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The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States

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Foreword

In this publication, Dr. Henriksen discusses the formation, development, and employment of Israeli Special Operations Forces. An informative survey of units and forces underpins Dr. Henriksen's lucid analysis of the strategic and operational conditions and environment in which they are employed. The strategic challenges facing Israel require innovative security solutions, and they have shaped the way Israel created and nurtured a variety of Special Operations Forces.

One can argue that the security challenges of Israel are the security concerns of the United States writ small. Terrorist and insurgent forces constantly threaten the country and highlight the need for effective border security to mitigate cross-border attacks and infiltrations. Israel's relatively small size exacerbates these threats and intuitively leads to understanding the requirement for a proactive combating terrorism or counterterrorist program vice a reactive policy. The need for a proactive approach emphasizes the need for effective and timely intelligence, especially Human Intelligence (HUMINT), and the linking of operational missions with the requirement for actionable intelligence.

For all of the author's insight into Israeli capabilities and success, he does highlight that Israel has been able to reduce, but not eliminate, the terrorist threat to the country. Counterinsurgency, combating terrorism, and counterterrorism strategies and operations can ameliorate or moderate terrorist actions, but ultimately only a long-term political solution between the warring parties will end an insurgency or terror campaign. Sadly, the current situation for Israel and its neighbors indicates a viable political settlement is not in sight and, consequently, Israeli Special Operations Forces will have to continue engaging the country's enemies.

Michael C. McMahon, Lt Col, USAF
Director, JSOU Strategic Studies Department

About the Author

Dr. Thomas H. Henriksen is a senior fellow with the JSOU Strategic Studies Department and is a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. Until September 2003, he was Hoover Institution associate director for program development. Other duties there included executive secretary of the National Fellows and National Security Affairs Fellows programs, as well as director of the Media Fellows Program.

His current research focuses on American foreign policy in the post-Cold War world, international political affairs, and national defense. He specializes in the study of U.S. diplomatic and military courses of action toward terrorist havens, such as Afghanistan, and the so-called rogue states, including North Korea, Iraq, and Iran. He also concentrates on armed and covert interventions abroad.

Dr. Henriksen has a forthcoming volume entitled The Transformation of American Power After the Berlin Wall. His book, an edited volume on competing visions for U.S. foreign policy, is *Foreign Policy for America in the 21st Century: Alternative Perspectives* (Hoover Institution Press, 2001). Other works include *Using Power and Diplomacy to Deal with Rogue States* (Hoover Essays in Public Policy, 1999) and the edited collection *North Korea After Kim Il Sung* (Hoover Institution Press, 1999).

He also authored or edited the following books and monographs: *One Korea? Challenges and Prospects for Reunification* (Hoover Institution Press, 1994); *The New World Order: War, Peace, and Military Preparedness* (Hoover Institution Press, 1992); *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Mozambique's War of Independence* (Greenwood Press, 1983); *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: Battle in the Bush* (Praeger, 1981); *Soviet and Chinese Aid to African Nations* (Praeger, 1980); and *Mozambique: A History* (Rex Collings, 1978).

Additionally, he has written numerous journal articles and newspaper essays concerning international politics and security as well as U.S. policy toward rogue states in the post-Cold War era. Dr. Henriksen has also received research grants from the American Philosophical Society, State University of New York, National Endowment for the Humanities, and National Defense Foreign Language Fellowship Program. His book *Mozambique: A History* was chosen for the

Outstanding Book Award for African History by Choice. During 1982, he traveled to the former Soviet Union as a member of the forum for the U.S.-Soviet dialogue.

Dr. Henriksen's education and public service developed in the 1960s, specifically earning his B.A. in History from Virginia Military Institute (1962) and the M.A. and Ph.D. in History from Michigan State University (1966 and 1969). He was selected for membership in Phi Alpha Theta—the history honorary society—as a graduate student. During 1963-1965, Dr. Henriksen served as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army. He taught history at the State University of New York from 1969, leaving in 1979 as a full professor. During the 1979-1980 academic year, he was the Susan Louise Dyer Peace Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Dr. Henriksen's national public service includes participation as a member of the U.S. Army Science Board (1984-1990) and the President's Commission on White House Fellowships (1987-1993). He also received a Certificate of Appreciation for Patriotic Civilian Service from the U.S. Department of the Army in 1990. He is a member of the Board of Trustees for two organizations, the George C. Marshall Foundation and the International Conference Group on Portugal.

The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States

Introduction

No political entity since medieval times has been more constant under military siege—whether conventional, terrorist, or even existential threat—than Israel.[1] Israel's neighbors or its indigenous Arab population have conspired to destroy the Jewish state since its founding in 1948. Assaults have varied from a phalanx of main battle-line tanks to a lone suicide bomber. The sheer ferocity of the attackers, many infused with religious fervor, from Israel's founding has disturbing echoes today as America and its Special Operations Forces (SOF) encounter similar assaults in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Like the United States, Israel had fought large-scale conventional wars, faced existential threats from nuclear-arming states, and terrorist attacks for decades. The two states share other similarities. Both are democracies with vibrant political cultures and first-world technological sectors. And both are subjected to intense international scrutiny with any perceived use of excessive force or humanitarian transgression, while their terrorist adversaries often escape with much less censure.

Differences also exist between the two nations. America's size, vast population, and economic and military strength dwarf tiny Israel, a country 300 miles long and nowhere more than 80 miles wide, with a population of 6 million. Geostrategically, two oceans and friendly bordering states protect the United States. Israel's borders, on the other hand, are actually its frontlines that demand constant defensive measures and sometimes offensive operations. America's active frontlines are located faraway in Iraq, Afghanistan, and North Korea. To survive, Israel had to become a national security state by the mid-1970s and still it preserved its freedoms and Judaic humanitarian traditions.[2] The United States has not yet had to face these stark realities.

Israel's versatility and adaptability in successfully combating threats not only has protected the embattled nation but also made it an intriguing case study. One example is that during the Lebanon occupation the Israelis learned to fight guerrillas, but during the second Palestinian *intifada* or "uprising" (literally translated as a "shaking off") they coped with suicide bombers. As such the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) military actions have been—and are—a crucible for methods, procedures, tactics, and techniques for the United States, which now faces a similarly fanatical foe across the world in the Global War on Terror. In short, Israeli experiences offer an historical record and a laboratory for tactics and techniques in waging counter-insurgencies or counterterrorist operations in America's post-9/11 circumstances. Over the last decades the global jihad against the United States, Western Europe, and even within many Muslim countries has merged with the conflict against Israel. Before this development, nonparticipants held that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was merely a nationalistic dispute over the destiny of Palestine. Now Israel's territorial enemies—such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah—share Al Qaeda's grandiose vision of reconstituting a tenth-century caliphate stretching from Andalusia to Aceh.[3]

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The recent appearance in Gaza of a new movement—the Army of Islam—represents the first Palestinian group to adopt the goals of Al Qaeda. Unlike other Palestinian resistance movements, the Army of Islam argues that it fights not "for a piece of land" but wages war to restore a religious caliphate throughout the Muslim world.[4] Thus, the global terrorist campaign is aimed at the United States, the West, and non-sharia-ruled Muslim states along with Israel.

The tiny Levantine country's contribution to the technology of warfare is well known. Israel's defense industry, for example, developed innovative techniques such as reactive tank armor to protect these hulking vehicles from high explosive rounds and remotely piloted aircraft, known as unmanned air vehicles (UAVs) by Americans forces. The Israelis deployed these pilotless planes during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. The Israeli drones buzzed above guerrilla

positions and beamed back real-time video images from the on-board cameras, allowing battlefield intelligence to occur without endangering piloted planes or land-bound reconnoitering teams. These UAVs became a feature of United States (U.S.) conflicts first in Afghanistan and then Iraq. If Israel did not actually first initiate some of the modern-day techniques or practices now widely used by American forces, it gave many prominences in the antiterrorist arsenal. They are worthy of consideration by U.S. forces.

Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency

The purview of this study is not large-scale conventional wars such as Israel's 1948, 1956, 1967, or 1973 conflicts or America's Persian Gulf War or its Kosovo bombing campaign. The emphasis is on Israel's practice of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, and the IDF generally and its SOF in particular are rich in experience in these most difficult forms of conflict. Even before Israel's declaration of independence, there have been specialized Jewish forces that date back to the 1930s. With World War II, Great Britain (who ruled Palestine under a League of Nations mandate) trained and equipped unconventional forces from among the Jewish population to combat Nazi armies and their Arab sympathizers in the Middle East. Disbanded after the war, these units' specialized warriors went underground to fight for independence from Britain. In the early 1950s, the now-independent State of Israel reconstituted small counterguerrilla parties to halt Arab infiltrators attacks on Jewish farmers and rural dwellers.

In time, Israel formed numerous specialized units, many of which are shrouded in secrecy. In this overview, it is impossible to mention all these entities, let alone give them proper consideration. For a more detailed picture, see the books and articles referenced in the endnotes as well as the Internet site *isayeret.com* (The Israeli Special Forces Database™); included are units within the country's prison services, public transportation, and border security forces.

Unlike the United States, Israel has a plethora of elite teams specializing in specific missions. The IDF established many small units because Israel's mandatory service requirements include all its men and women over 18 years of age. Because the required 3-year period is insufficient for individuals to master all SOF skills,

the units master techniques for a specific mission such as hostage rescue, underwater demolition, or canine capabilities. Most special units, however, also have LOTAR (Israeli acronym for Counter Terror from the Hebrew "Lohama Baterror") capacities. The Tier 1 units have multiple mission capabilities, similar to those in the United States or United Kingdom. Unlike the United States, though, Israeli youth pass directly from civilian life into special units, after the *Gibush* (selection process of arduous physical and psychological testing), rather than proceeding from regular military units. Exceptions to this path include Israel's National Counterterrorism Unit, which requires a minimum 3 years of service in an IDF combat unit.

Some of these groups were originally formed from paratrooper detachments or infantry brigades, as *sayeret* (reconnaissance) commando elements that function along the lines of SOF by gathering intelligence. They undertook Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) missions, then conducted defined attacks on key strongholds. Examples are the *Sayeret Golani* from the Golani Brigade and the *Sayeret Giva'ati* from the Giva'ati Brigade. The practice of having Special Forces as a part of regular line units differs from the American method; U.S. Special Forces are distinct and separate units. These brigade sayeret units do not have any real special operations capabilities. Rather, they are similar to the reconnaissance platoons of the 82nd and 101st divisions in the U.S. Army. Israel's Special Operations/Special Mission units fall under the IDF General Staff. Until after the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, America's SOF were most often employed in missions distinct from regular line units.

In the Israeli case, however, the integration among SOF, regular units, and intelligence officials is much tighter with fewer firewalls separating the exchange of information and plans than in many U.S. operations. Israel's Shin Bet (the domestic security service, officially known as Israel Security Agency) is also closely integrated into the military's counterterrorism effort by interrogating a captured terrorist as close to the time of apprehension as possible in order to head off subsequent attacks.[5] The free exchange of intelligence among gatherers and actors is enhanced because Israel is a small country where many of the soldiers and agents know each other before their service years. The ever-present perils the country faces, its political and military authorities' consciousness, and enforced decisions expands the flow of intelligence.

