and say, 'Well, look at the Palestinians. When they kill each other what are we [supposed] to do?' Regrettably, they use [this excuse] only to evade [their] responsibility towards Palestine or Lebanon.

"In the July 2006 war, and today in the Gaza Strip, no one asked these Arab regimes to open a front and fight [instead] of the Lebanese... or the Palestinians, but only to make a fair and appropriate political stand, at least on media level. [But today], as in the July War, we find [that] the Arab regimes hold the victims responsible."

At Height Of Blockade On Gaza, Egypt's FM Said: "We'll Break the Legs of Anyone Who Attempts to Cross into Egypt"

"Yesterday, we heard an Egyptian official [i.e., Egyptian FM Ahmad Abu Al-Gheit] [saying that] the side that 'aborted the Palestinian national dialogue efforts [was] responsible for what is happening in Gaza.' By that he meant Hamas. He then added that, in the [Egyptian] view, [the Egyptians] had issued warnings, and 'those who did not heed them [must] bear the responsibility on their own!' Could any human being believe such talk coming from an Arab person or official?"

"At the height of the blockade on Gaza, when Gaza was suffering from hunger and illness, that same person said, 'we will break the legs of anyone [who] attempts to cross into Egypt!'... By God, life has no value in the shadows of such figures and leaders, [who] plot and plan against the nation. When 300 martyrs [are] massacred in Gaza in minutes, an Arab official stands [up] to declare [that] he holds the victims and the martyrs responsible for the confrontation, as if expected Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and the Palestinian factions in Gaza to agree to an extension of the calm [that meant nothing but] blockade, starvation and humiliation [for Gaza] in the past six months!..."

The Arab Peoples Must Take to the Streets and Force Their Governments to Act - Anyone Who Is Killed Will Be a Martyr

"But what is the responsibility of the nation today? We as a nation are faced with a central goal [that] we ought to aim for in the current crisis...stopping the Zionist attack on Gaza and not allowing this attack to achieve any of its goals, purposes or objectives, [so that] the victory will be for Gaza despite the great sacrifices. Every state should work toward this goal, not only the citizens of Gaza.

"People whose governments have not taken any action at all should force their governments to act. It is not at all justifiable for people to say, 'We cannot move because of [our] repressive regimes.' We ought to [take to] the streets in the Arab and Islamic world, raise our voice to the world and put pressure on our governments. Even if they shoot us, it is still a must. Whoever falls martyr in these protests is a martyr [for] humanity..."

"In [the] July war I did not ask this of the Arab peoples, but in [the] Gaza war, and the aggression against the Gaza Strip, I say it is [incumbent upon] all of us to go out [on] the streets in the thousands, tens [of thousands] and hundreds of thousands, to [make] demands of these government and [hold] them responsible. They know well what they can do, particularly in the current times. They can do a great deal [now that] the United States and European countries are suffering financial and economic crisis..."

"Secondly, all the Arab and Islamic peoples [must] demand [of] the Egyptian regime... whose position is the cornerstone of what is happening in Gaza, not to open a battlefield or to fight, but only to open the (Rafah) crossing [so that] food, medicine, water and even weapons [can] reach our people in Gaza - for in Gaza there are people and resistance, men and women capable of resistance, steadfastness and victory. They have performed very well in all previous phases... Egypt is only required to open the crossing, indefinitely - for the living, not for the injured or the martyred. This Egypt, the Mother of the World, the largest and most important of [the] Arab States, it is not a Red Cross or a Red Crescent institution, [that it should] deal with the people of Gaza in this way."

The Egyptian Regime Must Resolve the [Situation] - Not Pressure Hamas to Return to Ceasefire or End the War...

"What is required of the Egyptian leadership and regime is to resolve this issue, and not to take political advantage of the war [in order] to pressure Hamas [and] the resistance factions in Gaza to accept [the] 'Israeli' conditions in return for a ceasefire or [an end] to the war - as some of us here in Lebanon did in the first days of the July aggression. They must help the people of Gaza

politically, [in order] to stop the aggression without restriction or condition. This is the real responsibility. This is what our Arab and Islamic worlds should be calling [for] and demanding [of] the Egyptian regime."

"Up until now we have been talking with tact, and...making appeals, but after what happened yesterday, we say to the Egyptian regime...if you do not open the Rafah border crossing, if you do not come to your brothers' rescue in Gaza, then you are party to the siege, [to] the killing... [and to] causing the Palestinian tragedy. Egyptian officials have to hear this from all the peoples of the Arab and Islamic world: from religious scholars, political parties, and [the] elites, intellectuals and media professionals - from [all the] different sectors of our societies. They must know that they [will be condemned by] the entire nation and its history, [by] the prophets and the martyrs, if they do not rush to take this humane and historical stand now..."

