

Progress Report

ISRAEL'S SECURITY MEASURES HAVE HELPED REDUCE PALESTINIAN ATTACKS

Earlier this month, Israeli security forces in the West Bank town of Nablus arrested two Palestinian terrorists who had recruited a teenager to carry out a suicide bombing in Israel. No one was killed or injured in the raid, and the suicide plot was foiled.

One day after the arrests, a senior Israeli military official presented a raft of statistics that demonstrated the effectiveness of such tactics.

2006 saw 11 Israelis killed in only two suicide bombings originating in the West Bank, a marked drop from 2002, when 234 people were killed in 62 suicide attacks.

The decline in attacks is widely attributed to the security measures Israel has implemented in the interim—an anti-terrorism barrier running along the West Bank, as well as security operations such as the recent arrests in Nablus.

Israel's defensive actions appear even more effective when considered together with statistics that suggest Palestinians have not stopped planning attacks on Israelis.

In 2006, 4,110 terror suspects were arrested by the Israeli military, in comparison to 3,062 in 2005 and 3,737 in 2004. Israel has thwarted 187 suicide attacks over the past year.

Additionally, terrorists in Gaza have become a significant threat to southern Israel by amassing an arsenal of rockets, arms and ammunition since August 2005. They regularly fire homemade Qassam rockets at southern Israeli towns such as Sderot.

Israel is concerned that terrorists in the West Bank will acquire the arms to emulate their Gaza compatriots, firing rockets over the security fence and threatening more Israeli population centers than ever before. •NER•

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Report

JANUARY 15, 2007

AIPAC'S BIWEEKLY ON AMERICAN MIDDLE EAST POLICY

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Missing Link

As the situation in Iraq remains dire, various detractors of Israel have once again rolled out an old and long-discredited fantasy. The Israeli-Palestinian dispute is the core regional issue, they say; end it, and all other Middle Eastern problems—including Iraq—will resolve themselves. Known as “linkage,” this theory fails the test of simple logic and is thoroughly refuted by history.

It should be evident to the most casual Middle East observer that even if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were to be satisfactorily resolved, Sunnis and Shia would continue to fight each other in Iraq and elsewhere. This conflict is a schism within Islam that goes back to the seventh century. It has nothing to do with Israel.

Likewise, the Israeli-Palestinian problem isn't the reason why Syria is meddling in Iraq and Lebanon. It doesn't explain why Iran is attempting to develop nuclear arms. And it has nothing to do with al-Qaeda's quest to topple governments deemed insufficiently committed to Islamic fundamentalism.

Taking these self-evident truths into account, a more sophisticated version of the linkage theory posits that the Israeli...see *Editor's Comments cont'd on pg. 4*

Financial Threat

WASHINGTON SLAPS SANCTIONS ON A BANK TIED TO IRAN'S WEAPONS PROGRAMS

As Iran ridiculed U.N. Security Council sanctions designed to stop its illicit atomic program, the Treasury Department took action against a state-owned Iranian bank accused of helping Tehran develop the missiles it would need to carry nuclear warheads.

The move against Bank Sepah, Iran's oldest bank, is the latest step in the U.S. effort to complement the Security Council sanctions—which were unanimously passed in late December and forbid international aid to Iran's atomic work—with its own campaign of economic isolation against Iran.

“Bank Sepah is the financial linchpin of Iran's missile procurement network and has



Photo by the Associated Press

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, said Tehran would continue nuclear work.

actively assisted Iran's pursuit of missiles” capable of carrying unconventional warheads, said Stuart Levey, the Treasury Department's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. The most advanced of Iran's missiles—the Shihab-3—can strike U.S. troops in the Middle East, Israel and parts of Europe.

By designating Sepah as a weapons proliferator, the department banned Americans from doing business with it and froze whatever assets it may have in the United States.

The action against the bank came days after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, reaffirmed Tehran's intention to defy the Security Council's call for an immediate end to his country's efforts to enrich uranium, a key step toward developing nuclear arms. •NER•

Brig. Gen. Yossi Kuperwasser, Bronfman Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy, is the outgoing head of the IDF Intelligence Research Department. Near East Report recently interviewed Kuperwasser regarding major regional developments. Excerpts of the conversation follow.



Photo courtesy of Israel Defense Forces

Brig. Gen. Yossi Kuperwasser is an expert on subjects ranging from Iran to Hizballah.

Near East Report: How has the Lebanon war affected Hizballah's status in Lebanon?