The ongoing cross-pollination between special operations and regular units has led to a greater appreciation of each force's capabilities. Unlike their U.S. counterparts, many IDF commanders have served at least one tour in a SOF unit. IDF commanders are therefore familiar with special capability forces and how to integrate them into missions.[6] Innovations springing from Israeli Special Forces have spread to conventional military units. Perfecting the long-term ambush (requiring sometimes 36 hours), these specialized troops taught the technique to conventional forces.[7] As one commentator said, the SOF have contributed to the specialization of regular line troops and, in turn, the conventionalization of Special Forces.[8] This blending has enhanced understanding and success.

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Israel also has other arrangements with distinct special units. For example, the IDF's General Staff (abbreviated as *Mat'Kal*) has its own Special Forces unit, the *Sayeret Mat'kal*. Along with specialist groups within the police and border guards, *Mista'aravim* are the deeply secret Arabist units that masquerade as Arabs among the indigenous populations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and *Shayetet* 13 (also known as Flotilla 13 or *Ha'Kommando Ha'Yami*) are naval crack commandos. In addition, the IDF even has an extreme cold weather force, Unit *Alpinistim*, which is dedicated to the defense of Mount Hermon, located on the Golan Heights and the country's only snow-covered mountain. Again, it is a reconnaissance unit with no special operations capabilities. Because Mount Hermon overlooks the Syrian capital of Damascus, only 35 kilometers distant, it commands a strategic vantage point. As such, the Israelis have erected state-of-the art electronic surveillance equipment aimed at one of the Jewish state's implacable enemies. Hence its year-round defense is crucial.

The IDF does not operate a Green Beret (U.S. Army Special Forces) type force for overseeing unconventional warfare "predominately conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces."[9] The IDF did institute separate units, however, comprised of non-Jewish peoples such as the Druze Muslims or the Bedouin, whose uncanny desert-tracking skills draw much acclaim. The protractedness and variety of the IDF's experiences with unconventional warfare make it a

compelling story for students of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency that has been underutilized.

American practitioners of counterinsurgency often study the lessons of the U.S. forces in the Vietnam War or the British in Malaya, while neglecting the very relevant experiences of the IDF over the past several decades in combating terrorism and insurgency.[10] Located in the heart of the Middle East, Israel's combat theater much more closely resembles America's challenges in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa in terms of cultural, historical, and political/religious persuasion than that of communist-inspired insurgents in Asia several decades ago. Moreover, America's Armed Forces use of special operations has had a problematic past dating from the Vietnam War, when the Pentagon and U.S. Army generals in the field did their utmost to freeze out or circumscribe special operations' clandestine methods.[11]

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Not unlike the United States, Israel has had to transform parts of its regular forces after major conventional warfare victories to address unconventional attacks. America won its major conventional engagements in World War II, the Persian the Gulf War, and the first 3 weeks of the Iraq War, only to be confronted by insurgencies in Vietnam and more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. While Israel also underwent a similar changeover after the conventional tank and troop battles during its 1973 war against Egyptian and Syrian massed attacks, it has also experienced earlier insurgent infiltrations dating almost from its founding. A small but typical conversion took place with a hostage rescue mission. Well before the United States created special mission units, for rescuing hostages among its other operations, troopers from the elite *Sayeret Mat'kal* disguised themselves in white mechanics coveralls to spring the abducted passengers on Belgium's Sabena Airlines jet bound from Brussels to Tel Aviv in early May 1972. Upon boarding the Boeing 707, the commandos killed two terrorists and freed the hostages in an early case study of foiling what became the skyjack phenomenon. The famed 1976 Entebbe hostage

rescue operation was another first and good preparation for counterterrorism operations.

Not all hostage-rescue missions went well, however. An example is the 1974 hostage-standoff in the northern town of *Ma'alot* that ended with the death of 25 students and teachers when three Palestinian terrorists opened fire with automatic weapons as Israeli forces stormed the school. The incident spawned the establishment of the National Counterterrorism Unit for hostage-rescue situations. The Israeli government also established a counterterrorism school, which offers instruction in urban operations, military skills, and the use of dogs for some missions. Regular IDF units also undergo training for implementing assignments in urban environments.[12]

IDF defensive operations led to their subdividing Israel into three main territorial zones—the Northern, Central, and Southern Commands—to facilitate protection of the country. While commanders within these theaters have much latitude in conducting operations, they generally lack same operational freedom of the American combatant commands in the Pacific, Europe, or the Central Command. Unlike the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, the IDF's General Staff commands forces in action. At various times, each of the three Israel territorial commands possessed their own specialized units for reconnaissance missions. These included *Sayeret Shaked*, *Sayeret Egoz*, and *Sayeret Haruv*, all of which were disbanded in the 1970s, although their names lived on in infantry battalions.

Years before the United States launched its 1986 retaliatory airstrikes on Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi's Libya for its terrorism, Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, or the al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in the Sudan, Israel had staged commando raids and counterstrikes against terrorist networks and states that facilitated their assaults. For example, Israeli helicopter gunships destroyed 14 commercial aircraft at the Beirut Airport in December 1968 that belonged to Lebanese Middle East Airways. The objective was to halt international terrorist acts planned in the Lebanese capital and to pressure Lebanon to halt the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) cross-border terrorism. Special Israeli units boarded each aircraft to ensure no passengers were on board before placing demo charges on the planes.

Elsewhere, Israel conducted a contemporary version of the international preemptive strike when its air force famously destroyed Iraq's

Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981 after a failed Iranian effort to accomplish the same goal the previous year. Although Operation Babylon initially elicited international opprobrium, it was later judged beneficial to halting Iraq's nuclear ambitions. In 1985, the Israel Air Force mounted another less well-known long-distance airstrike that necessitated midair refueling against the PLO headquarters south of Tunis, the Tunisian capital. This attack eliminated several key PLO figures, but narrowly missed its chieftain, Yasir Arafat.

These long-distance Israeli strikes serve as a lesson for American forces. The long-range hostage rescue by the IDF at Entebbe Airport in July 1976 preceded a similar but unsuccessful American effort into Iran just 4 years later. In the Israeli case, four terrorists hijacked an Air France commercial jet bound for Paris from Tel Aviv, after a stopover in Athens, on 27 June 1976. After flying to Benghazi, Libya, the Air France flight was diverted to Entebbe, Uganda, where President Idi Amin collaborated with the terrorist hijackers (two from Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and two from West Germany's Baader-Meinhoff gang) in holding the hostages.

With intelligence from the IDF's Aman, its intelligence branch, the *Sayeret Mat'kal* mobilized, rehearsed its plans, flew nearly 2,500 miles, and struck at the Entebbe Airport, rescuing more than 100 passengers and crew with a minimum loss of life. The Entebbe Airport raid—later renamed Operation Yonatan (after Colonel Jonathan Netanyahu, the only Israeli soldier to die in the assault)—entered the hall of fame of counterterrorist operations.[13] Despite the success of Israel's dramatic rescue raid, it did not serve as a model for the United States. In some sense, America's well-executed but fruitless 1970 Son Tay raid into North Vietnam to rescue captured U.S. airmen served as a model for Israel's Entebbe mission. Although the American operation did not free the prisoners who had been moved, it prompted U.S. attention to these types of activities.

In April 1980, the United States launched its own deep-penetration raid to rescue 52 American hostages seized in the U.S. Embassy takeover in Tehran 5 months earlier. The spearpoint of the effort called for a mix of Special Forces and U.S. Army Rangers. Despite lengthy preparation time, the 600-mile flight ended in failure at its Desert One rendezvous, when three of the Sea Stallion helicopters mechanically broke down and a fourth was destroyed in an acciden-

tal crash at the site. The costs also included eight U.S. lives, captured documents revealing the names of Iranians willing to help the rescue team, and an American humiliation.[14] Plagued by compartmentalization that prohibited the flow of information, unqualified pilots, and inattention to weather forecasts, the Iranian hostage rescue attempt became emblematic of the ill-starred American operations of the post-Vietnam era; examples follow:

a. Costly effort to free the crew of the merchant ship *Mayaguez*, taken prisoner by Cambodian communists in the Gulf of Thailand
b. Failed effort to protect the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, killing 241 troops
c. Blighted Grenada invasion marked by tangled command and coordination snafus.

Not all Israeli counter-operations ended so happily or mythically as the Entebbe venture. Palestinian insurgents ambushed IDF patrols, rained rockets down on Israeli civilians, and killed bus riders or café customers with suicide bombs. The failed Israeli rescue effort at *Ma'alot* (described on page 7) falls into this category. Even with its grinding counterinsurgency operations or counterterrorist sweeps, however, Israel's missions furnished abundant lessons and warnings for American strategists willing to observe and perhaps thereby also benefit.

Countering Terrorist Attacks

A bit of historical reflection on Israeli experiences is instructive. Not long after Israel's Independence War, the new country underwent the first attacks by irregular fighters that endure to this day. These intruders came from across Israel's borders. From guerrilla training camps in the Sinai Desert or the Gaza Strip, Egyptian intelligence officers trained Palestinians who they recruited from refugee camps. The raids soon caused hundreds of Israeli deaths.[15]

Forays from Egypt or Jordan dating from the 1950s resembled jihadi crossings into Iraq or Afghanistan decades later. The *fedayeen* (irregular forces) attackers were trained and armed by Egyptian and Jordanian military officers. To seal its borders from attackers, the IDF mounted defenses and counter-raids into adjoining territories, including Lebanon that in the words of one tough-minded critic

displayed "a brilliance that was *san pareil.*" [16] Starting in 1964, when the PLO formed, terrorist infiltrations also increased from Jordan. Often Jordanian troops protectively ringed the PLO bases. On occasion the IDF unleashed counterattacks with tanks, troops, and supporting air cover into Jordan and Syria, which amounted to mini-invasions. Following a day or two of fighting and destruction of military bases, the IDF withdrew back onto Israeli soil.

After the large-scale 1967 conventional war and the occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the number of cross-border infiltrations from Jordan intensified. Within both entities, large hostile Palestinian populations existed, with most on the West Bank of the Jordan River. The PLO strove to foment an insurgency within the Israeli-occupied West Bank. It resorted to classic guerrilla warfare tactic as exported by communist regimes in the People's Republic of China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

At first, IDF units engaged Palestinian infiltrators and Jordanian troops in firefights alone. Israel later employed defensive measures such as clearing vegetation that masked terrorist movements, implanted mines, erected electronic fences monitored by closed-circuit TV cameras, and profiled suspected individuals and groups. The Israelis also inserted Arabic-speaking intelligence and uncover operatives within the Palestinian population to expose and break up guerrilla cells.

The combination of active and passive measures complicated the PLO intrusions but did not completely halt them. Because more than enough interceptions occurred, however, a genuine people's war never took root among the occupied Palestinians living in the West Bank. This noteworthy victory of essentially closing a porous border to the flow of men and arms necessary to sustain an insurgent uprising warrants careful study by other military forces facing a similar challenge.

In Jordan, the *coup de grace* for the PLO came from the kingdom's monarch. Increasingly alarmed by the Palestinian terrorist antics against not only Israel but also hijacked international aircraft, King Hussein decided to act. The restive Palestinian population promised to destabilize the throne. King Hussein expelled the PLO through a bloody military assault and implemented a clampdown that pacified the Israeli-Jordanian border.