The Egyptian People Must Open the Rafah Crossing With Their Bare Hands

"Let the Egyptian people go out on the streets in their millions. Can the Egyptian police arrest millions of Egyptians? No they cannot! We all call upon the Egyptian people, because they are the ones facing this regime... People of Egypt, you must open this Rafah crossing with your bare chests if you have to, and I do not hypothesize here. I'm talking from a position of [one who has] participated [in] the resistance, which fought for 33 days... sacrificed and gave [the lives of its] martyrs. [According to] what we know and what we hear about the officers and soldiers of the Egyptian Armed Forces, [they are] still proud of their Arabism, [and] continue to oppose Zionism, despite the decades [that have] passed since the (so-called) Camp David peace agreement..."

"I do not call for a coup in Egypt, and I am in no position to call for a coup in Egypt, but I [urge] generals and officers to say to their political leadership that [their] honor [as members] of the military, the responsibilities [with which they have been] entrusted, and their medals, prevent them from guarding 'Israel's' border while seeing our people being slaughtered in Gaza! The presence of everyone on board today is what [will] change the equation - Egypt with its people, its political parties, [its] religious scholars, [the] Al-Azhar institution [of] religious law, all the armed forces and the political elites. I do not think there is an excuse for anyone to fall back..."

No one who visits the Arab world; and talks to Arab journalists, professionals, and intellectuals; can dismiss the impact of such rhetoric. There may be little love or sympathy for Hezbollah, Hams, Iran or any aspect of the "Shi'ite crescent" in much of the Arab world, but such arguments do have a cumulative affect. They do reach the Arab world and they do fuel a level of anger that no Arab government can ignore.

Egypt

The reaction of moderate Arab states was very different. Egypt was instrumental in negotiating the ceasefire, and its government did not take a hostile stand towards Israel. It saw Hamas as a radical movement tied to a hostile Moslem brotherhood in Egypt and as a potential threat to the regime. Moreover, Egypt neither wanted to be a smuggling route for arms that might be used by Egyptian terrorists or radicals inside Egypt, to see the Sinai become less secure, or to be thrust into taking responsibility for Gaza and its population when its priorities were its own citizens and economic needs.

President Mubarak refused to be pressured by Hamas. He gave a speech on Egyptian television on December 30, 2008 stating that Egypt would close its border crossings with Gaza until the Palestinian Authority regained control and a 2005 deal governing their operation is respected. "We in Egypt are not going to contribute to perpetuating the rift (between Abbas and Gaza's Hamas rulers) by opening the Rafah crossing in the absence

of the Palestinian Authority and EU observers in violation of the 2005 deal" between Abbas and Israel.^{lxx}

At the same time, no Arab state could ignore the reality of Palestinian suffering or the pressures of public opinion. It was clear from Egyptian media that the Egyptian public strongly condemned Israel, not Hamas, and that the fighting gave at least some new leverage to the Moslem Brotherhood and opponents of the regime.

The fighting placed Egypt in the difficult (and all too familiar) position of being caught between the Arab world and its official relations with Israel. Egypt condemned Israel's ground offensive and called for an end to Israel's "savage aggression" against the Palestinians. The Egyptian presidency a statement that said,^{lxxi}

Egypt places the onus on Israel for the innocent civilians martyred and wounded.... Egypt condemns in the strongest possible terms the beginning of Israel's ground operations in the Gaza Strip and the invasion of the territory by its forces...Egypt once again calls upon Israel to end its aggression immediately and without preconditions, and calls upon the United Nations Security Council and Quartet to swiftly fulfill their responsibility without delay to end the Israeli aggression."

Egypt also called on the Security Council and the Quartet to confront the humanitarian consequences of the attack on the Palestinians, and said Israel must be compelled to live up to its responsibilities as an occupying power.

Like Israel, the ceasefires left Egypt with a future where the indeterminate end to the conflict meant that Operation Cast Lead is only a step in a continuing security challenge. It was clear with a week that the smuggling tunnels were being rebuilt and continued to supply Hamas, and that all of the basic security problems in the Philadelphia Corridor remained – although possibly in a more diminished form.

Egypt did begin to install more cameras and new motion sensors along its border with the Gaza Strip to try to combat smuggling to the Hamas-run territory.^{lxxii} Egyptian officials stated that they hoped the new sensors and cameras would help detect any tunnel construction in the border area. They reported that some cameras and sensors had already been installed, and that they would be connected by cables that were part of a tunnel detection device being installed along the Gaza-Egypt border from south of Rafah to the Mediterranean coast. These actions, however, were the result of aid from joint U.S., French and German experts, and not planning by Israel or actions that could not have been accomplished without the fighting. Their effectiveness also remained to be seen.

