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GAZA WAR: HAMAS' MISCALCULATION, FAJR-5'S, LOOMING IRANIAN BOMB, DICTATED ISRAEL'S "DISPROPORTIONATE DETERRENCE"

Ambassador Alan Baker

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ONLY DISPROPORTIONATE DETERRENCE WILL OFFSET HAMAS

Isi Leibler

[Jerusalem Post, Nov 18, 2012](#)

The Jewish state was created to overcome powerlessness and provide a haven for Jews – not to have them cringing in shelters. There had previously been considerable criticism of the government for its failure to adequately respond to the ongoing toll inflicted on over a million Israeli citizens obliged to endure thousands of missiles launched against them at the whim of a loathsome neighboring terrorist state....

Hamas is no longer a terrorist faction. It is in every respect an independent state the majority of whose citizens enthusiastically support the terrorist initiatives and missile launches initiated by its evil leaders, who are committed to our annihilation.

The situation deteriorated with the rise to power in Egypt of the Muslim Brotherhood, the creators of Hamas. Since then, the Egyptian authorities stood by as Hamas accumulated vast quantities of sophisticated missiles and other lethal weapons including guided anti-tank missiles and shoulder-mounted anti-aircraft weapons from Iran, Libya Sudan and other states.

That explains why, despite awareness that Operation Pillar of Defense may escalate into full-scale war, all sections of Israeli society fervently support the IDF operation. It is also gratifying that Jews throughout the world are actively demonstrating solidarity with Israel.

Hamas was emboldened to test our resolve, believing that Israel would be fearful of confronting the new Egyptian regime and also encouraged by the active support from the Turkish government and the recent visit to Gaza of the emir of Qatar, who contributed \$400 million to their coffers.

Israel was indeed sensitive to these issues, as well as the effect of a military conflict diverting attention from Iran – especially now as it proceeds with its uranium enrichment. There was also concern at the civil war in Syria and the dramatic rise of Islamic extremism throughout the region. To top it off there were inhibitions because of the US presidential elections.

Nevertheless, Hamas miscalculated. By intensifying the bombardment of the South, it obliged the State of Israel to respond harshly or forfeit any modicum of deterrence. The initial outcome was good. The IDF had clearly learned from the lessons of previous wars: intelligence was impeccable; action was systematic and rational with, to date, minimal civilian casualties.

It must be stressed that the targeted killings of terrorist leaders are not acts of revenge or showmanship. They are logical military actions which can be rationally justified in moral terms. The killing of Ahmad Jabari, regarded as the Palestinian counterpart of Osama bin Laden, is a prime example....

The global response from most Western countries, which followed President Obama's lead condemning the rocket attacks and endorsing Israel's right to self-defense, has until now been satisfactory, despite the usual calls for restraint and for Israel to act in a "proportionate" manner.

But these are early days. Initially, we are unlikely to face problems at the UN Security Council. However, the General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council, controlled by Islamic and other anti-Israeli coalitions, have consistently viewed Israel as the aggressor and never the victim. Neither of these bodies has even once condemned the Hamas missile attacks and there is little doubt that they and NGO bodies such as Amnesty International will blame Israel exclusively for reigniting the armed conflict.

In addition, while the IDF is taking extraordinary precautions to minimize civilian casualties, there will invariably, as in any military conflict, be mishaps – especially in Gaza where Hamas ruthlessly employ human shields by locating armaments and launching missiles in civilian residential areas....

Clearly, the IDF would prefer to limit the conflict to pinpointed aerial strikes. However, if Hamas continue raining rockets against Israeli civilians, Israel will be forced into a ground offensive in which greater casualties are inevitable.

The main challenge for the government is to devise an end strategy to achieve long-term deterrence as well as a strategy to be implemented instantly should Hamas become sufficiently re-emboldened to recommence missile launches. Israel has no desire to return to the era of the tit-for-tat war of attrition whereby we respond to missile launches by bombing rocket launching sites and empty buildings.

Although some of our allies are already urging us not to respond "disproportionately," such a concept has absolutely no relevance to the threat facing Israel. While still seeking to minimize civilian casualties, we must create genuine deterrence in order to avoid future full-scale conflicts of ever increasing magnitude. In fact, a disproportionate response to aggression is fully consistent with international law in which the prime obligation of the state is to protect its civilians. Those seeking to deny us this basic right are maliciously hypocritical.