Counterinsurgency Successes

Lessons can also be gleaned from Israeli counterterrorist operations in the Gaza Strip. Here, squads of soldiers functioned more as policemen and detectives than combat infantrymen. Formally under Egyptian control, Gaza, along with the West Bank, fell to Israel during the 1967 war. Like the West Bank territory, tiny Gaza was densely populated; some 400,000 Arabs at the time lived in a pocket-sized territory of 360 square kilometers, which bordered the Mediterranean Sea. Under the new mandate, Israel ruled directly but permitted Gazans to live normal lives, engage in commerce, work within Israel, and receive public services. It hoped that a gradually improving standard of living would ease tension with Jewish governance. Although they resented Israeli rule, the Gazans experienced economic improvements in their daily lives, something that the anti-Israel guerrillas determined to disrupt in a preview of what happened in post-Hussein Iraq.

Among this population operated some 800 terrorists within Yasir Arafat's PLO and George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which funneled in money, arms, and trained cadre from Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The two organizations cooperated tactically and modeled themselves on Vietcong operations in South Vietnam. The PLO and PFLP established underground cells, recruited young men, staged attacks on the IDF, killed suspected Israeli collaborators, and generally destabilized Gazan society through torture, murder, and intimidation. As is typical in most guerrilla wars, violence hit the civilian population the hardest to uproot cooperation between it and the government. The terrorist fronts also tried to prevent Gazans from crossing into Israel to work. Operating in the teeming refugee camps or thick orange groves, the PLO and PFLP enjoyed classic advantages of elusive guerrillas in cover and evasion from easy detection by Israeli counterinsurgency forces.

In 1971 Major General Ariel Sharon, commander of Israel's southern zone, turned his attention to Gaza's mushrooming insurgency. Perplexed about how to regain control of the enclave, Sharon walked much of the territory over a 2-month period, trying to devise a policy of eliminating guerrillas while not unduly inflicting harm on the population. General Sharon hit upon a unique method of subdividing Gaza and crippling movement and communication amongst

terrorist units. On maps, he dissected the province into squares of a mile or two in area. General Sharon then trained "first-rate infantry units" for what he called "antiterrorist guerrilla warfare" whose tactics would create "a new situation for every terrorist every day." According to one source, the IDF deployed its Special Forces to Gaza, including the Southern Command's reconnaissance force, *Sayeret Shaked*; Central Command's reconnaissance troops, *Sayeret Haruv*; and *Sayeret Tzanhanim*, *Sayeret Golani*, and possibly *Sayeret Mat'Kal*.[17] Israeli special units played a large role in a highly successful counterinsurgency campaign along with Shin Bet and Aman.

General Sharon then trained "first-rate infantry units" for what he called "antiterrorist guerrilla warfare" whose tactics would create "a new situation for every terrorist every day."

General Sharon assigned squads of elite soldiers to each zone, in which they were to learn intimately the paths, orchards, houses, and other features as well as the routine comings and goings of the inhabitants. Anything out of the ordinary aroused their interest and their deadly response. In the buildup camps, the troops compared the outside and inside measurements of houses to detect crawl spaces or false walls behind which terrorist hid. In rural areas, they looked for ventilation pipes from underground bunkers. Dressing soldiers as Arabs, planting undercover squads, turning captured terrorists into agents (called *shtinkerim* or stinkers), the IDF generated intelligence that led to dead or captured guerrillas. Sharon later recorded these and other techniques in his autobiography, the reading of which would benefit any counterinsurgency practitioner.[18]

Sharon also focused on making terrorists operate in the open, where their stealth was exposed to Israel attack. For this task, he employed bulldozers to widen roadways in the refugee camps, which facilitated patrolling and reduced unobserved movement. Bulldozers also dug up bunkers often located next to thick cactus hedges. IDF patrols of orchards often trailed bulldozers behind other vehicles for quick employment. The purpose was to force underground cells into the open where they stood in Israeli crosshairs. These and other techniques substantially cranked down, although did not eliminate terrorist incidences.

In the West Bank after the 1967 war, Israeli security forces—including the IDF, Border Guard, and the Shin Bet—used stern measures to keep a lid on terrorist activities. They clamped down on demonstrations, set up checkpoints, conducted frequent searches, and initiated curfews. Israeli bulldozers razed homes of suspected terrorists as an object lesson. Because the Israelis rigorously sealed the border with Jordan, the West Bank population lacked the easy access to arms and explosives that later prevailed in southern Lebanon. Therefore, young men and sometime women in West Bank towns might stone Israeli security forces, as in the first *intifada,* and thereby did not pose the same danger of launching rockets or mortars as Lebanon or, as more recently, Gaza to Israeli life. Containing the *intifada* with its burning tires and Molotov cocktails required the IDF to react more as riot police than an army of massive firepower and maneuver.

The spontaneity, decentralization, and endurance of the Palestinian protests, however, presented other problems, as the street violence persisted from 1988 to 1995, some of which the U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan felt. Whenever a lighter armed, or even unarmed, opponent engages a superior force, especially before whirring television cameras, it enjoys a revered underdog status that places moral dilemmas on those trying to preserve civilian lives. Excessive force invites international censure. Limited applications of military power, on the other hand, risk an escalation of violence and casualties. Not just in the first *intifada* but also in the earlier low-intensity conflicts in Gaza and the West Bank, Israeli forces encountered the same type media glare and international criticism that now bedevils the U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. The double standard that excuses or at least ignores the savagery of the terrorists does not let the counterinsurgents off the political and legal hook.

Operations for Intelligence

Being subject to incessant cross-border murder and mayhem necessitated aggressive intelligence gathering to offset the attacker's element of surprise. Paid Arab informants, while sometimes useful, constituted a form of waiting for intelligence to arrive, which required time and effort to verify its validity. The Israelis decided to use spe-

cial military units not just for executing deterrence raids based on intelligence gained from other sources but also for initiating Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol operations to obtain intelligence. They operated on the principle that he who waits in counterterrorism is lost. Thus by the mid-1950s, Israeli authorities lifted a page from one particular World War II-era platoon of the *pal'mach* (meaning "strike platoons" manned by Jews and sanctioned by the British to wage guerrilla war against German forces). Comprised of Middle Eastern Jews who could speak and pass as Arabs, the Arab Platoon insinuated agents in Transjordan, Lebanon, and Syria to conduct irregular warfare and gather intelligence. Disbanded by the British near the end of the war, the Arab Platoon operatives went underground. The concept resurfaced later with Israeli special units and undercover agents that function within the hyper-tense environments of the West Bank and Gaza territories.

Commando raids against terrorist infrastructure often encompassed intelligence gathering along with retaliatory or deterrence ends. After a string of Black September[19] attacks culminating in the infamous Munich massacre of Israeli Olympic athletes, the IDF staged a small-scale invasion, Operation Turmoil 4, into southern Lebanon to extirpate the widening Palestinian terror apparatus in September 1972. To forestall Black September terrorism, the Israeli forces deliberately sought out documents.[20] Military actions to flush out intelligence formed the basis of many IDF operations.

Unlike the modus operandi of pre-9/11 U.S. SOF, which had a "Intel-drives-operations" approach, the Israelis utilized a cyclical posture of operations feeding intelligence that, in turn, contributed to more operations. Intelligence-seeking operations are now more standard in the American special operations community. As one practitioner commented in 2006, "The idea of conducting an operation in order to satisfy intelligence requirements is a much more common and accepted concept for us than it was 5 years ago."[21]

The firewalls that have often blocked the rapid flow of information between SOF and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) are much less a hindrance within the Israeli intelligence-defense community. Many Israeli company-sized regular units include an Arabic-speaking interrogator to access information quickly so as to preempt terrorist attacks.[22]

The Intertwining of Combat Action and Intelligence

More striking than any other feature is the IDF's tight blending of intelligence, particularly human intelligence (HUMINT), and combat action. Civilian and military officials frequently make a point of emphasizing the centrality of HUMINT to Israel's defense.[23]

Israel's crack SOF units have direct contact with the Israeli military intelligence headquarters, Aman. In the Israeli construct, Aman controls signal intelligence and even satellite transmissions. The Aman plays a predominate role in setting missions of small special forces. A tendency within the Israeli SOF community that has been less pronounced in its American counterpart is devolution of mission-setting goals downward to the actual elite units. Rather than a top-down approach, Israeli SOF generally (but not always) are tasked to look for missions instead of waiting for orders on high.[24] In mature battle theaters such as Iraq and Afghanistan, SOF are also in "bottom-up" approaches at the tactical level. But the Israelis often cross international borders in pursuit of intelligence as well as kinetic actions, something U.S. SOF do not undertake with strategic level authority.

Unlike the U.S. military branch, the head of the Aman is always an officer with military operational experience, not one groomed from within the military intelligence branch itself. Also the coordination between civilian and military intelligence officers is much closer and cooperative than the often rivalrous and rancorous CIA-military relationship. Overall the linkage between operational units and the intelligence branch is close. Aman, in some respects, functions like another service branch such as the Army, Navy, or Air Force. Unique to Israel, however, is that its commander is a full general officer, not a brigadier general like the Tank Corps, Infantry Corps, or the Artillery Corps. With the rise of suicide bombers during the second *intifada* starting in 2000, the operational-intelligence loop became even tighter in order to prevent explosive blasts killing innocent civilians.[25] For the Israeli army, containing the terrorist attacks associated with the second *intifada* required a reorientation in tactics. Special units from within the Israeli civilian police forces complemented their role.

Defense Through Targeted Killings

In self-defense, the State of Israel also reintroduced in contemporary times the technique of targeted killings against terrorists, although its governments have often disclaimed responsibility for specific attacks and provided no official statistics on the number of deaths.[26] Although eliminating bombers, assassins, or their facilitators generated controversy and criticism from anti-Israeli quarters, it proved to be a discriminating application of lethal force against direct threats. The practice of targeted killings has ebbed and flowed with the intensity of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The methods involved have also varied with the circumstances and include booby-trapped packages, helicopter gunships, F-16 fighters, car bombs, and commando operations. Helicopter fire, for instance, eliminated Sayyed Abbas Musawi, the Hezbollah secretary-general, in 1992.

One ingenious method was the use of a booby-trapped cell phone in 1996. Its explosion killed Yahya Ayyash, known among Palestinians as "the engineer" for his bomb-making expertise within the Hamas movement, formally known as the Islamic Resistance Movement. Unlike a missile or bomb strike, the deadly phone device spared bystanders' lives. If such methods are unsuccessful, however, the result can be adverse. An example is when two Mossad agents in 1999 tried to kill Khaled Mashaal via lethal injection in Amman, Jordan; the botched attempt on this political chief of Hamas was a celebrated bungle.[27]

After the internecine fights among Jewish independence movements, targeted attacks fell predominately against *fedayeen* infiltrators from Egypt and Jordan of the early 1950s. Organized by Egyptian military officers, Palestinian guerrillas slipped across the Sinai or Gaza borders to attack Israel kibbutzim (collectivized settlements) and kill their residents. One authority on Israeli responses to terrorism credited two key Egyptian assassinations with the suspension of *fedayeen* raids for 10 years, thereby demonstrating their early effectiveness against cross-border assaults.[28]

Later attacks were almost exclusively directed at Palestinians engaged in planning or participating in terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians or troops. Possibly the most well-know counterattacks took place against perpetrators of those who slaughtered 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. In a series of preventive strikes

to block further massacres, Mossad agents undertook 13 killings against the Black September movement, one of which resulted in a wrongful death of a Moroccan waiter in Lillehammer, Norway.[29]

Israeli authorities increased the incidence of targeted killings in response to the number of attacks on the country's civilian population with the outbreak of the second *intifada* in fall 2000. When the Camp David negotiations collapsed that summer, Palestinian militants intensified their suicide attacks against Israeli civilians. The Oslo Accords, which established the Palestinian Authority and obtained weapons for its own police force, meant that Arab residents were better armed than in the previous *intifada.* The Palestinians' increased use of suicide bombers also changed the calculus of the uprising. Hence, the second *intifada* witnessed a drastic change in the ratio of Jews killed to Palestinians—1 to 3; the first *intifada* had been 1 to 25.[30]

The frequency and mode of the Israeli counterattack also changed substantially during the second *intifada.* The Israelis eliminated many mid-level leaders of Palestinian terrorist organizations. In 2001, more than 20 were reported killed by snipers or helicopter gunships in what the Israeli government termed "targeted thwarting" in its Hebrew phrasing. Most of those eliminated were second-level terrorists; a few exceptions follow:

a. Mustafa Zibri, the secretary general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, met his fate from two IDF helicopter missiles while in his Ramallah office.
b. In March 2004, helicopter-fired rockets found Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the main leader of Hamas who ordered most of the suicide bombers that killed over 1,000 Israelis during the second *intifada*.