Jordan

Like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other moderate Arab states, the conflict placed Jordan in an awkward situation. The Jordanian government sees Hamas as a hostile movement and one that blocks peace efforts, and it has condemned Hamas rocket fire on Israel. Jordan

also fears the steady deterioration of the Palestinian Authority and situation of the Palestinian people as creating new pressure to make Jordan a "Palestinian state."

Jordan's King Abdullah continued to call for a peace settlement, a called he repeated when he met with President Obama's new envoy, George Mitchell in Amman in early February. The King called for immediate, "serious and effective," peace negotiations to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict "on the basis of the two-state solution." A royal court statement stated that,^{lxxiii}

King Abdallah asserted that the setting up of an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian national soil in accordance with the international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab peace initiative is a pre-requisite for the attainment of security for all (people) in the region.

At the same time, the Jordanian government faces growing anger from its own people – many of whom are Palestinian -- and from the Arab world if it fails to speak out against Israel. Jordan froze its diplomatic ties to Israel during the conflict it, and Jordanian MP's burned an Israeli flag inside the Jordanian parliament. Jordan did not, however, support Hamas or tilt towards alignment with Syria and Iran. Some reports also indicate that the chief of Jordanian Intelligence was dismissed for such a relationship.

Like Egypt, the indeterminate end of the fighting and further deterioration of the Palestinian situation left Jordan with more problems than when the fighting had begun, Popular anger against Israel was higher, prospects for a full peace diminished, and no clear end game was in sight.

Palestinian Authority

The fighting did not empower the Palestinian Authority. Instead, images of Palestinian suffering virtually forced leaders like Abbas to support Hamas at a time that Hamas had already begun to hunt down Fatah personnel in Gaza that it felt might be supporting the IDF or saw as rivals.

Palestinian media on the West Bank did make it clear that the Palestinian Authority saw Hamas as a key cause of the fighting and suffering in Gaza, and rejected Hamas calls for a second front on the West Bank that could only be as destructive to the Palestinian cause.^{lxxiv} Nevertheless, key Palestinian Authority leaders like President Abbas had to reject the possibility of taking over from Hamas as a result of the fighting and had to make new offers to Hamas to start talks on sharing power. Abbas declared that fighting "has become unbearable" and that "national unity is the most important thing to us."^{lxxv}

The reality on the ground was very different. Hamas stepped up its attacks on Fatah in the Gaza within a day after Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire. By the end of January, Hamas and Fatah were even further apart and Abbas set even more demanding conditions for dialogue with Hamas. He issued a statement on February 1, 2009, that dialogue with Hamas was impossible unless they recognized the supremacy of the Palestine Liberation Organization: "Now we say ... no dialogue with those who reject the Palestine Liberation Organization... They must admit without equivocation or ambiguity that the organization

is the sole and only representative of the Palestinian people. Then there will be dialogue."^{lxxvi}

This left the reconstruction and aid effort in a Palestinian political limbo, and there is little evidence that any Palestinian backlash against Hamas benefited the Palestinian Authority or Gaza. The Palestinian Authority's lack of influence over Israel was all too clear during the fighting and it was Hamas that was able to start the aid effort after the ceasefire.^{lxxvii}

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia sees Hamas as a both a generally hostile extremist group and as a barrier to the kind of peace settlement that might bring stability to the region and provide a real state for the Palestinian. Like Egypt, it condemned Hamas's rocket attacks and ending of the ceasefire. King Abdullah also reiterated his calls for Palestinian unity after the fighting and made it clear that he blamed the Palestinian leadership as well as Israel,^{lxxviii}

The competition between them is a big mistake. It will do them more harm than that done by Zionism...I appeal to them again to stand united in order to strengthen their cause. They should reject their selfishness in the service of their religion and nation, Palestine

Like Egypt, however, Saudi Arabia could not ignore the suffering the fighting imposed on the Palestinian people, King Abdullah and Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal warned that the fighting threatened the peace process and that the time window for the Saudi peace plan might close. Senior princes joined in the popular anger against the war, sometimes reflecting views heard more privately among senior officials in Jordan, Egypt, and in the other Gulf states.

One particularly strong warning came from Prince Turki al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia in an editorial in the Financial Times. On January 22, 2009. Prince Turki wrote as a private individual, which gave him a freedom other moderate leaders did not have. At the same, he had been the Saudi ambassador in both London and Washington. He has been a leading voice of moderation and a supporter of the Saudi peace process and an advocate of Jewish-Christian-Islamic dialog.

In my decades as a public servant, I have strongly promoted the Arab-Israeli peace process. During recent months, I argued that the peace plan proposed by Saudi Arabia could be implemented under an Obama administration if the Israelis and Palestinians both accepted difficult compromises. I told my audiences this was worth the energies of the incoming administration for, as the late Indian diplomat Vijaya Lakshmi Nehru Pandit said: "The more we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war."

