

MEMO

Nov. 15, 2012

Israel Forced to Respond to Hamas' Reign of Terror

Hamas and its terrorist allies in Gaza have hit Israel with nearly 400 rockets since Nov. 10, 1,000 during the past year, and some 13,000 in the past 11 years. These rockets have one goal: to terrorize, kill or maim innocent civilians. Hamas' long reign of terror has forced Israeli action to protect its citizens and cripple Hamas' terrorist infrastructure.

Hamas and other terrorists in Gaza have escalated their rocket barrage against Israel during the past week.

- During the past five days, the U.S.-designated terrorist group Hamas and other terrorists in Gaza have hit Israel with nearly 400 rockets. Some 4.5 million Israelis are within Hamas' rocket range and have been forced into bomb shelters, including in Tel Aviv, the heart of Israel's largest metropolitan area.
- Three Israelis in Kiryat Malachi, northwest of the major city Ashkelon, were killed Nov. 15 when a rocket hit their apartment. Since 2006, nearly 50 Israelis have been killed and nearly 2,000 injured in rocket attacks.
- While the IDF has reportedly neutralized many of Hamas' Iranian-supplied long-range missile sites, rockets fired from Gaza are hitting near major population centers such as Rishon LeZion, Beersheba and now Tel Aviv.
- During the past year Hamas and other terrorist groups have hit Israel with more than 1,000 rockets; they have launched nearly 13,000 since 2001.
- Israel's Iron Dome anti-rocket system, which the United States has helped fund, has shot down more than 100 incoming rockets headed toward populated areas.
- Without defensive measures like Iron Dome, Israel's indigenous early warning system and extensive bunker facilities, Israeli civilian casualties would likely be significantly higher.



Rescue personnel remove one of three Israelis killed Nov. 15 by Hamas rocket fire in southern Israel.

Hamas has vastly expanded its weapons capabilities since Israel's defensive Operation Cast Lead at the end of 2008.

- Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups have used the past four years since the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Operation Cast Lead to rebuild and rearm.
- Hamas continues to operate a vast network of tunnels under Gaza, which it uses to smuggle advanced weapons from Iran, Libya and Syria for attacks against Israeli civilians. It also has repeatedly sought to smuggle weapons through the sea.
- Hamas has increased the range and lethality of its rockets through the importation of advanced Iranian Fajr and Grad rockets and 120mm mortars.

- Iran has also assisted Hamas in building more stable rockets that can be stored for long periods of time. These rockets can carry larger, more destructive warheads and strike more accurately than before. Gaza's own rocket factories have also increased in quality and capability.
- Terrorist groups have also gained access to large quantities of sophisticated anti-tank and surface-to-air shoulder-launched missiles, heightening the danger to Israeli civilian vehicles and aircraft.
- Hamas continues to threaten further attacks on Israel. Agence France Presse reported that Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal, in a belligerent speech, asserted that Hamas would continue attacking Israel. "I call on my brothers who have their fingers on the trigger to run the battle wisely and with a brave heart," Meshaal said. "The war against the enemy will go on even after [Hamas leader Ahmad] Jabari departed us. Women and men are queuing for jihad and martyrdom."

Israel's response to the ongoing terrorism from Gaza is proportionate and in compliance with international law.

- Israel's military operation is an act of self-defense, a right enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Its aim is to put an end to the more than 8,000 rocket attacks on Israeli citizens since Israel fully withdrew from Gaza in 2005.
- Israel's actions to stop Hamas rocket attacks are proportional to the risk Israeli civilians—4.5 million of whom are within rocket range—have faced, including the real prospect of mass casualties. Israel need not wait for a rocket to slam into a school full of children before it acts.
- Under international law, any state must attempt to minimize the number of casualties of its opponent as it seeks to achieve its military objective. Accordingly, Israel uses pinpoint targeting to achieve its goals, as it did when it eliminated top Hamas military leader Ahmad Jabari and destroyed key rocket launching sites.
- Israel has dropped thousands of leaflets warning Gaza residents to avoid areas being used by Hamas and has made thousands of phone calls to targeted areas to warn citizens they are in danger.
- While Israel makes every effort to minimize civilian casualties, international law precludes Hamas's ongoing regular use of civilians to protect legitimate military targets. Article 28 of the Fourth Geneva Convention clearly states, "The presence of a protected person may not be used to render certain points or areas immune from military operations."
- The responsibility for civilian casualties when those civilians are used as human shields lies with the party that deliberately places them at risk, namely, Hamas.

It is vitally important for the United States to continue its strong support Israel's right to defend its citizens.

- It is critical for the United States to reassert its support for its ally Israel, including its right to live in peace and to defend itself. No other country in the world faces daily rocket attacks against its civilians, nor would any other country tolerate such violence.
- In reiterating President Obama's support for Israel's right to self-defense that the president made in a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, White House spokesman Jay Carney said, "There is no justification for the violence that Hamas and other terrorist organizations are employing against the people of Israel. We call on those responsible to stop these cowardly acts immediately in order to allow the situation to deescalate."
- The United States should continue efforts to ensure that Israel has the necessary resources to meet the growing rocket and missile threat in the region.