The use of the aircraft-borne missiles on cars or buildings with *intifada* organizers meant that Tel Aviv dropped its veil of secrecy on the tactic because to deny government involvement was pointless. More importantly, the counteroffensive reduced the organizing and execution of terrorist bombings on Israeli civilians. Given the near impossibility of defending countless terrorist targets in public sites (e.g., streets, restaurants, airports, and bus stations), preemption of attacks is the only reasonable deterrent measure.[31]

Frequently, the Israeli government notified the Palestinian Authority of those on its list for terrorist activities. If the Palestinian Authority failed to arrest the terrorist organizers, who it often alerted, the IDF put them in its gun sights. These pinpoint attacks have produced far less collateral damage than artillery-type bombardments that often kill many innocent bystanders. Precise intelligence drawn from many Israeli agencies and Palestinian collaborators has enabled the IDF to zero in on bomb makers or recruiters of homicide bombers.[32]

The U.S. Targeted Killing Effort

Faced with terrorist attacks, the United States also adopted over time the practice of targeted assassinations for the same reasons that the Israelis had, to wit: the reduction or elimination of terrorist attacks. America's use of targeted killings has lagged behind that of the Israelis. Two broad explanations for America's hesitancy to act follow:

a. Despite a spate of terrorist attacks on American officials, citizens, and military forces stretching back over three decades, the United States claimed it could not strike back due to an absence of precise intelligence on those responsible.

b. The United States remained wedded to conventional diplomacy and security arrangements rather than utilizing unconventional means to combat terrorism. Britain, for instance, also adopted targeted killings against terrorists. Its SAS hit team shot three unarmed IRA terrorists on a Gibraltar street in 1988 in an incident that grabbed much negative European attention.[33]

A detailed account of America's aversion to striking back would take us too far afield for this study; yet a couple overview examples of justifiable provocation are appropriate:

a. Seven months after the Palestinian massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, the same Palestinian terrorist organization, Black September, struck again at the U.S. Embassy staff in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, killing the ambassador, Cleo Allen Noel, Jr., and the *chargé d'affaires*, George Curtis Moore (and one Belgian diplomat). Yasir Arafat, the deceased Palestinian leader, formed Black September from his al-Fatah (Islamic Holy War) movement that had been launching guerrilla and terrorist raids

into Israel from Jordan, Lebanon, and the Gaza Strip since 1965. Black September's nominal separation from al-Fatah was intended to provide Arafat plausible deniability for the Munich killings and the March 1973 murders in Khartoum. The result was that Washington did not directly respond with force against the organizations that perpetrated terrorism for years.

b. During Ronald Reagan's presidency, assaults directed at Americans intensified. They took many forms, ranging from the kidnapping of Americans in Lebanon, bombings of U.S. embassies in Kuwait and Beirut, murder of Leon Klinghoffer (an American tourist on the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro*), and air hijackings of American planes to the massive truck bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut on 23 October 1983 that killed 241 troops. None of these deadly occurrences was suitably dealt with either by retaliating decisively or bringing culprits to justice. Despite evidence that the attack on the Marines had been carried out by the radical Islamic group Hezbollah backed by Iran, the United States never acted on a planned bombing mission against one of the group's training camps in Lebanon. Instead, Washington withdrew American forces from Lebanon early the next year.

About the second example, Secretary of State George Shultz and others in the administration did worry about the message sent by a cut-and-run tack. He called for action beyond "passive defense" to include "preemption and retaliation" in an October 1984 speech at the Park Avenue Synagogue in Manhattan.[34] The advice helped precipitate a limited counteraction in President Reagan's famed reprisals against Libya 2 years later.

Aerial Bombardments. Ronald Reagan lashed back at the Libyan dictator, Qaddafi, in response to a string of state-sponsored terrorist incidents occurring over several years, culminating in the bombing of a West German discotheque that killed two U.S. servicemen. Frustrated by being unable to assemble a coalition among European allies that would impose effective sanctions against Libya, the United States retaliated unilaterally with air strikes in 1986. In anticipating post-9/11 transatlantic relations, European capitals argued that the United States was overreaching. France predictably banned

the aircraft from its airspace. Perhaps ironically, one of the F-111 "Aardvark" warplane guided bombs did collateral damage to the French embassy at Tripoli in the El Dorado Canyon operation. The combined U.S. Navy and Air Force nighttime precision attack served as a model for similar missions in the next decade and even the next century.[35]

U.S. bombs that hit Qaddafi's residence and military installations almost eliminated the Libyan strongman. After the bombardment, he appeared subdued, contributing to the judgment that he had been deterred from further killing sprees. Appearances can be deceiving, however, and were in the case of Qaddafi. The Libyan dictator disguised his hand in over a score of state-sponsored terrorist activities in the late 1980s.[36] For its part, the United States incurred world censure when the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution condemning the American raid on Libya.

The most infamous of Qaddafi's masterminded attacks downed Pan American flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland in December 1988, which killed all 259 passengers (three fourths being Americans) and 11 others on the ground. Prima facie evidence pointed toward Libya's involvement in the destruction of the U.S.-bound airline. American and British authorities filed indictments against a Libyan intelligence officer and an employee of Libya's national airline for secreting a pressure-fused bomb among the baggage of the doomed flight. Qaddafi refused to hand over the two men for trial in either United States or Scotland.

The incoming George H. W. Bush administration resorted to diplomacy with allied governments and sought United Nations sanctions against Libya. London and Paris backed Washington in the Security Council, which voted to impose sanctions blocking international sales of petroleum equipment and arms along with banning incoming and outgoing flights. The United Nations demanded Libya turn over the suspects for trial in order to suspend the restrictions. A total lifting of the sanctions required the Libyan government to accept responsibility for the crime, pay compensation to the victims' families, and renounce terrorism. Qaddafi refused and the sanctions bit sharply into Libya's economy and Libyans' travel abroad for a decade and half. Ultimately in 1999 the Libyan despot offered up the two suspects and in 2004 (during the George W. Bush presidency) opened his country to inspection for unconventional weapons.

Libya was not alone in abetting international terrorism. State-sponsored terrorism also emanated from North Korea, Iran, and Syria during the 1980s as a precursor to the "rogue" state phenomenon that emerged on the international scene in the following decade. By that time, another species of this form of violence was visible on the horizon, one that spoke in the name of Islam.

Missile Strikes. After the Qaddafi-near miss, the United States second attempt at a targeted killing took place in 1998 against Osama bin Laden, the scion of a wealthy Saudi family whose spiritual and political aspirations were fired by his experiences in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion. Before bin Laden's Al Qaeda carried out the deadly 9/11 attacks, it struck U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, killing 12 Americans and hundreds of Africans. The United States resolved to strike back to preempt further Al Qaeda terrorism.

Before bin Laden's Al Qaeda carried out the deadly 9/11 attacks, it struck U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya …

Acting on intelligence that placed bin Laden and his inner-circle at a camp near the city of Khost on 20 August, U.S. naval vessels in the Arabian Sea launched 79 Tomahawk missiles that slammed into the Afghan terrorist installations and the al-Shifa plant near Khartoum. Operation Infinite Reach killed an estimated 20-30 people in the training camps and demolished the Sudanese chemical plant, which was linked to Al Qaeda. The exhilaration, experienced within government circles, of retaliating against terrorism quickly dissipated as disappointing reports streamed in about the errant attacks. Osama bin Laden and his top lieutenants escaped the strike, perhaps being tipped off from Pakistani sources.[37] Unlike various Tel Aviv governments, the Clinton administration never dispatched its secret elite troops to capture or kill bin Laden.[38]

A first successful, acknowledged application of post-9/11 targeted killing tactic turned out to be in Yemen, not Iraq. A fired missile killed an alleged associate of bin Laden and five suspected Al Qaeda operatives in the first days of November 2002. An unmanned Predator drone unloaded its deadly 5-foot-long Hellfire rocket straight into a four-wheel-drive vehicle carrying Qaed Salem Sinan al-Harithi—a suspected Al Qaeda leader and an accessory in the *U.S.S. Cole* bombing—as he and his riding companions drove 100 miles east of Sanaa, the Yemeni capital.

Washington justified the threshold-crossing assassinations because the traveling party was considered a military target—combatants—under international law. Although the attack did not rank even remotely near the preemptive war doctrine, it did signal a resort to deadly force in a different kind of warfare. As a combatant on a broader battlefield, Harithi fell victim to the campaign against Islamic terrorism. According to administration officials, President Bush delegated operational authority over Predator strikes to intelligence and military personnel, thereby improving the response time to sensitive information about the whereabouts of terrorists.[39]

Nineteen months later in the tribal agency of Pakistan's South Waziristan, another Al Qaeda-linked leader, Nek Mohammad, met a similar fate by a laser-guided Hellfire from a UAV Predator. This sanctuary in the lawless lands afforded the pro-Taliban Mohammad no protection from "secret" cooperation of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan, who fired the missile, and Pakistani officials. It was further evidence that hitting terrorists anywhere had become accepted practice, an application long used by the Israeli government.

On 13 January 2006, missiles fired from a remotely controlled Predator drone (and possibly piloted jets) on a mud-brick compound in Damadola, Pakistan targeted Al Qaeda facilitators. The airstrike reportedly killed some operatives, including two leaders:

a. Abu Khabab al-Masri (otherwise known as Midhat Mursi al-Sayid Umar), who trained Al Qaeda fighters in chemical and biological explosives
b. Abu Ubayda al-Misri, who directed insurgent operations in the southern Afghanistan province of Kunar.

The air attack was part of a series of assaults to cripple Al Qaeda and was aimed at the terrorist network's principle deputy Ayman al-Zawhiri, whose son-in-law, Abd al-Rahman al-Maghrebi, may have fallen victim to the bombing.[40] The frequency of these U.S. target killings of terrorists suggests that American forces are beginning to emulate Israeli practices, although Washington implementation lies well beyond America's landmass.