But after Israel launched its bloody attack on Gaza, these pleas for optimism and co-operation now seem a distant memory. In the past weeks, not only have the Israeli Defense Forces murdered more than 1,000 Palestinians, but they have come close to killing the prospect of peace itself. Unless the new US administration takes forceful steps to prevent any further suffering and slaughter of Palestinians, the peace process, the US-Saudi relationship and the stability of the region are at risk.

Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister, told the UN Security Council that if there was no just settlement, "we will turn our backs on you". King Abdullah spoke for the entire Arab and

Muslim world when he said at the Arab summit in Kuwait that although the Arab peace initiative was on the table, it would not remain there for long. Much of the world shares these sentiments and any Arab government that negotiated with the Israelis today would be rightly condemned by its citizens. Two of the four Arab countries that have formal ties to Israel – Qatar and Mauritania – have suspended all relations and Jordan has recalled its ambassador.

America is not innocent in this calamity. Not only has the Bush administration left a sickening legacy in the region – from the death of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis to the humiliation and torture at Abu Ghraib – but it has also, through an arrogant attitude about the butchery in Gaza, contributed to the slaughter of innocents. If the US wants to continue playing a leadership role in the Middle East and keep its strategic alliances intact – especially its “special relationship” with Saudi Arabia – it will have to drastically revise its policies vis a vis Israel and Palestine.

The incoming US administration will be inheriting a “basket full of snakes” in the region, but there are things that can be done to help calm them down. First, President Barack Obama must address the disaster in Gaza and its causes. Inevitably, he will condemn Hamas’s firing of rockets at Israel.

When he does that, he should also condemn Israel’s atrocities against the Palestinians and support a UN resolution to that effect; forcefully condemn the Israeli actions that led to this conflict, from settlement building in the West Bank to the blockade of Gaza and the targeted killings and arbitrary arrests of Palestinians; declare America’s intention to work for a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, with a security umbrella for countries that sign up and sanctions for those that do not; call for an immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Shab’ah Farms in Lebanon; encourage Israeli-Syrian negotiations for peace; and support a UN resolution guaranteeing Iraq’s territorial integrity.

Mr. Obama should strongly promote the Abdullah peace initiative, which calls on Israel to pursue the course laid out in various international resolutions and laws: to withdraw completely from the lands occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, returning to the lines of June 4 1967; to accept a mutually agreed just solution to the refugee problem according to the General Assembly resolution 194; and to recognize the independent state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. In return, there would be an end to hostilities between Israel and all the Arab countries, and Israel would get full diplomatic and normal relations.

Last week, President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad of Iran wrote a letter to King Abdullah, explicitly recognizing Saudi Arabia as the leader of the Arab and Muslim worlds and calling on him to take a more confrontational role over “this obvious atrocity and killing of your own children” in Gaza. The communiqué is significant because the de facto recognition of the kingdom’s primacy from one of its most ardent foes reveals the extent that the war has united an entire region, both Shia and Sunni. Further, Mr. Ahmadi-Nejad’s call for Saudi Arabia to lead a jihad against Israel would, if pursued, create unprecedented chaos and bloodshed in the region.

So far, the kingdom has resisted these calls, but every day this restraint becomes more difficult to maintain. When Israel deliberately kills Palestinians, appropriates their lands, destroys their homes, uproots their farms and imposes an inhuman blockade on them; and as the world laments once again the suffering of the Palestinians, people of conscience from every corner of the world are clamoring for action. Eventually, the kingdom will not be able to prevent its citizens from joining the worldwide revolt against Israel. Today, every Saudi is a Gazan, and we remember well the words of our late King Faisal: “I hope you will forgive my outpouring of emotions, but when I think that our Holy Mosque in Jerusalem is being invaded and desecrated, I ask God that if I am unable to undertake Holy Jihad, then I should not live a moment more.”

Let us all pray that Mr. Obama possesses the foresight, fairness, and resolve to rein in the murderous Israeli regime and open a new chapter in this most intractable of conflicts.

Israel may be able to afford the cost of ignoring its enemies, and the kind of extremist rhetoric emerging out of Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and even Syria. It must be far more careful about the impact of its military actions on moderate Arab regimes, and about discounting their anger and support for the Palestinian people. Few Arab voices deserve more to be taken seriously, and Prince Turki had previously used very similar words describing the conflict in a speech at the opening of the 6th Gulf Forum on January 6th,

Turkey

The grand strategic risks Israel runs in understanding the importance of regional and world opinion are further illustrated by the impact the fighting had on Turkey. Turkey was Israel's closest ally in the Muslim world before the conflict. The Israeli operation led to harsh words and serious problems between the two nations. Turkey was upset that Israel chose to begin the operation while Turkey was in the process of moderating peace talks between Israel and Syria. Israel's timing was especially distressing for Turkey due to the awkward position it placed Turkey in as a Muslim country while it is attempting to join the EU.