The issue of Israel continuing to provide Hamas-controlled Gaza with services is another bizarre anomaly. It is one thing to be sensitive to the humanitarian needs of civilian noncombatants, but to continue providing electricity and other utilities to a neighboring state raining missiles on us is utterly perverse. If the lights went out automatically every time a rocket was dispatched, the inconvenienced Gaza residents might even influence their leaders to hesitate before launching missiles.

An intensive government campaign must be implemented to counter the impact of successive years of the world having become conditioned to regarding Israel under missile attacks as normative. We must highlight the fact that such attacks against civilians are unequivocally war crimes....

We must recognize that in future conflicts, the terrorists will continue accumulating more effective and lethal weapons to employ against us. We must therefore endeavor to resist calls for a cease-fire until such time as Hamas, in conjunction with the Egyptians, undertake to cease their aggression. There must be a clear understanding that any breach would result in harsh "disproportionate" Israeli responses including the targeted killings of those responsible for initiating attacks. In the absence of such an agreement an enforced cease-fire will be perceived as a major victory for Hamas and our citizens will simply return to the life of terror they endured since the first Kassams were launched a decade ago.

HAMAS' MISCALCULATION

Barak Mendelsohn

[Foreign Affairs](#), November 18, 2012

The escalation in the fighting last week between Israel and Hamas caught many observers by surprise. Operation Cast Lead, Israel's 2008 campaign against Hamas, had led to an uneasy calm between the warring sides. And last year's release of Gilad Shalit (the Israeli soldier who had been kidnapped by militants in 2006) in exchange for a thousand Palestinian prisoners had even given observers hope that Israel and Hamas had found a way to manage their conflict. But then, Hamas attacked an Israeli mobile patrol inside Israeli territory on November 10 and Israel retaliated by assassinating Ahmed Jabari, Hamas's military chief. This time, the violence that has followed has not faded quickly; indeed, the fight is still intensifying.

Given the destruction wrought by Israel and Hamas' last major conflict, Hamas' calculations in the lead-up to this round of fighting are especially puzzling. The typical explanation is that Hamas ramped up its rocket campaign earlier this year in an effort to break Israel's siege on the Gaza Strip. Under fire, Israel had to retaliate.

That answer, though, is unsatisfying. In many ways, the siege had already been broken...Israel's efforts to tightly control the area's borders, which started after Hamas won elections there in 2006, had gradually wound down. After the public relations disaster that followed Israel's 2010 mishandling of the Gaza-bound Turkish aid flotilla, the flow of goods over the Israeli border into Gaza increased substantially. Moreover, the tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza border, through which most of the goods coming into Gaza are smuggled, became so elaborate that they resembled official border crossings. In fact, the volume of trade that travels through the tunnels could be up to \$700 million dollars a year.

To some extent, Hamas had a political interest in perpetuating the siege idea, which could be used to foment anger against Israel and drum up popular support. Further, it made sense for the movement to preserve some limitations on the movement of goods into Gaza, since the smuggling industry lined its coffers. Thus, although life in Gaza might not have been all that pleasant for Gazans, Hamas wanting to break the siege is not a compelling explanation for its renewed violence against Israel.

In fact, two factors pushed Hamas to ramp up its bombing campaign: competition from Salafi groups and Hamas' belief that its strategic environment had improved in the wake of the Arab Spring. Since Hamas was elected, it has found the Salafi groups in Gaza especially difficult rivals to manage....

Under pressure, Hamas repeatedly tried to quell the Salafi threat, and it did not shy from using brute force to do so. The clearest demonstration came in August 2009, when Hamas killed the leader of Jund Ansar Allah, a Salafi group that had openly challenged Hamas' authority, and a number of its members. But short of using extreme violence to suppress Salafism in Gaza, which would have been too costly for Hamas, Hamas could not eliminate the Salafi challenge. It watched with worry as new Salafi groups emerged and strengthened throughout the strip.

The pressure on Hamas only increased in the wake of the 2011 Arab uprisings. The Egyptian revolution and the subsequent chaos in the Sinai Peninsula were a backwind in the sails of Gaza's Salafis. The collapse of authoritarian regimes in North Africa unleashed a flood of weapons and fighters, which Salafis channeled into the Sinai Peninsula. With the Egyptian military unable to

control the area, Gazan Salafis turned the peninsula into a staging ground for attacking Israel. They believed (correctly) that Israel, anxious not to kill its peace accord with Egypt, would not dare to respond directly....

