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**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center  
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& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

# **The role of intelligence in the battle for hearts and minds**

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## **The battle for hearts and minds in the context of the struggle against terrorism**

1. Over the course of the last decade, the confrontation with the threat of terrorism has become an important factor influencing the Israeli agenda and, in fact, the agenda of the entire international community. That confrontation, which to a great extent has taken the place of conventional warfare between sovereign states and regular armies, exhibits **unique characteristics** that stem from the nature and conduct of the terrorist organizations. Lacking any moral or legal restraints, **terrorist organizations** make deliberate use of violence in various forms to force governments to change their policies in one field or another. Such kinds of violence include **murderous terrorist attacks aimed against civilians** and designed to achieve some political goals (including those of national or religious nature).

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**2. The State of Israel has been dealing with the threat of terrorism since the mid-1960s**, and since the 1980s it has been one of the main items on its agenda. The threat comes mostly from the **Palestinian terrorist organizations** (foremost among which is currently **Hamas**) and a Lebanese terrorist organization (**Hezbollah**). Both organizations possess an extensive military infrastructure and advanced capabilities in the sphere of media. They are supported by **Iran and Syria**, two state sponsors of terrorism, which prefer to wage a sustained battle against Israel by proxies rather than by confronting it directly, in conventional warfare. While Israel struggles against terrorism, the international community, led by the **US**, is engaged in a **campaign against global jihad**, which gained momentum following the September 11 terrorist attacks (2001). The main theaters of said campaign are currently Afghanistan and Iraq.

**3. The struggle between the countries threatened by terrorism and the terrorist organizations takes place on three fronts at the same time: the actual military confrontation** between terrorist operatives and security forces in any given country; **the political front**, in which both sides endeavor to gain the support of the international community; **and the media front**, in which both sides use a variety of means and methods to communicate their stances and positions to relevant target audiences in order to influence them and win over their support. These three fronts are interdependent and complementary. **Victory or defeat on one front may have a significant, even decisive influence on the others**, and therefore neither front can be ignored.

## **What is the battle for hearts and minds?**

4. Researchers and experts in the academia, the intelligence, and the army – in Israel and abroad – **have no single, agreed-upon definition** of the term “the battle for hearts and minds”. In a paper written for the National Security College (2003), Colonel (Ret.) Miri Eisin, currently the Prime

Minister's foreign press advisor, provided various commonly-used definitions of the term and suggested one of her own: **“The battle for hearts and minds is an effort undertaken by a state or by a non-state entity to influence different target audiences** in order to achieve victory in a national struggle. The tools to achieve such influence are **varied** and are based on knowledge of the culture, politics, media, education, and any other means that would influence the chosen target audience.”<sup>2</sup> The military has always considered the battle for hearts and minds to be a part of waging war; however, **there have been significant changes** in the nature, characteristics, and significance of the battle for hearts and minds. This has been the result of both the unique characteristics of terrorist organizations and their modus operandi as well as **the media revolution and the information revolution which accompany the war against terrorism and influence it to a significant extent.**

5. The terrorist organizations that fight Israel, particularly Hezbollah and Hamas, dedicate considerable resources to the battle for hearts and minds, being aware of its great importance. **The “weapons” in the battle for hearts and minds are virtual “bullets” and “explosive charges”:** television footage, press reports, virtual information on the Internet, sermons given by preachers in mosques, radio broadcasts, **and on a deeper level – education and indoctrination. The effect of such “weapons” and their short-term and long-term influence in terms of morale on the various target audiences is no less than real weapons.** For better and for worse, they affect both sides' motivation, willpower, and determination to continue the sustained battle between them, despite all the difficulties and the involved damage to morale. Hezbollah, the role model of the Palestinian terrorist organizations, dedicates considerable financial resources (coming from **Iran**) to that effect. Aware of the significance of the battle for hearts and minds, Hamas allocates resources from its own budget and from the budget of