It also raises critical questions in terms of Israel's relations with both Turkey and Syria, and the prospects for peace. Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed in an interview with Lally Weymouth after the fighting that Turkey had brought Israel and Syria together, and had also brought Israel and the Palestinians to the brink of a peace settlement at the time the war began, one whose outbreak derailed Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations,^{lxxix}

At the request of Syria, we entered a phase of working together with Israel and Syria indirectly to get them to talk with each other. We are mediators in that process. This was an example of how much importance we put on peace in the Middle East. We had done this before with Pakistan and Israel. . .

During the tenure of [former Pakistani president] Pervez Musharraf, we brought them together in Istanbul: the foreign minister of Israel and the foreign minister of Pakistan.

And what happened?

The meetings took place for two days in secret about two years ago. We also took part in the peace talks between Israel and Palestine.

Between Israel and Fatah or Israel and Hamas?

I'm referring to the Palestinian Authority and President Mahmoud Abbas. On December 23 we had a meeting with Prime Minister Olmert in Ankara. On that day we had the fifth round of the unofficial talks between Syria and Israel. That night . . . I was talking on the phone to Syrian President Bashar Assad, and I was talking to Olmert in person and also to the Syrian foreign minister.

Were you trying to move the process to direct talks between Israel and Syria?

Yes.

And did Bashard Assad agree?

President Assad from the start had a very positive attitude toward these talks. On that night, we were very close to reaching an agreement between the two parties. It was agreed they were going to talk until the end of the week to come to a [positive] outcome.

So you felt you were close to coming to an agreement?

These talks on that night went on for five or six hours. . . . When I was talking with Prime Minister Olmert, I said regarding the Palestine-Israeli talks it would not be correct not to include Hamas in the negotiations. They entered the election in Palestine and won the majority of seats in the parliament. But Prime Minister Olmert said he could not do something like that. Moreover during that talk, I said . . . that I believed I could be successful in freeing the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

In order to release the Israeli soldier, did you ask the Israelis to do something for Hamas?

I said to Prime Minister Olmert that if you want us to mediate in order to get the Israeli soldier freed, we can do this and we believe we can achieve something. But . . . once the soldier is free, Israel should [release from jail] Hamas's speaker of parliament and its members of parliament.

Why do you have such a close relationship with Hamas, which is an arm of Iran and is run by Khaled Meshal, who lives in Damascus?

First of all, Hamas is not an arm of Iran. Hamas entered the elections as a political party. If the whole world had given them the chance of becoming a political player, maybe they would not be in a situation like this after the elections that they won. The world has not respected the political will of the Palestinian people. On the one hand, we defend democracy and we try our best to keep democracy in the Middle East, but on the other hand we do not respect the outcome of . . . the ballot box. Palestine today is an open-air prison. Hamas, as much as they tried, could not change the situation. Just imagine, you imprison the speaker of a country as well as some ministers of its government and members of its parliament. And then you expect them to sit obediently?

It sounds like you and Prime Minister Olmert were on the eve of an actual breakthrough between Israel and Syria.

I'm sharing my excitement with you.

The Israelis have been frustrated that they couldn't talk directly to the Syrians.

We were trying to be their hope. Olmert's last sentence [as he left] was, "As soon as I get back I will consult with my colleagues and get back to you." As I waited for his response, . . . on December 27, bombs started falling on Gaza. There had not been any casualties in Israel since the cease-fire of June 2008. The Israelis claim that missiles were being sent [from Gaza]. I asked Prime Minister Olmert, how many people died as a result of those missiles? Since December 27 there have been almost 1,300 dead, 6,000 injured, no infrastructure left, no buildings left, everything is damaged, Gaza is a total wreck. It's all closed, under total siege. The United Nations Security Council makes a decision, and Israel announces it does not recognize the decision. I'm not saying that Hamas is a good organization and makes no mistakes. They have made mistakes. But I am evaluating the end result.

Starting now, do you see a role for Turkey? There was a discussion about Turkish troops being part of a peacekeeping force in Gaza.

This is totally out of the question. Only maybe as observers. It would be a major mistake for us to send security forces. There are those who try to claim that my attitude toward Israel's latest attacks on Gaza is because I'm anti-Semitic or against the Jewish people.

If Erdogan's remarks are accurate, rather than the product of anger and rhetoric, they indicate that Israel made two major strategic blunders into starting a war with such limited objectives in Gaza – derailing negotiations with Syria and avoiding a peaceful alternative in Gaza. The facts involved at, however, still extremely uncertain, and the anger of the moment is not history.