Yossi Kuperwasser: Before the war, Hizballah claimed that it was Lebanon's protector. The abduction of the IDF soldiers to extract the release of Lebanese prisoners was supposed to confirm that notion in the face of growing pressures. The claim was based on the idea that Israel would not retaliate against Lebanon if Hizballah attacked because Lebanon is unaccountable, and that Hizballah could deter Israel because it would not dare counter-attack due to the threat of Hizballah's rockets. This was proved wrong.

So now Hizballah is saying, "OK, our protection failed, but we Shiites are 40 percent of the population, and we want our fair share in the government." This is an extremely sensitive issue, because the entire structure of Lebanese politics is based on the 1932 census, in which the Shiites were a much smaller minority, and the 1989 Taif agreement [which ended Lebanon's civil war]. If you start dealing with the size of each sect today, it's a recipe for total chaos.

NER: What happens if Hizballah succeeds in gaining more power in Lebanon?

YK: The struggle between the Siniora government and Hizballah is a microcosm of the region-wide struggle between reformists and anti-Western radicals. If Siniora is toppled, the radicals would win a significant regional victory. And it's even bigger than that. Iran is leading the Islamist radical camp in an effort to change the entire world order, which it believes is under Western control. It is joined by other, non-Muslim radicals. A Hizballah victory would have worldwide repercussions.

NER: What has Israel gained from the war?

YK: The war had mixed results. On the one hand, Israel's deterrence was somewhat reduced. On the positive side, first we got rid of the immediate threat. Second, we proved to the Lebanese that they cannot rely on Hizballah for protection. Third, we gave the Lebanese a better tool—Resolution 1701—for moving forward. Fourth, we created a new context for the arms shipments to Hizballah—now, it's forbidden to do so. And fifth, we sent a clear message to everybody that it's not worthwhile to provoke us.

Moreover, Iran, which had invested maybe \$200 million per year in Hizballah in addition to weapons, has lost much of this investment in the war. Iran had prepared the vast Hizballah arsenal for use in case of a U.S. or Israeli attack on its nuclear facilities; that Iranian tool was used prematurely. At the same time, we exposed the extent to which Syria was involved in supporting Hizballah. Syria had provided Hizballah with virtually all the heavy rockets that fell on our heads, as well as state-of-the-art Russian-made anti-tank weapons. And finally, the war increased the moderate Arab states' concern about Iran, creating an atmosphere in which there's more room for cooperation between moderate Arabs, Israel and the United States.

NER: Is Syrian President Bashar al-Assad serious in his calls for peace talks with Israel?

YK: Assad knows exactly what it takes to

show he's serious, but he's doing just the opposite. He supports Hizballah and destabilizes Lebanon. He continues to host the Palestinian terror groups. He continues to let terrorists go through Syria to Iraq. He continues to produce chemical arms.

These are his deeds. Does he know what he has to do? Yes, he does. Can he change? Yes, he can. Is he? No, he isn't.

NER: How is Iran's influence manifested among Palestinian terrorist groups?

YK: Iran has given these groups financial and political support, and it provides training to Gaza-based terrorist groups. Islamic Jihad, which continues to perpetrate terror attacks despite the cease-fire, is totally dependent on Tehran. Its entire income comes from Iran, and it's quite rich for a small terrorist organization, making it easier for it to mobilize more people. The Iranians are deeply involved in Palestinian terrorism.

NER: Why should the United States be concerned about these developments?

YK: Wiping Israel off the map for [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad is just a step toward changing the world order. For him, that order is not just based on the wrong values—namely, Western values—but it was built to serve Western hegemony. And he and his ilk want to end this hegemony. They are trying to weaken and then destroy all the elements that in their mind undergird the prevailing order.

That's why they defy the U.N. and its resolutions on Lebanon and Iran; it's part of the world order. In their mind, that order is based on the results of World War II. They question the Holocaust not just because they hate Jews, but because if you say, "There was no Holocaust," you say there shouldn't be Israel, which is an important part of the post-World War II order. Another part of the order is the superpowers' near-monopoly over nuclear weapons. We want nuclear arms too, say the radicals. North Korea is already there, and Iran is getting closer. Since they also defy the code of war fighting and look at civilians as legitimate targets, this development is extremely dangerous. •NER•

Palestinian Update

WHILE ISRAELI WORDS AND ACTS REAFFIRM THE JEWISH STATE'S COMMITMENT TO PEACE WITH THE PALESTINIANS, HAMAS REMAINS DEVOTED TO TERRORISM AND GAZA IS SERVING AS A BASE FOR ATTACKS ON ISRAELI TOWNS

Although Israel has taken steps in recent weeks to help ordinary Palestinians, the Hamas-controlled Palestinian Authority has refused to respond in kind, failing to prevent the firing of rockets at Israel in direct violation of a late-November cease-fire.