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<sup>2</sup> Colonel Miri Eisin, “The Battle for Hearts and Minds in Post-Modern Warfare” (Hebrew), National Security College, May 2003, p. 48. According to Miri Eisin, the terms “psychological warfare” and “battle for hearts and minds” largely overlap. However, the Israeli military definition considers psychological warfare to be limited to just one target audience, and that is enemy soldiers (Miri Eisin, p. 29). In American military view, “psychological warfare” is only an operative military tool designed to achieve military accomplishments in strictly non-military means (Miri Eisin, p. 33).

the Palestinian Authority (following the movement's rise to power) even at a time of financial difficulties.

6. As already mentioned, the battle for hearts and minds between Israel and the terrorist organizations is waged against the background of the **international media revolution**, reflected mostly in the appearance of satellite television stations and the enormous development of the Internet. **The terrorist organizations (mainly those of Islamic nature) cleverly took advantage of the media revolution. The two leading Middle Eastern terrorist organizations in that field are Hezbollah and the Hamas movement.** Both established veritable “**media empires**”, including satellite television stations, newspapers, radio stations, and websites in various languages. The terrorist organizations' message, as it comes across on their media, is **consistent, clear, and focused**, unlike Israel and other Western countries, whose democratic nature gives rise to a multitude of views and opinions.

## **The role of intelligence in the battle for hearts and minds**

7. Researchers studying terrorism unanimously agree that intelligence is supremely important in the struggle against terrorism. Intelligence provides vital strategic and tactical information to decision-makers and to counter-terrorism forces. Such information is vital for formulating counter-terrorism policy and waging the war both from the defensive aspect (counter-intelligence, alerts on planned terrorist attacks) and from the offensive aspect (intelligence for military counter-terrorism operations).<sup>3</sup>

**8. In the past, the assistance of the intelligence in the battle for hearts and minds was not an integral component of the “classical” tasks of intelligence in the war against terrorism;** however, as the impact of the battle for hearts and minds as part of the struggle against terrorism increases, the importance of intelligence increases as well.

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed reference to the role of intelligence in the war against terrorism, see: Boaz Ganor, *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers*, New Brunswick: N.J.: Transaction, 2005.

**Intelligence services in Israel and in Western countries must adapt to the new challenges posed by the unique characteristics of the struggle against terrorism and the media revolution** and significantly improve the quality of assistance they provide to the battle for hearts and minds. They should do it even at the cost of **compromising the monopoly on intelligence information** they formerly had and raising some fundamental concerns which we will attempt to examine below.

**9. Why, then, must the intelligence assume this task, so different from its “classic” missions?** First and foremost, in my opinion, it is due to the capabilities held by intelligence and its **relative advantages** over other bodies concerned with the struggle against terrorism. **The key ability is the exclusive intelligence information (which terrorist organizations strive to conceal) on terrorist organizations, their conduct and the countries supporting them.** Such information, mostly classified, serves first and foremost for the operative needs of the struggle against terrorism; however, it can definitely be used, in a controlled and informed fashion, also for political needs and for the battle for hearts and minds. Israeli senior intelligence officials have become increasingly aware of this in recent years, as the Palestinian campaign of terrorism against Israel (“the second intifada”) escalated. The Israeli Military Intelligence and the Israel Security Agency, which play a key part in the struggle against terrorism, have started considering this sphere an integral part of their tasks, and they even established target-specific mechanisms for that purpose (see below).

**10. How can the intelligence be of help in the battle for hearts and minds?** I would like to indicate three main spheres:

a. **Monitoring the efforts undertaken by terrorist organizations with regard to the battle for hearts and minds and addressing that sphere in collection, research, and operative tools,** as a completely legitimate subject within the context of PIR (Priority Intelligence Requirements) and as part of the tasks of the intelligence. Thus, for example, the **“media empire”** established by terrorist organizations (television, internet, press) **calls for research and**

**monitoring** both for the needs of the battle for hearts and minds and also because the organizations use it for logistic and operative needs (funding, communications between operatives, transferring technical know-how). Studying the contents of the publications on the various media, coupled with a deep understanding of the different messages and of the culture and ideology behind them, will help pinpoint the weak links in the terrorist organizations' media efforts and in providing an adequate reply within the context of the battle for hearts and minds.