The new regional order presented Hamas with a serious dilemma. As the ruler of Gaza, it could not sit on the sidelines while Israel targeted territory under its control. But it was unable to fully rein in the Salafis without proving once and for all that it was no longer a resistance movement. For Hamas, then, the only choice was to tolerate the attacks. It portrayed them at home as a way to preserve the struggle against Israel. Abroad, it refused to acknowledge any role in them at all to reduce the danger of a backlash. Over time, pressure from Hamas rank and file led the organization to take a more active role in each round of violence.

The flaw in Hamas' logic, though, was that it assumed that Israel would cooperate and not retaliate. Israel would not let Hamas shirk responsibility, though, and demanded that Hamas assert its authority over the radical factions. To reinforce the message, this year, Israel carried out a number of strikes on Hamas targets. Once it became a target itself, Hamas was even less able to show restraint. It eventually resumed carrying out its own strikes on Israel, a move that was cheered by the Hamas rank and file, who, without such attacks, might have defected to the more radical groups.

Another of Hamas' miscalculations was expecting Egypt to be supportive of its actions, which, when combined with Israel's fear of alienating the regime in Cairo, would allow Hamas to escalate the conflict without it spinning out of control. The hope was not off base....But, the group was wrong again. Hamas' closer ties with Egypt did not discourage Israel from fighting back.

Simply put, Hamas' strategic environment was not as favorable as it thought. When it tried to push Israel's boundaries, Israel pushed back. Now the group is in a bind. It needs a face-saving resolution to the fighting, one that would allow it to claim some achievement worth of the devastation inflicted this month on Gaza. Even after that, the group will still face the same old tension between its ideology of resistance and the responsibilities that come with governing. And all the while, its Salafi challengers will be lurking, challenging its commitment to the struggle against Israel. If Hamas wants to avoid future such escalations, it will need to crack down on these groups.

But that would come with a price -- in popularity and legitimacy -- that Hamas seems unwilling to pay. Hamas must also finally make the transition from resistance movement to normal political party. It will probably take a push from Cairo for that to happen. Hamas' alliance with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood offers the group some of the cover it needs to make the much-needed transition. And the Muslim Brotherhood is a good model for Hamas to follow, besides. Absent Hamas' political transformation, no cease-fire with Israel will hold for long. The next round of violence awaits, just over the horizon.

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With Longer Reach, Rockets Bolster Hamas Arsenal

Ethan Bronner

[*New York Times*](#), November 17, 2012

When Israel assassinated the top Hamas military commander in Gaza on Wednesday, setting off the current round of fierce fighting, it was aiming not just at a Palestinian leader but at a supply line of rockets from Iran that have for the first time given Hamas the ability to strike as far as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

The commander, Ahmed al-Jabari, had shifted Hamas's low-grade militia into a disciplined force with sophisticated weapons like Fajr-5 rockets, which are named after the Persian word for dawn and have significantly increased the danger to Israel's major cities. They have a range of about 45 miles and are fired by trained crews from underground launching pads.

Hamas had perhaps 100 of them until the Israeli attacks last week, which appear to have destroyed most of the stockpile. The rockets are assembled locally after being shipped from Iran to Sudan, trucked across the desert through Egypt, broken down into parts and moved through Sinai tunnels into Gaza, according to senior Israeli security officials.

The smuggling route involves salaried employees from Hamas along the way, Iranian technical experts traveling on forged passports and government approval in Sudan, Israeli officials said. Mr. Jabari's strategy has been so effective and alarming for Israel that it is preparing for a possible next stage in the four-day-old battle: a ground war in which its troops would seek to destroy remaining rocket launching bases and crews and munitions factories.

Under Mr. Jabari, Hamas also developed its own weapons industry in Gaza, building long-range rockets as well as drones that they hoped to fly over Israel just as Israeli drones roam the skies of Gaza...The current operation to eliminate the Hamas rocket launchers could serve to cripple the ability of Iran's allies in Gaza from retaliating should Israel ever carry out its threat to attack Iranian nuclear facilities.

"Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad are building weapons with experts from Iran," one top security official said Saturday, speaking on condition of anonymity. "What we took care of ... was their own production facility for U.A.V.'s," he added, referring to unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones. "This was all the work of Jabari, who was a very sophisticated and strategic thinker."