The fact remains, however, that previously friendly Turkish officials called Israel's campaign "a dark stain on human history," and the air campaign against Hamas a "crime against humanity." Prime Minister Erdogan called for Israel to be barred from the UN until it ceased the operation. Turkey also made several statements that supported Hamas. Israeli officials were quoted in turn as saying that the Turkish opposition to Operation Cast Lead had severely hurt Israel's view of Turkey.

Israelis tended to dismiss such words as driven by the heat of the moment and as atypical of the Turkish military. Prime Minister Egrodan openly clashed with President Shimon Peres at Davos a month later, however, and Israeli need to be far more cautious about the feelings of the Turkish military and secular Turkish analysts and officials. Anyone who visit Turkey finds that they – like many of their Arab counterparts in moderate Arab states -- are often considerably less sympathetic to Israel in private that the official line might indicate.

Qatar

Qatar provides a different kind of example. It has often almost deliberately provoked divisions with other moderate Arab states like Saudi Arabia, and was a supporter of Hamas before the conflict began. During the Israeli campaign Qatar froze its diplomatic ties with Israel, although it did not sever them – only its commercial relations. In addition it also claimed that King Abdullah's peace proposal of 2002, which had been accepted by the Arab League, had been rendered dead by the Israelis.

Qatar sponsored a largely pro-Hamas summit meeting in Doha in mid-January 2009, and invited Hamas and Islamic Jihad representatives. Moderate Arab states did not attend or sent comparatively low level representatives, but the summit still an revealed a serious split in the Arab world over Hamas and the future of the peace process. It also gave some propaganda leverage to supporters of Hamas. Al-Manar TV of Lebanon provides a typical report on the summit of this kind:^{lxxx}

The blood of more than 1,100 martyrs who have fallen in 21 days of Israel's savagery against the Palestinians couldn't unite Arabs...

On Friday, a Qatari-suggested urgent Arab Summit finally kicked off. The summit, which was postponed for 20 full days due to Arab 'disparities', however failed to reach the needed quorum. Yet, the summit could see the reaching of a long-awaited decision. Indeed, Qatar and Mauritania decided to "suspend" their relations with Israel, a Mauritanian diplomat declared.

Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa addressed the Arab leaders during the opening session, stressing on the urgent need to halt the Israeli aggression on Gaza and to open crossing. "We would have loved to see Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas here but he apologized," Sheikh Hamad noted. Sheikh Hamad also praised, following Lebanese President's speech, the Lebanese Army and Resistance for the major role they have played in the battle against the Israeli enemy.

For his part, Hamas politburo Chief Khaled Meshaal addressed the attendees, stressing that the Palestinian Resistance movement would not accept Israel's terms for a Gaza truce. "I assure you: despite all the destruction in Gaza, we will not accept Israel's conditions for a ceasefire," he declared, calling on Arabs to rely on the Resistance.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad addressed in turn the Arab leaders and stressed that the problem does not only lie in the occupation, but in the nature of the enemy, noting that Israel has actually built itself on massacres and only speaks the language of blood. He called for all Arab countries with ties to the Zionist entity to cut them and shut its embassies. "Syria has decided to suspend peace negotiations for an unspecified period of time," he also noted. While warning that Israel wanted its war in Gaza to be a turning point in the history of its struggle with the Arabs, Assad expressed belief that the Arab peace initiative was already dead.

For his part, Lebanese President Michel Sleiman called the Arab leaders to set a clear and comprehensive strategy on how to deal with the Israeli enemy and oblige it to implement the Arab Peace Initiative. He called on them to be active and take practical measures to ensure a ceasefire, reconstruction plan and the spirit needed to make it through. "Arab unity, as well as Palestinian unity, is more important than the location of holding an Arab summit," Sleiman noted, stressing that the Doha meeting wasn't aimed at consolidating divisions among Arabs. "Lebanon is ready to bring together the Arab stance," the Lebanese President emphasized.

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir called for international pressure on Israel to halt its offensive against the Palestinians. He called on Arab states to reconsider their stances, noting that the Palestinian cause should remain the central one. "The best we can offer to Gaza is the humanitarian and material support," he noted.

Comoros President Ahmad Abdallah Sambi said that what is happening now in the Gaza Strip is considered war crimes. He called on Arab leaders to support Gazans through action and not only through speeches. "Gaza was a prison, and now became a cemetery for Arabs and Muslims," he emphasized.