**b. Controlled, orderly declassification of intelligence information in order to make it accessible to all those who are involved in the battle for hearts and minds in Israel and elsewhere.** I refer first and foremost to **data** on terrorist activity, the military infrastructure of terrorism, terrorist funds, and the incitement and propaganda against Israel, as well as evidence for the assistance terrorist organizations obtain from state sponsors of terrorism. **Visual materials are particularly important (see Appendix).** Intelligence services are not the only organizations possessing the necessary raw materials for advocating for Israel; however, they possess capabilities without which the battle for hearts and minds cannot be waged effectively (such as the systematic and comprehensive monitoring of open sources; aerial photographs and UAV photographs, interrogations of terrorist detainees, seized documents).

**c. A designated collection effort for promoting political goals and for the needs of the battle for hearts and minds.** These needs frequently require intelligence information, including visual information that is not available owing to limitations imposed by the terrorist organizations. Understanding the significance of the battle for hearts and minds, the intelligence must **collect information that would specifically be designed also for that purpose**, similarly to the way it collects information to promote operative objectives as part of the war against terrorism. Such an effort, for example, ought to be made to prove that Hezbollah in Lebanon violates Security Council Resolution 1701. As

another example, the information about Hamas's military buildup in the Gaza Strip should be made available to use in order to demonstrate the terrorist threats posed to Israel and help lay the groundwork in the international community and public opinion for an Israeli response to the threat of terrorism in the Gaza Strip.

11. Intelligence, by nature, can help offensive activities initiated by the security forces against the media infrastructure of terrorist organizations. The importance of a television channel used by a terrorist organization is no less than that of a military base, a training base or a logistic facility. Thus, for example, Hezbollah's **Al-Manar television channel** has been and should be a legitimate target for attack, being an inseparable part of the organization's terrorism-supportive system, as was reflected during the second Lebanon war. The station's reporters, stationed in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories or even in Israel, are legitimate targets for detention or deportation.



**An aerial photograph of the Al-Manar television station in Harat Hreik, in Beirut's southern Shi'ite suburb, which was attacked by the IDF in the second Lebanon war. The Al-Manar station is a key component in Hezbollah's "media empire" and an inseparable part of the system that supports terrorism.**

**12. The consumers of intelligence information collected for the battle for hearts and minds are not necessarily the "classic" consumers of the intelligence services.** Therefore, the intelligence must

prepare itself for the creation of appropriate communication channels through which information can flow regularly, directly or indirectly, to the various elements involved in the battle for hearts and minds. In the case of Israel, these elements include the Foreign Ministry and its embassies abroad (the ambassadors abroad are the “soldiers” on the battlefield of the media); the IDF Spokesman; the Israeli and foreign media; research and information institutions; Jewish and non-Jewish NGOs abroad which assist the advocacy for Israel. The intelligence services must form a close reciprocal relationship with individuals and bodies engaged in the battle for hearts and minds, and help them provide the necessary response. Not all of those bodies belong to the governmental political and defense establishment and the intelligence services must be willing to cooperate with non-governmental bodies in the battle for hearts and minds (in recent years, the Israeli Military Intelligence and the Israel Security Agency have taken significant steps in that direction).