An even more spectacular application of taking down a jihad terrorist came with the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in a safe house north of Baghdad on 8 June 2006 by two F-16 jets dropping precision 500-pound bombs. U.S. SOF played a role in pinpointing the

whereabouts of this mastermind of Al Qaeda in Iraq, according to George W. Bush's remarks in a Rose Garden press conference. They acted "on tips and intelligence from Iraqis, confirmed Mr. Zarqawi's location, and delivered justice to the most wanted terrorist in Iraq," stated the president.[41]

Commando Raids. Despite the apparent adoption of Israeli defense tactics, the United States has only resorted to missile strikes or aerial bombardments in its targeted killings. It has not reported success with commando raids, where the specific mission is *shoot to kill* a known terrorist residing within a country that enjoys *de jure* peace with the United States. Israel, on the other hand, has undertaken several such operations. In addition to the counterattacks against the perpetrators of the 1984 Munich Olympic massacre of its athletes in Western Europe and the Middle East, Tel Aviv mounted others. Among the most notable was long-distance special operations removal of Abu Jihad (Khalil al-Wazir), a Yasir Arafat loyalist and deputy PLO commander who oversaw numerous terrorist assaults with many victims. Operating from Tunisia, Abu Jihad made for an elusive target. *Sayeret Mat'Kal* commandos carried out an elaborately planned assassination operation involving the Mossad, naval SOF, and the IAF infiltrating a posh suburb of Tunis on 16 April 1988. Along with eliminating Abu Jihad, the Israeli team netted an abundance of PLO documents, a sine qua non of every foray.[42]

The Clinton administration discussed at length SOF either capturing or killing bin Laden in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, but nothing came of the deliberations. Clinton officials lived in the shadow of history. During the 1970s, the CIA had been embroiled in controversy. Senator Frank Church, a Democrat from Idaho, headed a U.S. Senate committee investigation of the CIA that revealed a series of bizarre plots to assassinate foreign leaders such as Fidel Castro of Cuba via exploding cigars. In 1975 the committee concluded that assassination was incompatible with American principles and thereby should be rejected as a foreign policy instrument. As one consequence, presidential Executive Order 12333—issued by Gerald Ford and re-signed by subsequent presidents—outlawed political assassinations. Legal experts judged that the ban did not apply to military targets or persons posing imminent threat to the United States in times of armed conflict. But executive branch officials still agonized over the precise

language in Bill Clinton's secret legal authorizations, or Memorandum of Notifications, to go after the chief terror suspect.

The quandary was that the inherent risks of apprehending bin Laden virtually necessitated the use of lethal force. The CIA did not want its hands tied, yet sought political cover. Similarly, the White House did not want to be held responsible if a subsequent investigation construed an authorizing memo as a shoot-to-kill order from President Clinton. Executive branch aides worried that their authority conveyed to Afghan agents a license to kill the terrorist planner. It was a bureaucratic hall of mirrors, and consensus eluded the president's senior aides. National Security Advisor Sandy Berger struggled to forge an agreement. Attorney General Jane Reno and her Justice Department adhered to a law-enforcement formula for dealing with terrorism. They mulled over the language of authorizing memos that the CIA deemed ambiguous on the use of lethal force. The agency concluded that the only legally acceptable pretext for killing the Saudi terrorist chief lay in a credible capture operation that went awry in its execution.[43]

In the course of the 9/11 testimonies, the conflicting understandings among the participants revealed that the Clinton White House and the CIA held polar opposite interpretations of Memorandum of Notifications. The administration policy makers, including Bill Clinton, shared the opinion that their intent was to kill bin Laden. "This intent was never well communicated or understood with the CIA," according to the 9/11 Commission.[44] George Tenet took away the impression that his agency possessed authority to capture the Saudi terrorists, not kill him. In essence, the decision makers tied themselves in knots. The Israeli elite secret units were far bolder because, in part, they enjoyed the backing of their political leaders.

Invasion, Counterinsurgency, and Withdrawal from Lebanon

Just as IDF actions anticipated American use of targeted killings to combat terrorism, so also did Israel's intractable insurgency in Lebanon eerily foretell U.S. experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rather than fixating on the lessons of the Vietnam War, American students of counterinsurgency would have benefited from looking at Israel's experiences in combating terrorism emanating from Lebanon and later from its 18-year occupation into its northern neighbor. They

might also have gained insights and warnings of unanticipated resistance in the post-invasion phrase following "shock and awe" offensive in the Iraq War. An ounce of anticipation would have gone a long way toward adequate preparation for America's greatest counterinsurgent enterprise since the Vietnam War.

For the first 20 years of Israel's history, its Lebanon border had been the most peaceful over its other three frontiers. Invading armies or guerrilla raids had come with grim frequency from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. What changed the pacific Israel-Lebanon boundary into a war zone is like all politics in the Middle East—both a simple and complex story. The simple explanation lies in the fact that the PLO and then other terrorists groups, such as Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), used the Lebanese southern quadrant for attacks on northern Israel. The openness of Lebanese society enabled the PLO and PFLP to recruit fighters in the Palestinian refugee camps. When the Kingdom of Jordan violently expelled Palestinian guerrillas from its territory in "Black September" 1970, most fled to Lebanon to continue their attacks and killings from its southern belt. In time the Palestinians turned Beirut into the world's terrorist capital to carry on violent attacks on Israel and its citizens as well as hijackings of international civilian jets.[45]

The complex explanation, which takes us well beyond the thrust of this study, can be summarized by stating that contending factions propelled Lebanon's descent into anarchy in the early 1970s. Pushed into a multipronged civil war by the convoluted nature of the Lebanese political configuration, the Mediterranean country spawned some 50 different factions and militias among the Sunni, Shiite, Christian, and Druze religious communities. Into this tangled conflict stepped the Syrian army and intelligence services, ostensibly to restore order and later to assist the Palestinian guerrillas who fired rockets or infiltrated terrorists into northern Israel. Additionally, Damascus wadded into its eastern neighbor in 1976 to reestablish its hold over Lebanon as part of an historic Greater Syria. From this base, it also hoped to exert pressure on the Israelis to relinquish the Golan Heights.

Rather than detailing the intricacies of Lebanese politics, it is more pertinent for this study to record the IDF's handling of the Palestinian attacks themselves. By the late 1970s, southern Lebanon erupted as the primary Arab-Israeli battlefield. Before actually

occupying southern Lebanon, Israel made repeated forays into the adjoining borderlands as retribution and deterrence for Palestinian assaults. The IDF fired artillery, marched patrols, and dropped bombs on suspected Palestinian headquarters, training camps, and arms depots. It also deployed armored columns and several thousands of troops northward that cleared and held territory for brief periods. As part of its offenses, the IDF recruited, trained, and armed Arabic-speaking soldiers for its Unit 300—a group of volunteers from the minority Druze, Bedouin, and Circassian communities. The Special Forces unit, *Sayeret Ha'Druzim*, consisted of Druze Muslims, who formed an especially effective reconnaissance force within the Lebanese contingent.[46]

After a medium-scale invasion of Lebanon—about 7,000 troops in Operation Litani (1978)—to curtail the cross-border raids into Israel, the IDF turned to setting up a security zone. Specifically, it tried to create a buffer area in southern Lebanon by backing the grievances of local allies; the grievances were toward the interloping Palestinians, who were causing them trouble with Israel. The IDF approach was to aid a combined Christian and Shiite militia under the leadership of Sa'd Haddad, whose forces fought the PLO in southern Lebanon because they resented Palestinian domination. Tel Aviv trained and armed this Free Lebanon Military, which comprised about 2,000 fighters against PLO guerrillas.[47]

The IDF approach was to aid a combined Christian and Shiite militia …

Out of these efforts eventually developed the South Lebanese Army, which played a role in Israel's occupation of Lebanon; its analysis begins on page 31. In the 1970s, the IDF as well as the Mossad also made contact with Lebanese Christians, many of whom resided in the Levantine country's north. These Maronite Christians, known to many as *Phalangists*, provided little real benefit to the IDF in the late 1970s. What is pertinent to this study is that the intricate wheels-within-wheels politics of managing ruthless, deceitful, and untrustworthy allies proved daunting even for the Israelis, long accustomed to the intrigue and intricacies of Middle East politics. The warning flags to American practitioners of counterinsurgency campaigns were unmistakable before the United States ventured into Iraq and Afghanistan.

Another part of the Israeli strategy embraced the so-called "Good Fence" policy (taken from the stoutly defended barrier between the two countries) that enabled Lebanese civilians to cross over into Israel for sanctuary, food, employment, and medical treatment. As such, it represented a quasi "hearts and minds" campaign to win over anti-PLO elements and to stabilize the southern reaches of Lebanon. This policy formed a major nonmilitary effort to bolster a population friendly to Israel.

Despite the efforts of the IDF and its Christian-Shiite allies, the PLO persisted in firing Katyusha rockets, lobbing mortar rounds, and launching terrorist attacks from Lebanon as well as the West Bank that killed Israeli civilians and military personnel. Some Palestinian assaults were staged by suicide teams, who killed or kidnapped residents of lightly defended settlements. The Israeli Special Forces improved in their hostage rescue techniques. The *Sayeret Mat'Kal*, for example, saved all but one child on a terrorist-infested kibbutz in 1981.[48] The Lebanese border, however, remained largely porous to PLO infiltration.

The deadly incursions made Lebanon a virtual national obsession among the Israeli public and led to large-scale conventional invasion of the coastal country on 6 June 1982 in Operation Peace for Galilee. Six and a half Israeli army divisions pushed deep into Lebanon, seizing more than a third of the country—almost to the Beirut-Damascus Highway that bisects the nation—by the time the first cease-fire went into effect. The IDF employed its commando forces, for instance, in the capture of the Beaufort Crusader Castle with a special unit from the Golani Infantry Brigade. The air war against the Syrian pilots went lopsidedly in the Israeli Air Force's favor but the IDF's ground advance encountered stiffer resistance than anticipated, especially from small parties of PLO guerrillas and Syrian tanks. Still, the conventional phase of this blitzkrieg intervention largely succeeded in sweeping the most PLO guerrillas back from the southern border.

The Lebanon incursion attained one of Israel's goals at the end of August, when the PLO agreed to evacuate Beirut under a U.S.-brokered agreement to spare the seaside capital from further destruction by the Israeli siege. Nearly 15,000 PLO fighters and their dependents departed for Tunisia, and others went to Syria. Later, however, some PLO fighters drifted back to operate in southern Lebanon. In addition, the other main invasion goal—installation of a friendly

government—eluded Tel Aviv with the assassination of President Bashir Gemayel, newly elected by the Lebanese parliament. Because Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin viewed the Phalangist leader as favorable to the Jewish state, the Syrians had him killed.[49] The resulting instability led Israel to reevaluate its earlier plan—a short-duration occupation of Lebanon—for a more lengthy stay so as protect its northern border. As one counterinsurgency expert has said, this decision and Israel's management of Shiite conflict became "one of the most disastrous chapters in Israeli military history."[50]

The Israeli incursion yielded a little recognized benefit for other countries engaged in antiterrorist campaigns. It destroyed the PLO terrorist training camps in southern Lebanon, which functioned as precursors to similar Al Qaeda bases in Afghanistan two decades later. Funded by oil revenues from Qaddafi's regime in Libya, the camps instructed assassins, bomb makers, document forgers, and terrorist facilitators. Within their encampments, the PLO along with instructors from Cuba and East Germany trained members of the Irish Provisional Republican Army, Japanese Red Army, Nicaraguan Sandinistas, and the Spanish Basque ETA (Evzkadi Ta Askatasuna).[51] But Tel Aviv also reaped a whirlwind of unintended consequences from the intervention, which could have served notice to the United States before its Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The invasion and subsequent occupation also sparked a major political realignment. Whereas the southern Shiite minority had originally looked to Israel for assistance against the Sunni-dominated PLO, this community now turned against the foreign occupiers in the 1980s. The guerrilla warfare that soon greeted the IDF foretold a familiar pattern that U.S. and coalition forces encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan. The terrain favored irregular warfare, as it was either wooded mountain areas or small urban centers, ideal for guerrillas to shoot, run, and hide. A long porous border with a hostile Syria also foretold what befell U.S. forces in Iraq after the 2003 invasion when the American-led coalition faced an adversarial Iran and Syria in post-Hussein Iraq.

