

MEMMO

March 13, 2009

Israel Continues Humanitarian Efforts Despite Attacks

Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza continue to carry out rocket attacks against Israel and prepare for future violence. Despite Hamas' actions, Israel remains committed to reducing hostilities and facilitating the transfer of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The United States and the international community should work with Israel to prevent Hamas from smuggling arms into Gaza and profiting from international efforts to assist Gazans.

Despite Israel's commitment to end hostilities, Hamas and other Palestinian groups continue to carry out attacks and smuggle weapons.

- Since Israel ended its defensive operations in Gaza, terrorists have fired more than 140 rockets and mortars into Israel.
- One longer-range Grad rocket recently slammed into a synagogue while another rocket hit a school in Ashkelon.
- Hamas has openly displayed its efforts to rebuild smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border targeted by Israel during its recent operations.
- Despite U.N. Security Council and other international efforts to discourage smuggling, on Feb. 24, top Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar told Reuters, "It's our right to bring in everything – money and arms. We will not give anyone any commitment on this subject."



An Israeli police officer holds a rocket fired by Palestinians into the city of Ashkelon.

- Since taking control of Gaza in June 2007, Hamas has smuggled more than 100 tons of weapons into the territory, according to a recent study by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Israel remains committed to ensuring the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza while taking steps to defend its citizens.

- The government of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces are actively working to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.
- Israel has worked closely with the U.N. and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations to speed the delivery of humanitarian goods into Gaza, including daily unilateral cease-fires during the fighting to allow aid to move.
- Since Israel's operations ended on Jan. 18, Israel has dramatically increased the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza to an average of more than 150 trucks a day. This represents a five-fold increase from December and a six-fold increase from November.

- Since Jan. 18, about 140,000 tons of food and medicine have entered Gaza, while more than 13 million liters of fuel have been transferred into Gaza to support the Gaza power plant, hospital generators and humanitarian aid vehicles.
- While Israel continues to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza, it needs to take precautions in the face of the continuing violence.
- Israel has been forced to close the Gaza border crossings to most goods except humanitarian aid because Hamas has repeatedly attacked the very crossings used to transfer aid to Gaza. Last year, several Israelis were killed and more than a dozen wounded in Palestinian attacks on the crossings.

It is vital for the United States and international community to work with Israel to ensure that Hamas does not rearm.

- In the aftermath of the conflict, the United States and several European powers agreed to step up efforts to interdict and stop Iranian gun-running destined for terrorists in Gaza.
- The United States and Israel signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) pledging joint efforts to stem the flow of weapons to Hamas and terrorists in Gaza. The agreement recognizes that Hamas' acquisition and use of arms against Israel were "the direct causes of recent hostilities."
- The agreement states that a durable and sustainable cessation of hostilities depends on denying weapons to terrorist groups and countering Iran's destructive activities.
- The agreement also strongly underscores American support for the security of the Jewish state and the importance of the U.S.-Israel relationship to America's national security.
- After the signing of the MOU, a U.S. Navy vessel intercepted an Iranian ship loaded with weapons for Hamas. The weapons were ultimately unloaded in Cyprus.
- If the Hamas attacks continue, Israel reserves the right to take further action in Gaza to protect its citizens, the prime obligation of any government.

Any reconstruction efforts in Gaza should empower those seeking peace, not Hamas and its allies who call for Israel's destruction.

- Israel has stated that it will work with the Palestinian Authority (PA), Arab states and the international community to ensure that rebuilding in Gaza helps empower those seeking peace with Israel.
- Reconstruction aid should be funneled through the PA, the legitimate government of the Palestinian people. No aid should be directed through Hamas until it meets the conditions of the international community: reject violence, recognize Israel and abide by previous agreements.
- A mechanism must be established to ensure rebuilding materials entering Gaza are used for their intended purposes. Hamas has frequently used pipes, cement and metals to build rockets and strengthen its terror infrastructure and not as intended for housing, hospitals or schools.
- As part of a \$900 million pledge to the PA, the United States has slated \$300 million for humanitarian efforts in Gaza. The U.S. said that procedures will be established to ensure that the money does not "end up in the wrong hands."