## **Difficulties, problems, and ways of dealing with them**

13. Naturally, the involvement of the intelligence in the battle for hearts and minds raises several difficulties and problems that have occupied senior intelligence officials for the past several years. Experience has proved such concerns to be exaggerated and shown that they can be adequately solved. They can be summarized as follows:<sup>4</sup>

**a. Maintaining the safety of sources and the safety of information:** the “classic” effort of intelligence services, one of our most fundamental tenets, **is to conceal intelligence information from enemies** in order to maintain the safety of intelligence sources, being the primary asset of all intelligence services. The intelligence services also frown upon exposing their personnel and forming relationship with individuals and bodies involved in the media. The realization that intelligence services must release the information they

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<sup>4</sup> These problems are addressed in an article by Major Ofer: “The Intelligence mission of incriminating [terrorist organizations] – a new stage in the mission of the intelligence in a changing international environment” (Hebrew), Mabat Malam, Vol. 42, September 2005.



have and make it available for public use as part of the battle for hearts and minds **calls for a conceptual change** coupled with institutionalized process to deal with the subject. **The conceptual change, in my opinion, has already occurred, and an institutionalized process of declassification is now underway.** The experience of the past several years has shown that it can be done without damage.

**b. Preventing the politicization of intelligence:** the work relations between the intelligence and senior political decision-makers are naturally limited to the joint interpretation of reality, but not to shaping it into directions that can potentially result in political disagreements. In the past, the involvement of the Israeli intelligence community in the controversial Israeli-Palestinian conflict came back to haunt it; dragged into political controversies, the intelligence services must make sure that the assistance they extend in the battle for hearts and minds is designed to promote broadly-supported political goals, avoid being a means to promote a political agenda and politicians' interests, and make sure that the assistance it extends focuses on providing reliable information within the context of the battle for hearts and minds and not be dragged into manipulative use of intelligence information.

**c. Avoiding compromising the objectivity of intelligence officers:** dealing with the battle for hearts and minds may distract intelligence officers from their main occupation and **result in a conceptual bias.** They might "fall in love" with the ideas and with the ability to shape reality, thus compromising their professional considerations and their commitment to provide accurate, reliable information to the decision-makers and to those who implement those decisions. This potential risk can be avoided by creating **separate, target-specific apparatuses and channels** for the battle for hearts and minds, which would draw upon the collection and the research but would not be part of them. At the same time, research personnel in the various intelligence services should be encouraged to **identify**

**opportunities (or risks)** in the battle for hearts and minds as part of their daily work, and initiate the transfer of relevant information to those designated apparatuses and channels involved in it.

## **The establishment of media sections in the Israeli Military Intelligence and in the Israel Security Agency**

14. In recent years, during the current terrorism campaign of the Palestinian organizations (“the second intifada”), **important steps have been taken by the Israeli Military Intelligence and the Israel Security Agency to expand their assistance to the battle for hearts and minds.** The turning point, in my opinion, was Operation Defensive Shield, carried out at the height of Palestinian terrorism, which demonstrated both to the Israeli Military Intelligence and to the Israel Security Agency the need for an adequate reply also as far as the battle for hearts and minds was concerned.

15. During Operation Defensive Shield, the intelligence was granted **new opportunities** in the battle for hearts and minds. This came about as a result of hundreds of thousands of documents seized in Judea and Samaria as well as the arrests of many terrorists of various ranks belonging to the Palestinian terrorist organizations. This made it necessary for the intelligence to orient itself accordingly, in close cooperation with the political echelon and the Foreign Ministry. In retrospect, it can be stated that the Israeli Military Intelligence and the Israel Security Agency rose to the challenge by facilitating the massive use of seized documents and terrorist operatives’ interrogation reports. Without a doubt, this helped the Israeli policy, the advocacy for Israel, and the legal battle against the terrorist organizations and their supporters.

16. In the years that passed since Operation Defensive Shield, **the Israeli Military Intelligence and the Israel Security Agency institutionalized** their involvement in the battle for hearts and minds and established target-specific bodies for that purpose. Within that context, a media section was **established in the Israeli Military Intelligence** after

the second Lebanon war. It is headed by Major Assaf Doron, who holds a B.A. in Media Studies. The section is meant to provide a timely, efficient reply to questions from reporters about the Israeli Military Intelligence and help the battle for hearts and minds (by background conversations, briefings, lectures, and releasing intelligence information that can support the political effort and the media campaign). The Israeli Military Intelligence also has a unit involved in various activities designed to psychologically influence the enemy, and some of those activities were revealed in the second Lebanon war.