The Lebanese political terrain was even more treacherous. Unlike the unpopulated Sinai desert where Israeli armored forces prevailed in the 1973 war, Lebanon was sprinkled with villages and honeycombed with lawlessness since the writ of a central government had not run for years much beyond the capital. Lebanon's multi-sided civil war

resumed with factions from the Christian, Druze, Palestinian, Shiite, and Sunni communities fighting each other and sometimes the IDF in a kaleidoscopic intricacy. Keeping the players straight demanded more than a game program; it called for forbearance, flexibility, and restraint as the combatants shifted. As an occupying force, the IDF sometimes found itself in the midst of crossfire as it strove to protect one group from another that foreshadowed U.S. role in Iraq.

Initially, the Shiite villagers warmly greeted the IDF because the southern Lebanese communities had long been burdened by PLO activities and Israeli counter-responses. They resented the Sunni-dominated PLO out of sectarian difference, its cadres' arrogance, and its disruption of daily life. Numbering about three-quarters of a million people, the Shiite Muslims made up 80 percent of the southern Lebanese population. Shiite extremism was not yet increasing, and tensions between Shiite people and Israelis were not a significant factor. Thus, most Shiites refrained from helping the retreating PLO fight the incoming IDF.

A metamorphosis took place among the Shia, many of whom had welcomed Israeli support against the Sunni-dominated PLO in the late 1970s. After the IDF's 1982 incursion, however, the Shiite community turned against their onetime benefactors in southern Lebanon, who they had initially greeted with showers of rice. The Shia soon came to see the IDF less as a liberator than an occupier, foreshadowing a similar turn of events after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq that toppled Saddam Hussein. In the latter case, the United States was initially considered liberators in Iraq, but its lengthening occupation soon eroded the locals' gratitude. In Lebanon, the Shiite, backed by their coreligionist in Iran, likewise turned against the IDF. From this opposition emerged Hezbollah (the Party of God). The Iran-Syria alliance that formed during the Iran-Iraq War (1980s) facilitated Tehran's support of Hezbollah; Damascus opened its territory for use—that is, as conduit for Iranian arms, funds, and instructors to reach Lebanon.

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Suicide bombings—later the bane of coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq—loomed large, which was early in the Israeli incursion into Lebanon. In November 1982, a suicide bomber from Hezbollah,

born amid the Lebanese Shiite community, struck an IDF headquarters building in Tyre, killing 75 Israeli soldiers. Almost exactly a year later, another Shiite suicide bomber repeated the feat; 28 Israel security officials were killed in a truck explosion at the IDF/Shin Bet headquarters also near Tyre. In between the two attacks, the U.S. Embassy in West Beirut was bombed. Even more devastatingly, the American military felt first hand the Shiite resistance and their suicide tactics in 1982 when a truck bomber detonated a massive explosion against the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 troops who had been deployed as a multinational peace force. This attack should have served as a red flag to the top civilian war plans in the Pentagon ahead of the U.S. occupation of Iraq prior to the invasion. If the single incident failed to alert American officials, the IDF's nearly two-decade tribulations in Lebanon would have served that purpose.

Over the 18-year occupation, the IDF confronted scores of suicide bombers that killed and maimed many of its soldiers as the insurgency spread. Adoption of this tactic by the newly founded Hezbollah and its military wing, Islamic Resistance, was facilitated by the presence of a 1,500 strong contingent of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, who used it against Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War.[52] Under these circumstances, the Israeli role metamorphosed from a liberating warrior to an embattled occupier or peacekeeper. Along with Lebanese civilians, its patrols fell victim to car explosions, roadside bombs, and suicide attacks as well as ambushes. To counter wireless explosive devices, the IDF deployed dogs in its units of *Oket'z Explosive Palgra* (Sting Explosive Force), which limited the casualty rate despite the increased use of roadside bombs.[53]

The complex internecine conflict and the political failure to secure a peace settlement with a friendly government in Beirut led Tel Aviv to withdraw from central Lebanon in late 1982. The IDF settled on a line south from the mouth of the Awali River on the Mediterranean to Mount Dov near the Syrian border. It also reduced its troop presence by more than half, to about 33,000 soldiers. This downsized arena still left Israel with about 12,000 square miles and half a million people to oversee. The smaller area yielded no security for the IDF, which still suffered bombings and ambushes. Although Israeli SOF had fought terrorist incursions from contiguous states since the 1950s or after 1967 within the West Bank, they had not encountered

genuine guerrilla warfare, in which a population had a ready access to arms and munitions. The insurgents in the West Bank at this time lacked the plentiful supply of firearms that the Shiites bands possessed. Moreover, West Bank inhabitants shared in the Israelis general economic improvements, which at times took the edge off their grievances.

Afterwards, the IDF settled into a near classic guerrilla conflict on Lebanese soil. The struggle reported familiar charges of any such campaign as Israeli involvement in inadvertent massacres of civilians and a "war of choice" that eroded popular support for the occupation. Then in 1985, Tel Aviv staged another, deeper pullback to a narrow belt along the Lebanese border, some 6 to 10 miles wide spanning the length of the Israel-Lebanon boundary.

Like what preceded its 1982 invasion, the IDF turned to local forces. It reconstituted the former Free Lebanese Movement (FLM) as the South Lebanese Army (SLA), now under General Antoine Lahad (the former head, Haddad, died in 1984), to police the "security zone." As in the 1970s, Christian and Druze villagers formed the bulk of the SLA, along with smaller Shiite representation. Within the security zone, the SLA administered the civil functions as a quasi-government. They operated militarily from village strongholds in the southernmost strip with backing from the IDF's Northern Command. Israeli artillery, aircraft, and ground troops supported the SLA. The Israeli army financed, trained, and equipped about 2,000 SLA soldiers to fight Shiite militias. Two Shiite militia groups—Amal (a northern-based movement) and Hezbollah—stepped into the breach left by the PLO, although some PLO guerrillas filtered back to southern Lebanon. These rival parties did engage in deadly battles from time to time. Before being vanquished by Hezbollah in street fights, Amal was generally absent from southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah and its military wing, the Islamic Resistance Movement, operated extensively.

To stem the rockets and raids launched by the Shiite militants, Tel Aviv executed two medium-sized conventional counter operations. Both of these military sweeps (1993 Operation Accountability and 1996 Operation Grapes of Wrath) made a strenuous stab at disrupting the insurgent infrastructure of training facilities and supply depots. They temporarily succeeded but like water, the Hezbollah fighters flowed back into the crevices that tank columns

and frontal assaults inevitably leave in place. Because small guerrilla bodies tend to harass upon their return, they frustrated much heavier forces. Katyusha rockets thus kept falling inside Israel. Within Lebanon, roadside bombs remotely detonated; in addition, rocket propelled grenades and ambushes plagued the IDF and its SLA, which performed poorly. Like other such large fire and maneuver engagements, the IDF ventures also upset civilians, thereby generating intelligence, assistance, and even recruits for the elusive guerrillas. Booby trap explosions or gunfire consistently took a toll of three or four IDF casualties every month. For their part, Hezbollah death squads eliminated Israeli sympathizers and collaborators or peeled them away by threat or enticement. In short, by the mid-1990s Southern Lebanon resembled the Mekong Delta.

To reduce, if not totally eliminate, civilian casualties that generated anger and hence fresh Hezbollah recruits, the IDF implemented guidelines such as not always returning fire to the source of guerrilla fusillades. In most cases, the Hezbollah fighters deliberately took up positions within or near villagers for protection against Israel counterfire. This tactic naturally reduced the advantage of massive firepower enjoyed by the IDF. Likewise, the IDF also adopted elaborate procedures at checkpoints or in searches to minimize their own casualties, which sparked political outcry and commissions charged with looking into soldiers' deaths. Furthermore, the IDF relied on technology—such as airstrikes, fire-detection finders, spotter drones, and artillery bombards—to reduce casualties. Such policies foreshadowed similar actions by U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, as they fought the most politically fraught of all modes of warfare.

The ambushing of thin-skinned vehicles in southern Lebanon also heralded trouble for U.S. convoys and patrols in Iraq and Afghanistan. The American-built M113 armored personnel carrier was particularly vulnerable to rocket-propelled grenades and roadside bombs that were stock-in-trade of the fierce Shiite attacks. Nearly two decades later U.S. Army and Marine infantrymen suffered heavy casualties while riding in the unarmored Humvees on roadways around Baghdad, Ramadi, or Fallouja until the vehicles were "up-armored" to afford a modicum of protection from small bomb blasts.

The IDF also struck back with helicopter-fired missiles or daring SOF raids to kill or capture guerrilla leaders. To counter the growing battlefield skills of the Islamic Resistance, the IDF turned to unique

units such as *Sayeret Egoz* ("walnut" in Hebrew) that conducted aggressive patrolling and ambushing of insurgents. These units were effective but not on a decisive scale. Despite the pullback to reduce the size of its occupied sector, the IDF still endured the steady attrition associated with a traditional insurgency where a conventional army, even one with many skilled special operations units, confronts guerrilla forces that fire and run.

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Israeli popular opinion, like that of other Western societies in similar wars, gradually turned against the protracted Lebanese intervention, with its trickle of casualties, well-publicized charges of mistakes resulting in the death of innocents, mounting costs in treasure, and inclusive nature. While Israel suffered fewer casualties than their Shiite opponents, the death of IDF troops had a corrosive political impact in Jewish society. The Lebanon conflict also drained defense resources and demoralized some IDF units. Although Israeli governments wanted a settlement with Syria before departing, they were unable to reach an accord with Damascus. Finally, after 18 years on Lebanese soil, Tel Aviv moved the last of its IDF units out in a disorderly withdrawal in 2000. Some 1,000 SLA militiamen and their families streamed across the border into settlements on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Some units abandoned tanks, artillery, and armored personnel carriers, which the IAF bombed so they would not fall to Hezbollah.

A decade and half before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, one American analyst perceptively wrote about the IDF's encounter with Hezbollah: the "vicious circle of resistance and reaction provides a warning to other states that may become involved in especially sensitive occupations."[54]

Although Israel could not impose its political will on Lebanon through invasion and occupation, it did emerge from the quagmire with its northern border less violated than before the 1982 invasion, until the Hezbollah attacks in mid-2006. Occasional Katyusha rockets rained down from time to time, although cross-border attacks nowhere near approached the frequency of the pre-1982 invasion period. The effectiveness of the Israeli fence—spotlighted, electronically monitored, and heavily patrolled—partially explains

the reduction in ground-based raids before Hezbollah provoked fierce IDF counterattack in July 2006. The other part of the explanation lies in the fact that Hezbollah was biding its time. Before Hezbollah crossed over the Israeli border to capture two IDF soldiers that spared 12 July 2006 war, it became a virtual "state within a state" in southern Lebanon. It elected 14 representatives to the 128-seat Lebanese parliament, assumed two Cabinet posts, ran schools and hospitals, and secretly amassed arms and 14,000 rockets to rain down on Israel.