Qatar has been pressing for an emergency Arab summit on the Gaza crisis since the first day of the Israeli aggression on December 27. But it has repeatedly run into opposition mainly from Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

And it's in this context that some Arab States didn't feel embarrassed to announce their rejection to the principle of the holding the summit, others simply said that the summit is 'inappropriate' while a third group proudly said that there is an 'already scheduled' economic summit next week, and Gaza would be discussed on its sidelines.

Why shouldn't they, if the Palestinian President himself did not attend the Doha summit? Mahmoud Abbas, whose term expired on January 9, was among the firsts to "welcome" the Qatari invitation for the summit, however he "apologized" later. In contrast, Palestinian Resistance leaders are present in Qatar.

Meanwhile, the official Qatar News Agency said that the leaders of Algeria, Comoros, Lebanon, Mauritania, Sudan and Syria were attending the summit while Djibouti, Iraq and Libya had sent senior officials. Non-Arab Iran and Turkey were also taking part with Tehran represented by its President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ankara sending an aide to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem, who was in Doha for the meeting, said that the summit was "the fruit of Qatari, Arab, Syrian and Islamic determination ... in defiance of the all the pressures exercised to prevent it."

Arab League chief Amr Mussa, who was pressured to boycott the Doha summit according to well-informed sources, acknowledged that there was "chaos" in Arab ranks over the Gaza crisis as Arab foreign ministers gathered in Kuwait City for a separate meeting. The "Arab situation is in a very big chaos," Mussa told reporters as he entered the talks, which began two hours late. "It is regrettable and harmful," he added.

Qatar emerged from the conflict as an even stronger supporter of Hamas, and the Arab League divided and with far more uncertain support for the search for peace. As Amr Musa put it, the "Arab situation is in a very big chaos...It is regrettable and harmful."^{lxxxix} While Arab states later papered over the divisions between them, it was clear that simply labeling opposition to the fighting as somehow Iranian, Syrian, and Hezbollah ignored the level of anger and tension in the Arab and Islamic world and the risks to Israel.

The Regional Impact on Israel

Israel may be able to disregard European opinion, and opinion outside the region. There have been so many negative reports and empty UN Resolutions over the wars, that they have lost their impact. Israel also can scarcely afford to limit its security efforts in response to the rhetoric and propaganda efforts of hostile states and extremist movements.

At this point in the time, Israelis are almost certainly correct in assuming that they can also ignore at least the short-term the negative impact of such developments on moderate Arab regimes and supporters of the peace process. This is particularly true as long as the US continues to provide support and does not put pressure on Israel. Israeli political leaders are also probably correct in assuming that outside states will continue to largely fund UN and other relief efforts in Gaza and pay for most of the reconstruction effort, regardless of what they think about the fighting. Saudi Arabia, for example, pledged a billion dollar in aid after the fighting.

It is less clear, however, that Israel cannot ignore the negative impact of the kind of war it fought in Gaza on the region – although many Israelis feel it can. At the time of the ceasefire, a number of Israeli senior officials and analysts largely dismissed the Arab street as if it could not influence those Arab regimes who saw Hamas's kind of extremism as a greater practical threat than Israel.

In fact, most took the stand that regardless of what the leaders of nations like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco might say, they actually realized they benefited from Israel's attacks on Hamas and increased ability to deter the Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria. Some went so far as to state that countries like Qatar, which severed relations with Israel, did so because they had become part of the emerging Iranian power bloc in the region. They also dismissed Iranian, Syrian, and Hezbollah statements as the actions of already hostile states that in fact had lost ground because Israel had proven it had restored its deterrent "edge. Several also felt that Egypt now both recognized that it would have to take far more decisive action to secure the Philadelphia Corridor, and would be forced to take a more active and positive role in Gaza.

No one can dismiss these views. Moderate Arab states do face a serious threat from extremist elements and terrorists and have taken far larger casualties in the struggle against them than Israel, Europe, or the United States. At the same time, the growing isolation Israelis have from the Arab world sometimes seems to blind them to the fact that moderate Arab leaders do support the Palestinians – regardless of what they may think about Hamas and leaders like Arafat – and their anger is real. Moderate Arab regimes also are not Western-style dictatorships. They are not democracy, but they are highly sensitive to public opinion and seek consensus. They also depend on military and security forces which are now far more broadly based and sensitive to Arab media and to what goes on in Arab research centers and think tanks.

At the same time, Israel does face serious strategic risks to the extent it either ignores the regional reaction to the fighting in Gaza, or its impact on Arab leaders and its prospects for any kind of real and lasting peace settlement. This raises a question that every Israeli and all of Israel's supporters need to ask in the aftermath of the "Gaza War." Has it in fact repeated the strategic failures made by Israel's top political leadership during the Israeli-Hezbollah War in 2006. Has Israel somehow blundered into a steadily escalating war without a clear strategic goal or at least one it can credibly achieve? Will Israel end in empowering an enemy in political terms that it defeated in tactical terms? Will Israel's actions seriously damage the US position in the region, any hope of peace, as well as moderate Arab regimes and voices in the process?