At the same time, sectarian violence between Hamas and the rival Fatah party has increased, resulting in Palestinian deaths on both sides and reducing hopes for the emergence of a moderate unity government that recognizes Israel, stops terrorism and accepts past agreements.

Even in this environment, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has continued to restate Israel's willingness to make far-reaching compromises with the Palestinians in return for an end to violence against Israelis.

Israel is Reaching Out for Peace with the Palestinians

Israel has taken a series of steps to improve the daily lives of average Palestinians.

After a meeting between Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in late December, Olmert announced that he was willing to release \$100 million in frozen Palestinian tax revenue to help finance the Palestinian health system.

In a similar gesture, Israel has eased restrictions at 16 West Bank checkpoints by

reducing the number of security checks, and Olmert has announced plans to remove 27 roadblocks in a second phase.

Israel has also accelerated the processing of goods at border crossings between Israel and Gaza, allowing for the quadrupling of Palestinian exports.

To further facilitate Palestinian movement, Olmert announced plans to build several bypass tunnels in the West Bank to make Palestinian movement easier and reduce friction between Palestinians and Israelis.

Perhaps even more importantly, in a landmark speech in November 2006, the prime minister laid out a political vision for the Palestinian people, declaring that Israel is willing to offer the Palestinians an independent state with territorial contiguity in the West Bank if they recognize Israel, accept previous agreements and end terrorism.

Rejecting Peace, Palestinians Have Broken a Cease-fire with Attacks Against Israel

Palestinian strikes against Israel have continued even though terrorist groups agreed on Nov. 26 to stop attacks in return for a suspension of Israel's Gaza military operations.

Since the cease-fire went into effect, Palestinians have fired nearly 80 rockets into Israel, striking a strategic facility in Ashkelon

and seriously wounding two Israeli teenagers in the city of Sderot.

Palestinians also fired mortars earlier this month at the Karni crossing between Gaza and Israel, wounding an Israeli truck driver. Palestinian terrorists have regularly attacked Karni, the main crossing point for humanitarian supplies to enter Gaza.

In a further violation of the cease-fire, Palestinians have continued to smuggle weapons into Gaza via tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. Media reports indicate that the number of tunnels has more than doubled to nearly 250 since Israel fully withdrew from Gaza in the summer of 2005.

Hamas Remains Committed to Violence and Israel's Destruction

Comments by Hamas leaders suggest the terrorist group is using the cease-fire to regroup, as Israel has shown restraint in not responding to the daily attacks. Israel has indicated that it will take limited, targeted action only against terrorists actively firing rockets.

Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Mahmoud al-Zahar said a cease-fire was merely one of a number of tactical steps on the way to the "complete liberation" of Palestine. "We as Muslims are the owners of this land and we shall not give up a single handful of Palestinian soil," he said. •NER•

VIOLENT RESPONSES

PALESTINIAN REACTIONS TO ISRAELI PEACE GESTURES

Israeli Action:

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert reaffirmed Israel's willingness to offer the Palestinians an independent state.

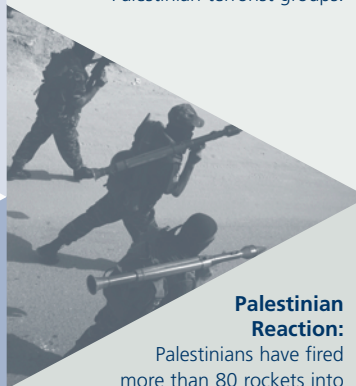


Palestinian Reaction:

Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh repeated the Palestinian government's refusal to accept Israel's right to exist.

Israeli Action:

Israel agreed to a cease-fire with Palestinian terrorist groups.

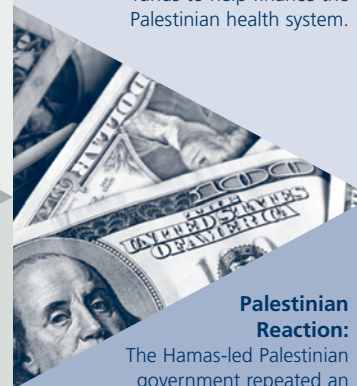


Palestinian Reaction:

Palestinians have fired more than 80 rockets into Israel since the cease-fire went into effect.