During its Lebanese occupation, the IDF's counterinsurgency strategies diverged from the U.S. practices in Vietnam and later in Afghanistan and Iraq. In each of these conflicts, America pursued a robust "hearts and minds" campaign of digging wells, constructing roads, and providing medical clinics to win over the indigenous population. It also tried to stand up local forces for confronting the insurgents. Especially in the Afghanistan and Iraq cases, the United States also tried to implant democracy through running referenda, holding elections, coaching politicians, and aiding political movements. In the American way of counterinsurgency, a hearts-and-minds strategy is central for moving the local population away from the insurgents. The Israeli approach differed from these American efforts. The occupation itself also brought much criticism. One commentator labeled IDF measures as "heavy-handed steps" and cited its "posting of road signs in Hebrew, commandeering facilities, and establishing bases, headquarters, and detention camps."[55]

Although Israel looked after its own one million Arab citizens within its own territory as a reflection of Jewish values and as a modern-day state's responsibility, it showed less interest in instituting civic-action type programs on Lebanese soil. Its action-orientated military doctrine has been cited as an explanation for a missed opportunity to undercut insurgent efforts and thereby serve as protectors of the local communities. Rather than seeing counterinsurgency in political terms, the IDF narrowly focused almost exclusively on the military dimension, according to critics. In this interpretation, the IDF "let slip a golden opportunity to forge a closer link" with the Shiite community. Thus, one argument is that by failing to implement a genuine counterinsurgency strategy, the IDF ignored "*the* crucial element in securing wider political objectives."[56] The realities

of Middle East politics and religion, however, render this assessment less than valid.

Given the level of distrust and actual hatred flowing from Shiite communities as the occupation lengthened, no hearts-and-minds program would have worked. Under radicalizing influence of their coreligionist from Iran, the Lebanese Shia changed their stripes to view the Israelis as their new enemies. Such a policy also permitted the Shiite community of Lebanon to advance their political goals within Lebanese politics by presenting themselves as protectors of Lebanon's sovereignty.[57] As a counter to their critics, Israeli active and retired military officers expressed skepticism, believing that the Arab populations would have taken the assistance rendered by Israeli hearts-and-minds endeavors without transferring their long-term loyalties toward their benefactors.

The IDF approach differed from the current U.S. campaigns within Iraq and Afghanistan, on which the judgment of history is still awaited. The American-led coalition has sought not only to foster social services but also establish Iraqi security forces and promote democracy. The United States restored electricity, water treatment facilities, oil pumping wells and pipelines, schools, and hospitals with the expenditure of billions of dollars. While not all these ventures worked according to plans, America undertook substantial rehabilitation of Iraq's infrastructure. In short, the United States launched a gigantic nation-preserving and nation-building enterprise in a fragmented, traumatized, and deeply antagonistic state.

It was Hezbollah that filled the social-service vacuum within the southern Lebanese society, making the Israeli effort more difficult to implement. Like the 1930s Chinese Communists or Mozambique's Frelimo party, Hezbollah set up an insurgent state in the shadow of Israel's occupation that swayed or intimidated southern Lebanese residents.[58] Additionally, the Islamic Resistance assassinated the distributors of food that the Israeli government disbursed mainly to the Lebanese Christian community.

Hezbollah practiced traditional guerrilla political techniques as an "effective provider to local south Lebanese residents." In deed, it helped rebuild damaged villages and provided humanitarian relief. It dispensed its own funds as well as monies from Iran in an insurgent version of the hearts-and-minds campaign across sectarian lines as

well as within the Lebanese Shiite community by operating clinics and schools. It also extended aid to the families of fallen fighters and other civilians wounded in the conflict. It behaved like an autonomous governing structure within the greater Lebanese state.[59] Additionally, the Party of God functioned as a political entity by getting members elected to the Lebanese parliament starting in the 1992 elections. Later, Hezbollah members held Lebanese cabinet posts in national governments, while its military arm carried out attacks on the IDF.

Hezbollah ascended as the champion of Lebanon sovereignty in a way that the PLO never did. In addition to being fiercely anti-Israel, Hezbollah was a nationalistic movement that strove to insinuate itself into the Lebanese body politic by legitimizing its nationalist credential. It received funding, training, and ideological inspiration from the Iranian mullahs. Locally, however, it behaved more like a national liberation front than had the PLO. In irony so typical of the Middle East, the Israeli governments of the 1990s turned to making peace with the PLO, the very target of its Lebanon invasion. And in a further twist, Israel's former Shiite surrogates became its new foes.

While both Israel and the United States adapted conventional forces to wage counterinsurgency campaigns, raised local armies, and deployed their special operations troops to engage irregular forces, they diverged on hearts-and-minds efforts and state-building issues. American soldiers and their elected politicians embraced a political as well as military approach to insurgents. In this effort, they adhered to the Western way of counterinsurgency that had been practiced in varying forms by France in Algeria, Britain in Northern Ireland, and Portugal in Angola and Mozambique. America, however, implemented its civic-action programs and political integration on a far grander scale. Its enormous wealth partly explains a reliance on this approach. The other part is that its social-action programs reflected its values, which were reinforced during the 1960s—the Great Society welfare-system era and the integration into the American mainstream of the largely disenfranchised and impoverished African-American population.

One difference in the counterinsurgency measures stemmed from the fact that the insurgent movements in southern Lebanon retaliated against Israeli civilians or held Tel Aviv hostage by threatening to attack the Israeli population living in the northern part of the

Jewish state. Therefore, a failure to prevent or quickly halt a Katyusha rocket fusillade from the Lebanese side of the border resulted in political controversy within Israeli society. This proximity to conflict is without parallel in the American case in Iraq or Afghanistan, where U.S. troops suffered but not America's homeland population. The Israeli experiences, in fact, made them adept at urban conflict.

Urban Warfare and Counterterrorism

A year before the United States unleashed Operation Iraqi Freedom, the IDF undertook large-scale urban combat operations in several West Bank cities, including Jenin and Nablus, as part of its Operation Defensive Shield. This operation was a counterterrorism offensive that was triggered by a terrorist bombing in Netanya, which killed 23 people. As specific case studies, Jenin and Nablus can provide lessons. Specifically, the fighting in Nablus's Kasbah (old city) district and Jenin's Palestinian refugee camp displayed unique features in April 2002 and constituted the biggest military engagement in the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Jenin's Palestinian refugee camp was the second largest in the West Bank. As a consequence of the Oslo Accords, the Jenin camp had come under the Palestinian Authority, which provided civil and security administration in 1995. Cadres from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Al-Asqa Martyrs Brigade, and Hamas entered the camps and orchestrated some 100-suicide bombers since the start of the second *intifada* in September 2000. These orchestrated attacks killed hundreds of Israeli bus riders and café goers. The Tel Aviv government decided to deploy the IDF to disrupt the terrorist infrastructure.

Wanting to minimize civilian casualties in the maze of houses and buildings that made up the crowded refugee center, the IDF opted not to use fixed-wing aircraft in airstrikes against bands of Palestinian insurgents. The Israelis also worried about giving Palestinians "the public relations coup of mass civilian casualties" if aircraft bombing formed part of the operation.[60] Cobra attack helicopters were episodically used but no precision bombs from the Israeli Air Force.

Without an IAF air bombardment, the insurgent defenders enjoyed two advantages: first, they were spared a devastating aerial bombardment; and second, they knew the intricacies of their urban environment that would remain largely intact without being flattened

by Israeli aircraft. Flushing them out meant going in after the Palestinian fighters in close quarters rather than blowing them to smithereens with bombs. By foregoing bombing, the IDF opened itself to the bag of dirty tricks that insurgent fighters the world over rely on to produce casualties. Thus the Palestinians prepared for the IDF offensive by laying mines in the roads and booby traps inside buildings. The no-bombs decision also prolonged the siege from an estimated 72 hours to 12 days, as Israeli troops fought painstakingly house-by-house through the 13,000-person camp.

This no-airpower decision also contributed to 23 Israeli fatalities of which 13 less-than-prepared reservists fell in one incident when the Palestinians sprang an ambush against their attackers. A heavy preparatory aerial shelling by the Israeli Air Force would have undoubtedly pulverized pockets of resistance. After initial setbacks, the IDF threw in giant Caterpillar bulldozers that cleared routes for armored vehicles, pushed aside booby traps, opened fields of fire for advancing IDF forces, and demolished houses suspected of harboring terrorists. The Caterpillar D-9, weighing 50 tons and rising 20-feet high, proved particularly effective in safely detonating explosive devices hidden within structures.

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Although the charges of widespread Israeli massacres turned out to be bogus under United Nations and Amnesty International investigations, the use of the armor-protected bulldozers became a lightning rod of international criticism for the IDF tactics. Part of the explanation for this quick censure lies in the previous application of bulldozers to raze homes of terrorists as a form of collectivized punishment and community deterrence. Even though bulldozers worked well in close urban combat, U.S. forces in Iraq did not resort to using them in the attack on Falluja (November 2004) or other urban assaults.[61] In the course of the Falluja assault, U.S. forces instead relied on artillery and heavy airstrikes on militant positions thereby leveling whole neighborhoods. This bombing-induced tabula-rasa strategy later resulted in recriminations and reevaluation. In Tall Afar and Ramadi, U.S. forces implemented tactics to secure and gain the confidence of the inhabitants. In Jenin, as in Falluja, ground

troops went into action against well-dug-in insurgents who decided to stay and fight.

Fighting in nearby Nablus also witnessed the novel use of a familiar tactic. Again wanting to minimize casualties inside the teeming city, the IDF avoided undo exposure in streets, alleys, or courtyards during its infestation. It refrained from passing through external building doors or transcending internal stairwells. These usual access points were circumvented by the Israeli adoption of blasting through walls to move horizontally and exploding holes in floors or ceilings to pass vertically within structures. Sometimes troops swung a sledgehammer against a concrete barrier to open it in so-called "cold breaching."

Rather than conforming to old-style frontal assault from block-to-block takeovers, the elite Israeli Paratroops Brigade penetrated the Kasbah district where some 1,000 insurgents awaited them behind elaborate barricades, improvised explosives, and mines buried in streets and alleys. Better prepared than the IDF reservists who fought in Jenin, the paratroopers waged a cagey fight in the sprawling labyrinth. Undoubtedly, the inside-out penetration spared Israeli lives and forced the insurgents out into the streets and open areas, where they faced the IDF's greater firepower. Brigadier General Aviv Kokhavi wrote in his battle plan that the defenders faced Israeli troops "swarming simultaneously from every direction." The IDF practice of "walking through walls" rested on extensive research and training. One authority described the method as movement "within the city across hundred-meter-long 'over-ground-tunnels' carved through a dense and contiguous urban fabric."[62]

In breaching walls, the IDF did not invent the technique; it had been employed since at least World War II (and before then, sappers had demolished defenses since the invention of gunpowder). The IDF systematized and employed the technique in a large-scale manner. Exterior damage was less than in the Jenin- or Falluja-style destruction, and the structures were still habitable, although many had holes punched through outside walls.

These two urban conflicts and other sweeps in Operation Defensive Shield shared the same goal. This counterterrorist operation did not totally eliminate suicide bombs.