A number of recent Israeli military attacks were aimed at cutting the supply chain into Gaza. In late October, a munitions factory in Sudan was hit from the air. Israel did not acknowledge carrying out the attack, but the winks and nods of officials here make clear that it did. Israel has carried out several other such attacks on Sudan, including on convoys, in the past few years.

In addition, Mossad agents killed a Hamas official in a Dubai hotel in early 2010 because he was thought to be crucial to the Hamas supply chain of weapons and rockets into Gaza. One official here said that until Israel ended its military occupation of Gaza in 2005, there were only primitive weapons factories there. The Hamas rockets had a flight capacity of about a mile, they could not be aimed and they flew in a wild cylindrical pattern. Hamas then built better rockets that could fly up to 12 miles.

That changed little until 2007, when Hamas fighters pushed the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority out of Gaza into the West Bank and took over governing the coastal strip. "At that point, Jabari turned his neighborhood defense operation into a real army," said a retired Israeli general whose portfolio included Gaza and who spoke on condition of anonymity. "He organized what was a militia into companies, battalions and brigades. He sent commanders to Syria and to Iran to be trained by the Revolutionary Guards. And then he built up this whole new branch to develop military technology focusing on long-range missiles."...

In addition to the Fajr-5, Hamas has a few hundred of what are known as enhanced Grad rockets, which have a range of about 25 miles. The Grads are 122-millimeter rockets that have bigger warheads than the standard Grads, but their accuracy is relatively low. The Grads may also be coming from Iran but others are made in Gaza and imported from Libya. In addition, Hamas has

hundreds of standard Grads that have a range of about 12 miles, as well as thousands of homemade mortars and Qassam rockets with a range of about six miles.

Israeli officials said the movement of the Fajr-5 rockets through Egypt could not go unnoticed there, given their size. Each is 20 feet long and weighs more than 2,000 pounds — the warhead alone weighs 375 pounds — and the trucks carrying them across Egyptian bridges and through roadblocks into Sinai would be hard to miss.

In the current conflict, Israel's antirocket system, known as Iron Dome, has been more effective than expected, but still dozens of rockets have landed. Whether the military operation against Gaza is a dress rehearsal for any future attack on either Iran or Lebanon — where Hezbollah has thousands of rockets pointed at Israel — is a matter under debate here. Some see it as clearing away any possible trouble from Gaza. Others say that makes little sense, given the difference of scale in the conflict in Gaza and any war against Iran or Hezbollah. Hamas's arsenal is tiny compared with what Hezbollah in Lebanon is thought to have: thousands of rockets capable of hitting Tel Aviv.

Yonatan Touval, an analyst with Prime Source, a private Tel Aviv risk-assessment company, said, "The Iron Dome system is ineffective in intercepting longer-range projectiles, such as those that would be launched from Lebanon toward the Tel Aviv area. To address this threat, Israel is currently developing the Magic Wand system, but it is not expected to become operational before 2015."....

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ON TOPIC

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[Dear North American Student](#): Rebecca, *CIJR*, Nov. 16, 2012 — A letter from a Canadian, Jewish, Israel young woman who is currently studying in Israel having made aliyah and after having served in the IDF. A unique perspective from a wise, younger person who is able to understand the comparison between a person living in Israel, versus a person living in any Western city.

[Western Media Elites Just Don't Get the Middle East](#): Barry Rubin, *Jewish Press*, November 18th, 2012—The elite currently in power in the Western mass media is never going to comprehend the Middle East. There is a problem with bias, for sure, but the big problem is the impenetrable ignorance of the very people who are entrusted with explaining the region to others. They insist on imposing their own misconceptions on the situation while ignoring the evidence.

["IDF Did More to Safeguard Civilians Than Any Army in History of Warfare"](#): Col. Richard Kemp, *UN Watch*, October 16, 2009—Statement to UN Human Rights Council, 12th Special Session -- Debate on Goldstone Report— The truth is that the IDF took extraordinary measures to give Gaza civilians notice of targeted areas, dropping over 2 million leaflets, and making over 100,000 phone calls. Many missions that could have taken out Hamas military capability were aborted to prevent civilian casualties.

[Eleven Reasons Why This Is Not Cast Lead](#): Anshel Pfeffer, *Ha'aretz*, Nov.18, 2012— This isn't a second Operation Cast Lead, though. There are a number of significant differences in the

circumstances and execution of the latest offensive which are affecting the way events are unfolding and will influence the eventual outcome.

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