17. In August 2002, a **media section** was established in the Israel Security Agency, and has become exclusively responsible for managing and coordinating the relations between the Israel Security Agency and the media in Israel and abroad. As part of its activity, the section is responsible for providing the media with information on counter-terrorism affairs and for disclosing incidents in which it was involved, preparing advocacy documents in a variety of subjects (periodical summaries of information on terrorism, suicide bombers, women and children in terrorism, and so forth). This section also initiates background briefings for Israeli and foreign reporters, initiates in-depth research articles and interviews with interrogated terrorist detainees, and provides information in response for applications by reporters and experts from the academia.

18. Nevertheless, it appears that the intelligence services are still far from fully utilizing their potential, of which **intelligence information**, a vital “weapon” in the battle for hearts and minds, is a key component. The intelligence services must **increase** the quantity and improve the **quality** of the intelligence information they release, **and improve the communication and dialogue with the bodies and institutions taking part in the battle for hearts and minds**. The intelligence services must also cooperate between themselves in that field, based on a common view of the specific needs and the relative advantages of every service.

## **The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center**

19. Operation Defensive Shield, in which hundreds of thousands of documents were seized, triggered the establishment and rapid development of the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center in Glilot. The center specializes in terrorism and its team of researchers studies diverse aspects of terrorism, including terrorist organizations (specifically Palestinian terrorist organizations and Hezbollah), their modus operandi, their arms, their ideology, incitement against Israel and the Jewish people, financial aid to terrorism, terrorist media, and countries and bodies supporting terrorism (mostly Syria and Iran). The center's researchers collect and analyze information from many varied sources and distribute the processed products as "information bulletins" that include data, state of affairs, implications and assessment, **going to great lengths to ensure accuracy and reliability.**

20. The information bulletins are distributed to diverse target audiences in Israel and abroad in a variety of means, the most important of which being **the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center website.** Using the website (and the e-mail service), the Information Center distributes **information bulletins in six languages** (Hebrew, English, Arabic, French, Russian, and recently also German). They are translated by the Information Center's team of translators. Many people visit the website (some 400,000 per month, as at March 2007) from the US, Europe, Israel, and the Arab/Muslim world, and that number is on a constant rise. The Information Center receives many feedbacks from the various target audiences using its information products, and it keeps in constant touch with them.



**The English homepage of the website: the websites are the spearhead of distributing information about terrorism**

21. Distributing information on terrorism is also carried out in other ways. The center includes a library and a computerized information center that specialize in intelligence and terrorism, as well as an archive of seized Palestinian materials. These extend information services to the defense establishment and to civilian customers (such as experts and students from the academia) in need of infrastructure information (books, articles, seized documents). The center also features a display of seized Palestinian materials that is visited by hundreds of people a month. Among those visitors are military personnel, terrorism experts, diplomats, foreign delegations, and school students.

# Appendix

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## Examples of visual intelligence materials from various sources used for the battle for hearts and minds

### Aerial photographs



The rocket

**Launching rockets from populated areas: an aerial photograph of a rocket (in circle) from a launcher positioned between two buildings in a south Lebanese village**



The launcher

**An aerial photograph showing a long-range rocket launcher in a south Lebanese village**

**Note:** the aerial photographs and the recorded interview with a Hezbollah operative (see below) are taken from a paper titled "The use of Lebanese civilians as human shields" (November 2006), written by the researchers of the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center. The paper was based on varied information, including information received from the Israeli Military Intelligence.