The IDF reasserted control over the West Bank, however, which limited the Palestinians from conducting an effective terror campaign. By squeezing the terrorist underground (with police work, informants,

and patrols), the campaign largely worked. For combating terrorism operations in the West Bank, the IDF deployed its Sayeret Duvdevan, which differed from other special operations units by being exclusively counterterrorist in orientation rather than having a hard-core Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol focus with some counterterrorism capabilities. Their low visibility among West Bank residents and language capabilities make them especially effective.

During the combat phase of the operation, the IDF aimed to reduce Palestinian terrorists through death or capture. Since the Palestinians had no genuine industrial or strategic targets, they relied on trained political leaders or terrorists to continue their fight. Thus, IDF attacks conformed to the Israeli basic plan of targeted killings whether from the air or the ground.

The U.S. offensive operations in urban areas, on the other hand, have sometimes resulted in flattened neighborhoods through devastating airstrikes. The November 2006 offensive against Falluja stands as a negative example. These blunt tactics have not proved any more effective in curbing Iraqi car or suicide bombings. More recently, some units have undertaken aggressive foot patrols to establish security and softer approaches toward Iraqi civilians in hopes of winning public trust among the populace. Under the command of Colonel H. R. McMaster, for instance, the 3rd Armored Calvary Regiment undertook a vigorous campaign of intelligence gathering and security steps targeted much more at insurgents than blunderbuss assaults that would have made a wasteland of Tall Afar in 2004. More recently other commanders have adopted these types of methods in Baghdad and Ramadi.[63]

Combating terrorism in the urbanized West Bank also beheld the introduction of Israeli undercover units, which disguise themselves as Palestinian civilians. These units foil terrorist plots, unearth intelligence, and seize Hamas or the Palestinian Islamic Jihad figures or other terrorists on Israel's most-wanted list in raids. After the 2002 crackdown on suicide bombers, Israeli military units have conducted frequent nightly raids as well as occasional daytime arrests.[64] In addition, the IDF set up roadblocks that have intercepted many suicide bombers bound for Israeli cities. Checkpoints, both routine and impromptu, have proven effective as well as road patrols in limiting terrorism. Thus a near-saturation of territory seems effective,

although difficult to execute in large cities and to sustain over long periods.

One former special operations officer held that the IDF enjoyed greater political scope in combating attacks in the second *intifada* than during the Lebanon intervention that witnessed setbacks in controlling assaults.[65] With the threat of failing to halt suicide bombings, cooperation improved between brigades that operated regionally in Israel and Special Forces. While the brigades had a great deal of detailed knowledge, the SOF still wanted maximum flexibility in deciding the specifics of a mission. The exigencies of the suicide threat reduced the inter-unit tension and enhanced cooperation.[66]

The sheer volume of operations—up to 700 annually and mounted by squad-sized units—required downward delegation of planning, execution, and command and control to lower levels. The operation tempo dictated "short-cycles" between decision-makers and the actual operators of countermeasures against terrorism.[67] Because of the possibility of untoward circumstances impacting plans, Special Forces must anticipate and practice contingency plans. One former officer depicted this as the "jazz band" model whereby musicians fully know the main tune before they improvise on it from execution to execution.[68] The antiterrorist effort is concentrated on keeping the terrorists on the run, scared, and moving; and as General Yossi Heymann commented, to "keep the grass low," which in American parlance translates to "keeping their heads down."[69]

Like their American counterparts, Israeli SOF are well-grounded in the political dimensions of assaults. Unnecessary violence or the death of the wrong suspect ricochets back on them and on the overall mission. For IDF SOF operating among Israeli citizens, the risks also entail serious political repercussions if Israeli civilians are inadvertently killed or wounded in an antiterrorist incident. As a consequence, their rules of engagement are extremely restricted.

Future Glimpses

As the United States contemplates reductions of its ground forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, American strategists must envision the next phase in the Global War on Terror. In anticipating what methods and operations might become useful, SOF would do well to scrutinize the operations and tactics employed by their counterparts in the IDF, as

terrorist tactics adapt and evolve. It seems improbable the United States will replicate the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq in the near term.

Operation Iraqi Freedom and America's subsequent nation-building endeavors proved enormously expensive in blood and treasure. As of now, over 3,000 U.S. troops have died in the Iraq conflict, and 25,000 wounded, many of them severely. In addition over $450 billion has been expended in direct military and rebuilding efforts. Over 150,000 Iraqi fatalities resulted from U.S.-led intervention and the Iraqi insurgency. Although these Iraqi casualty figures pale in comparison with Saddam Hussein's atrocities and mass killings especially among the Kurdish and Shiite populations, they suggest the American government will unlikely engage in another large-scale occupation along the lines of the Iraq War.

The costs of the Iraq War and the international uproar, moreover, have limited American options against other threats from Iran to North Korea and elsewhere. These factors make it improbable that the United States will soon again embark on another Iraq conflict. The takeover of Somalia by Taliban-like militants in mid-2006 despite very slender U.S.-financed proxy opposition demonstrates the fact that Washington is reluctant to engage in another conflict with a full plate in Iraq and Afghanistan.[70]

Despite setbacks, the Global War on Terror shows no sign of winding down. Indeed, the rash of terrorist incidents since 9/11 in Bali, Turkey, Morocco, Israel, Madrid, London, and Mumbai indicate a protracted struggle. The need for SOF is assured. In the new American way of war, specific units of the SOF along with regular Army and Marine forces will continue to concentrate on preventative civic-action programs to alleviate the grievances that Al Qaeda and its clones tap into for recruits and assistance as in the Horn of Africa and the Philippines. In other cases, however, state-building enterprises and social-service networks may not be feasible because terrorists may be tucked deep in inhospitable terrain. Thus, American counterinsurgency strategies of nation-building, civic reconstruction, and democracy promotion cannot be utilized. These "denied areas" or "ungovernable spaces" lend themselves to the Israeli way of war.

This Israeli approach to combating terrorism over a long haul affords an example of a counterterrorism strategy. Israel's 18-year intervention and occupation of southern Lebanon sobered the

Jewish state on the intractableness of Arab politics and resistance. As consequence of occupying Arab lands, it has withdrawn from its 18-year toehold in Lebanon and from the Gaza Strip. It also resumed and expanded its utilization of raids, whether by air power or commando teams, to deter and retaliate against terrorism from Hezbollah in Lebanon or the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank, as demonstrated by its extended foray into Lebanon against Hezbollah (summer 2006).

Given Israel's limited resources and strategic defensive crouch, the Jewish state has over the years relied on raids—sometimes fairly long-distance strikes—as preemption, deterrence, or punishment for terrorism perpetrated on its soil or against its citizens abroad. The United States might find that it also must dispatch commando raids, capture terrorists for intelligence, assassinate diabolical masterminds, and target insurgent strongholds with airpower, missiles, or with SOF from bases around the globe rather than trying pacification programs and nation-building endeavors in inhospitable lands.

After the 9/11 attacks, the United States started off on a counterterrorism campaign but ended up in counterinsurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq. The enormous expense in blood, treasure, and political capital around the world make future invasions, occupations and nation-building schemes prohibitive. The failure of backing proxy forces with money and nonlethal equipment, as in the case of anti-Islamic extremist forces in Somalia, makes these types of ventures virtual nonstarters. Thus the United States might have to resort to counterterrorist strikes as Israel has done.

The purpose of commando-type raids is not merely punitive. Air attacks can often accomplish the same thing, although the "surgical strike" often results in civilian casualties. Deep-penetration assaults demonstrate not only military muscle but also superior military intelligence and political confidence that sends a powerful message to state leaders and terrorist networks—that is, they are vulnerable to up-close and personal attacks that, in short, they can run from but cannot hide.

One larger, societal lesson to be gleaned from Israel's long war against terrorism from Jordan, Gaza, Lebanon, or the West Bank boils down to endurance and fortitude in the face of unrelenting attacks. In addition, the Israeli *and* American societies are better at sustaining low-profile counterattacks that are launched in the name

of prevention, deterrence, and retribution than full-blown offensive wars such as Israel's 1982 Lebanon intervention or America's Iraq and Afghanistan invasions. Democracies are not good at sustained, high-cost wars.

While pursuing diplomacy and nonlethal measures are steps to counter terrorist threats, more aggressive measures may be more effective. The United States might find that it must also, like the Israelis, dispatch commando raids across international boundaries, stage operations solely to gain intelligence, assassinate diabolical masterminds within allied nations, and target insurgent strongholds in noncombatant countries with bombs, missiles, or SOF from bases around the world rather than undertake enormous pacification programs and expensive nation-building endeavors in inhospitable lands. By eliminating terrorists and destroying militant networks, you deny bombers and beheaders victories—the only sure way to defeat terrorism. Limited military offensives sustained in a manner that enables the United States to husband its resources for a protracted conflict against violent extremism may provide the next long-term SOF mission.

Endnotes

1. An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the Sixth Annual International Conference on Global Terrorism, Institute for Counter-terrorism, Herzliya, Israel, 12 September 2006. The author would like to thank a number of people who contributed their time or insight, while he alone is responsible for mistakes or misinterpretations. A special note of thanks goes to Golan Benavi in Israel; CAPT Roger Herbert, U.S. Navy; and COL William Hix, U.S. Army. Others in alphabetical order are as follows: Tristan Abbey; Col David F. Aumuller, U.S. Marine Corps; Shmuel Bar; David Fishbein; LTC Wade Foote, U.S. Army; LTC Christopher Gibson, U.S. Army; Charles Kirschner; COL H. R. MacMaster, U.S. Army; Ken Poole; Linda Robinson; and Bob Zeidman.
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7. Interview with Hegai Peleg, Israel, 23 March 2006.
8. Interview with Brigadier General Yossi Heymann, Chief of Infantry and Paratroops, Israel, 21 March 2006.
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17. Samuel M. Katz, *Soldier Spies: Israeli Military Intelligence* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1992), page 221.
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20. Katz, *Soldier Spies*, page 228.
21. CAPT Roger Herbert, commanding officer, Naval Special Warfare Unit THREE, San Diego, e-mail 14 June 2006. CAPT Herbert clarified this and other matters in a subsequent e-mail, 22 September 2006.
22. Interview with Heymann, 21 March 2006.
23. Interview with Dore Gold, former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, Israel, 19 March 2006. In addition to active and retired military officials, Gold underlined the importance of blending HUMINT and combat action. He noted that translators had to be able to understand conversations on even static-ridden phone connections.
24. Interview with Peleg, Israel, 23 March 2006.
25. Interview with Golan Benavi, SOF operator, Israel, 23 March 2006 and subsequent e-mail.
26. See Steven R. David, "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing," in *Democracies and Small Wars*, ed. Efraim Inbar (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pages 138-58. Gives brief but relatively comprehensive review of Israeli targeted killings.
27. See Boaz Ganor, *The Counterterrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2005), pages 122-126. Gives clear explanation of the operation and its rationale.
28. Katz, *Soldier Spies*, page 128.
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30. David, "Israel's Policy of Targeted Killings," page 141.
31. See Ganor, *The Counteterrorism Puzzle*, pages 128-40. Gives penetrating analysis of the dilemmas posed by targeting killings.
32. Samantha M. Shapiro, "Announced Assassinations," *New York Times Magazine*, 9 December 2001, page 54.

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46. Katz, *Soldier Spies*, pages 271 and 312.
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49. Schiff, *A History of the Israeli Army*, pages 256-257.
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52. Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), page 40.
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67. Interview with Golan Benavi, Israel, 23 March 2006.
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