Israeli Action:

Israel pledged to release frozen funds to help finance the Palestinian health system.

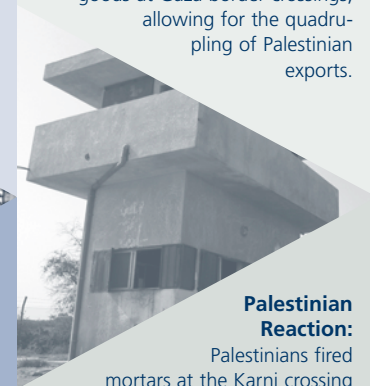


Palestinian Reaction:

The Hamas-led Palestinian government repeated an attempt to smuggle millions of dollars into Gaza from Iran.

Israeli Action:

Israel accelerated the processing of goods at Gaza border crossings, allowing for the quadrupling of Palestinian exports.



Palestinian Reaction:

Palestinians fired mortars at the Karni crossing between Gaza and Israel, forcing the closure of the checkpoint.

All photos by the Associated Press

Palestinian dispute inflames the "Arab street" against both Israel and the United States, making it impossible for moderate Arab governments to cooperate with the United States on Iraq.

There are two flaws with this argument. First, Arab governments are already aiding the U.S. war effort in Iraq in the form of access to naval and air bases, overflights and other logistical support. Second, those agitating against cooperating with America are the elements of the "Arab street" least interested in an equitable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nothing short of Israel's destruction would satisfy them.

The specter of a revolutionary "Arab street" has also proven to be one of history's reddest herrings. Even when the Israeli-Palestinian front was in crisis, no major riots erupted in Arab capitals; all the Arab governments remained secure, and none were forced to make drastic changes in their foreign policies.

This has remained the case through two Palestinian campaigns of violence, the latter of which has been aired across the Middle East via satellite television.

Israeli-Palestinian peace is a deeply cherished objective. The Israeli government is committed to a two-state solution, and the Israeli public is overwhelmingly supportive of peace with the Palestinians. But it is an unfounded illusion that peace between Israel and the Palestinians would end the fighting in Iraq or somehow magically resolve all of the other deep-seated problems in the Middle East. •NER•

In Memoriam: Ford and Kollek

FORMER PRESIDENT GERALD FORD AND FORMER JERUSALEM MAYOR TEDDY KOLLEK PLAYED KEY ROLES IN SHAPING THE ISRAEL OF TODAY

The recent deaths of former President Gerald Ford and former Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek provided occasions to reflect on the contributions both men made to the strength of the modern state of Israel and its relationship with the United States.

Ford's presidency began in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the conflict that started with unprovoked attacks on Israel by Egypt and Syria and ended only after U.S. supplies helped the Jewish state fight back the invaders. Ford reaffirmed that policy of steadfast support for Israel.

"We shall continue to stand with Israel," he said. "We are committed to Israel's survival and security."

Ford's administration rejected attempts to condemn Israel in the wake of the Entebbe incident, the daring 1976 raid in which Israeli commandos rescued hostages whose Tel Aviv-based flight had been hijacked and taken to Uganda.

Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger backed Israel in peace negotiations with Egypt that culminated in the Sinai Agreement in 1975. That deal laid the groundwork for the 1979 peace treaty in which Egypt became the first Arab state to accept Israel's right to exist.

Ford was also a key advocate for Soviet Jews' right to emigrate to Israel. In January 1975, he signed into law the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, landmark legislation that conditioned U.S. trade benefits on liberal emigration policies.

Ford's stand for Soviet Jewry echoed a

fight waged dozens of years earlier by Kollek, a founding father of Israel whose pre-statehood responsibilities included overseeing the flight of thousands of Jews from Nazi Germany.

Ultimately, though, Kollek is remembered primarily for his nearly three decades as mayor of Jerusalem. He won his first term



Photos by the Associated Press and Government Press Office of Israel
Gerald Ford, left, served as U.S. president from 1974 to 1977, while Teddy Kollek, right, was Jerusalem mayor from 1965 until 1993.

in 1965 and presided over Jerusalem's re-unification two years later after Israeli troops liberated the eastern half of the city during the Six-Day War. Kollek sought to restore Jerusalem's ancient splendor, earning comparisons to King Herod because of the countless building projects he encouraged.

He was famous for maintaining good relations with Arab residents and for his desire for peaceful coexistence—all while steadfastly asserting full Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem. "I think Jerusalem is the one essential element in Jewish history," he said. "A body can live without an arm or a leg, not without the heart." •NER•

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