To blunt, the answer so far seems to be yes. To paraphrase a comment about the British government's management of the British Army in World War I, lions seem to be led by donkeys. If Israel had a credible ceasefire plan that could really secure Gaza, it is not apparent. If Israel had a plan that could credibly destroy and replace Hamas, it is not apparent. If Israel had any plan to help the Gazans and move them back towards peace, it is not apparent. If Israel had any plan to use US or other friendly influence productively, it not apparent.

"Existentialism" versus Peace

Israeli attitudes towards the future prospects raise another critical grand strategic issue . Many Israelis still believe in a peace process, although one they increasingly feel is deferred far into the future. Others, however, increasingly feel that no peace process is really possible and that Israel must plan to exist in a region where it cannot hope for a real peace with the Palestinians or more than coexistence with Arab states. As one Israeli intellectual put it, Israel may have to exist indefinite on a "existential" basis, surrounded by hostile neighbors and separate as much as possible from Palestinian Arabs.

These feelings are scarcely new. They have built up since the peace process effectively became a war process in September 2000, and they have considerable justification. A hostile Hamas, a corrupt Fatah, a weak Palestinian Authority, and a divided Palestinian movement fighting a low-level internal conflict, are scarcely convincing peace partners. Saudi and Arab League peace proposals present major internal political problems for an Israel committed to settlements, control of Jerusalem, and deny a Palestinian right of

return. The broader threat from Iran, movements like the Hezbollah, and an uncertain Syria and Lebanon present strategic problems no one in Israel can ignore.

The Gaza War does, however, seem to have triggered more support for the idea of a unilateral approach to the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank that would be a "two state solution" largely based on cutting off the West Bank and Gaza, reducing the Arab presence in Jerusalem, and putting steadily tighter controls on Israeli Arabs. There is scarcely any consensus about such policies and there seems to be little practical thought about how they would be implemented beyond enhancing Israel's physical security through more separation. The real world ability to create viable economies in the West Bank and Gaza and deal with their demographic problems got little attention. So did the ability to create any form of viable Palestinian protostate and regime. It was often assumed that the Palestinian Authority not only needed an indefinite IDF security presence in the West Bank but wanted it. Gaza was to be dealt with by weakening Hamas during the reconstruction stage and/or by exporting as many of its problems as possible to Egypt and outside Arab funding.

This may be the Middle East that Israel and its Arab neighbors have to live with. In fact, there is little hope of a sudden return to a viable peace process – to the extent that territory for peace was ever anything other than settlements for terrorism. Moreover, the fighting in Gaza did lead a figure as senior as King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to warn that Israel has to understand that the choice between war and peace will not always be open, and that the Arab peace initiative that is on the table today will not stay on the table. It also led the President of Syria, Bashar Assad, to say that such peace efforts were no longer relevant.^{lxxxii}

One wonders, however, how long it can really go on without exploding into far more violent conflicts or empowering non-state actors hostile to Israel and moderate Arab regimes. One wonders how much it will affect the medium and long-term stability of key states like Egypt and Jordan? One wonders how much it will sustain Iranian radicalism and aid the opportunism of a nuclear Iran? Israeli leaders like Yitzhak Rabin once saw these risks as unsustainable. Regrettably, they may still be proved right.

ⁱ The author was briefed by Israeli and US international lawyers on these issues. For a good independent summary, see Steven Erlanger, "Carnage in Gaza, Is it A Crime?" *International Herald Tribune*, January 17-18, 2009, pp. 1 & 8. The article was published earlier in the *New York Times*

ⁱⁱ For a relatively well-balanced and more detailed description of Hamas and its actions, see the "Hamas" entry in Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamas>. The annual US State Department reports on terrorism describe the reasons that the US has labeled Hamas a terrorist organization. For an account that is more sympathetic to Hamas, see Sherifa Zuher, *Hamas and Israel: Conflicting Strategies of Group-Based Politics*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, December 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ See http://www.denverpost.com/harsanyi/ci_11410945, "Death to all Juice", *Denver Post*, January 9, 2009; and http://jeffreygoldberg.theatlantic.com/archives/2009/01/nizar_rayyan_of_hamas_on_gods.php, "Nizar Rayyan of Hamas on God's Hatred of Jews", *The Atlantic*, January 2, 2009.

^{iv} Alon Ben David, "Iran is 'rearming Hamas in Gaza,'" *Jane's Defense Weekly*, January 28, 2009, p. 7.

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^{viii} Griff Witte, "Israel's Key Election Issue: Did the War End Too Soon?" *Washington Post*, February 2, 2009, p. A1 & A5.

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