## Testimonies of detained terrorists



**Muhammad Abd al-Hamid Surur, Hezbollah anti-tank operative, detained during the second Lebanon war. A recorded interview with him assisted in preparing the paper on Hezbollah's use of civilians as human shields.**

## Television movies



**A shot from the anti-Semitic series "The Diaspora" (Al-Shatat), produced in Syria and broadcasted on Hezbollah's Al-Manar television channel. The series made use of the theme of ritual murder of Christian children. The use of shots from the series for advocating for Israel was not in vain: France (followed by other European countries) and the US banned Al-Manar's broadcasts in their territory due to the anti-Semitic incitement they contain.**



**The leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad speaks on Hezbollah's Al-Manar television channel: "Inside the West Bank, for example, there is the separation fence, and that is an obstacle to the resistance [i.e., terrorist organizations]..." (November 11, 2006). Statements made by leaders of terrorist organizations about the difficulties posed by the security fence to the perpetration of terrorist attacks can be used by Israel to provide advocacy-related political and legal replies to the criticism it suffers due to the construction of the security fence.**



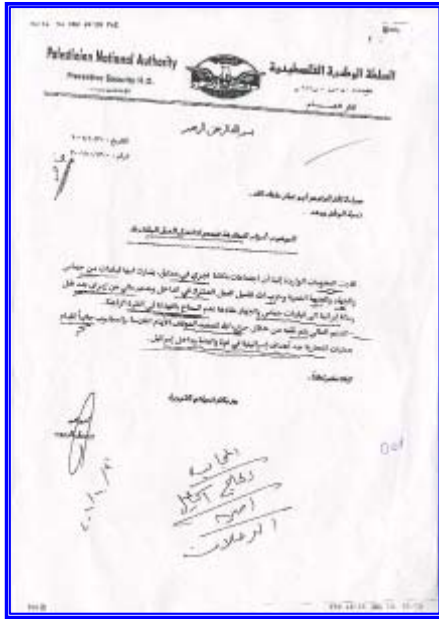
**Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hassan Nasrallah’s deputy, stresses in an interview to an Iranian television channel that Hezbollah’s policy of terrorist attacks against Israel (including suicide bombing attacks and firing rockets) requires the jurisprudent approval of the Iranian leadership (Al-Kawthar, April 16, 2007). Such interviews help illustrate Hezbollah’s total dependency on Iran and reinforce Iran’s image as a state sponsor of terrorism.**

## **Documents seized during the IDF’s activities in Judea and Samaria**



**Seized documents in which Fatah seniors ask Yasser Arafat to financially assist Fatah terrorist operatives in Tulkarm, including those involved in deadly terrorist attacks. Operation Defensive Shield (April 2002) was accompanied by a political and media campaign designed to explain to the international community the reason for IDF’s entering the Palestinian Authority-administered territories.**





**Documents seized by the IDF during Operation Defensive Shield. The documents feature intelligence reports of the Palestinian security apparatuses for the years 2000-2001, submitted to Arafat. The documents detail significant money transfers by Iran to Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah in order to encourage them to perpetrate terrorist attacks in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories, including suicide bombing attacks. Such documents help prove that Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism.**



**Exposing Hamas’s ideological affiliation with terrorist organizations and worldwide radical Islamic elements through a poster seized in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories. The title reads: “Chechnya, Afghanistan, the Balkans, Kashmir, Palestine, and Lebanon”.**

## Documents seized in the second Lebanon war



**A leaflet published by the Islamic Resistance Support Association, a Hezbollah institution engaged in collecting donations and in the battle for hearts and minds (including outside of Lebanon). Publishing the leaflet helps the struggle against donations to Hezbollah, demonstrating that the donations are designed to purchase arms to destroy Israel.**



**A seized document of Hezbollah, proving that explosives, anti-tank mines and detonation materials were stored in Kafr Kila and Kafr Dibbin in south Lebanon, among residents' houses. The document was used in the paper on Hezbollah's use of civilians as human shields.**