



**Intelligence and Terrorism Information
Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

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Operation Cast Lead Update No. 6



Final preparations before the land operation (IDF Spokesman, January 3, 2009).

The IDF Initiates Land Operation in the Gaza Strip

Overview

1. On January 3, after eight days of air strikes, the ground phase of Operation Cast Lead began. It included large infantry, armored, engineering artillery and intelligence forces supported by the Israeli Air Force and the Israel Security Agency and other security factors. On January 4 an IDF soldier was killed in the Jabaliya area in the northern Gaza Strip, apparently by mortar shell fire. An officer and soldier were critically wounded, and about 20 were slightly wounded.

2. The objective of the ground phase is to seriously damage Hamas's land networks and to take control of the areas from which rockets and mortar shells are fired into Israeli territory. That will serve the overall goals of the operation, which are **to strike at Hamas's military infrastructure and to reinforce Israel's deterrent capabilities to create a better, more stable, long-term security situation around the Gaza Strip** (IDF Spokesman, January 3, 2009).

Initial Description of the IDF's Activity during the Past 24 Hours

3. **Preparatory artillery bombardment for the incursion into the Gaza Strip:** At 1600 hours on January 3 the IDF began a prolonged artillery bombardment along the Gaza Strip, especially targeting the rocket launching areas around Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, and Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza strip. It was the first time the IDF fired artillery at terrorist targets in three years.



Final preparations before the land incursion (IDF Spokesman, January 3, 2009).

4. **Land activity:** At 2000 hours on January 3 a large force composed of infantry, tanks and the engineer corps entered the Gaza Strip, supported by the IAF and the Israeli Navy.

Exchanges of fire continued between the IDF and terrorist operatives (as of the afternoon of January 4, 2009).

5. **Naval activity:** Following an Israeli defense ministry decision and a security assessment of the situation on January 3, the Gazan coastal waters were closed off for a distance of 20 miles from the shore (IDF Spokesman, January 3, 2009).

6. **The Israeli Air Force:** Since the beginning of the land operation the IAF has attacked more than 50 targets.¹ They included tunnels, armed squads of terrorists, weapons storehouses, mortar shell launching squads and a number of mortar shell launching areas. Israeli boats supported the ground forces and attacked Hamas's General Security headquarters in the Shati refugee camp, Hamas shore patrol positions, and rocket launching positions.

7. **Reserve call-up:** With the beginning of the second phase of Operation Cast Lead on December 3, 2009, according to an assessment of the situation and decision made by the Political Cabinet, reserve units were called up as reinforcements. Most of the reserves belonged to fighting units, some to the Home Front Command and the rest to various other branches (IDF Spokesman, January 3, 2009).

Attacks on Terrorist Targets, January 1-3, 2009²

7. On January 1-3 the IAF attacked many terrorist objectives in the Gaza Strip, including mosques which served as arsenals and terrorist operative bases, Hamas military-terrorist operatives, locations where weapons were manufactured and stored; rocket launchers, rocket launching squads and ground, and symbols of Hamas's administration. Between the beginning of Operation Cast Lead and the land operation phase, the IDF attacked **more than 900 targets** in the Gaza Strip.

8. The following data are based on IDF Spokesman announcements and information in the Palestinian media:

- i) **January 1:** During the night the IAF attacked the **Al-Khulafa mosque** in Jabaliya, which was a focal point of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' terrorist activities. It served as an important Hamas operations room where organization meetings were held and from which operatives were dispatched to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel. In addition, it contained a rocket arsenal which included long-range standard Grad

¹ As of the early afternoon hours of January 4.

² As of the IDF land incursion.

rockets. The attack on the mosque was followed by a long series of secondary explosions and burned for a long time, indicating that a large quantity of hidden weapons and ammunition had been stockpiled in it.

ii) **January 1:** The IAF attacked the house of **Nabil Amarin**, a senior Hamas military operative who commanded a Hamas battalion in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City. The building contained a large quantity of weapons and ammunition. The attack was followed by large secondary explosions.

iii) **January 2:** Shortly after rockets were launched at Ashqelon, IAF places located the launchers in the northern Gaza Strip and attacked them, reporting direct hits.

iv) **January 2:** The house of Hamas operative **Muhammad Maatouk** was attacked in Jabaliya. It had served as a weapons storehouse and also contained a laboratory with a tunnel used by Hamas operatives.

v) **January 2:** The house of **Muhammad Madhoun** was attacked in Gaza City. Madhoun was a prominent Hamas operative and responsible for rocket fire into Israeli territory.

vi) **January 2:** The house of **Imad Akel** was attacked in Nusseirat in the central Gaza Strip. He was a senior weapons manufacturer and one of the heads of Hamas's rocket division. His house served as a weapons storehouse and the attack was followed by a series of secondary explosions.

vii) **January 2:** Following intelligence, the IAF attacked a vehicle in Gaza City. Its passenger was a battalion commander in Gaza City and responsible for rocket launching squads.

viii) **January 2:** A Hamas institute was attacked in Al-Atatra in the northern Gaza Strip. It served as a meeting and hiding place for Hamas operatives and extensive rocket fire had been carried out from the area.

ix) **January 2:** The IAF attacked the house of **Ismail Ghanem** in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip. It served as a storehouse for weapons and rocket launching equipment. Ghanem is one of the most prominent operatives firing Grads into Israel.

x) **January 2:** The IAF attacked the house of **Izz al-Din Hadad**, a senior Hamas operator in Saja'iya, the northern Gaza Strip. It served as a meeting place and operations center for Hamas operatives.

xi) **January 2:** The IAF attacked the control tower at the Dahaniya airport in the southern Gaza strip. Beneath it was a tunnel planned to be used to carry out a terrorist attack and abduct an IDF soldier.

9. In addition, at least five tunnels under the Egyptian-Gaza border were attacked, as were eight storehouses and locations for manufacturing weapons, five Hamas posts, rocket launchers and rocket launching areas, mosques serving terrorist purposes, houses of terrorist operatives and the offices of the Hamas magazine Al-Risala in Gaza City during the IDF ground operation.



Explosion at the gas terminal in the Zeitun neighborhood of Gaza City during the land operation (Al-Jazeera TV, January 3, 2009).

Palestinian Casualties

10. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead **about 500 Palestinians have been killed and about 2000 wounded**, most of them operatives belonging to Hamas and the other terrorist organizations. In addition, after the ground phase of the operation began, there were reports that **dozens of Palestinian terrorist operatives** had been killed in firefights with IDF forces.

Fatah Claims Continuing Hamas Oppression in the Gaza Strip

11. According to reports, Hamas continues sowing terror among the residents of the Gaza Strip and oppressing Fatah activists, even in the midst of Operation Cast Lead. The Fatah-affiliated PalPress website reported that Hamas operatives sent orders to hundreds of Fatah activists in the Gaza Strip confining them to their houses, only allowing them to leave to attend Friday prayers. According to the reports, Hamas operatives in the streets of Gaza shot the scores of Fatah activists who disobeyed the order in the legs (PalPress website, January 2)



A copy of the notice sent by the Hamas administration to Fatah operatives in the Gaza Strip (PalPress website, January 2, 2009).

Marginal Decrease in the Amount of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

12. Over the weekend there was a marginal decrease in the amount of rocket and mortar shell fire into Israeli territory. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, **295 rockets and 115 mortar shells** have fallen in the southern part of the country. Since the New Year, the attacks have been the following:

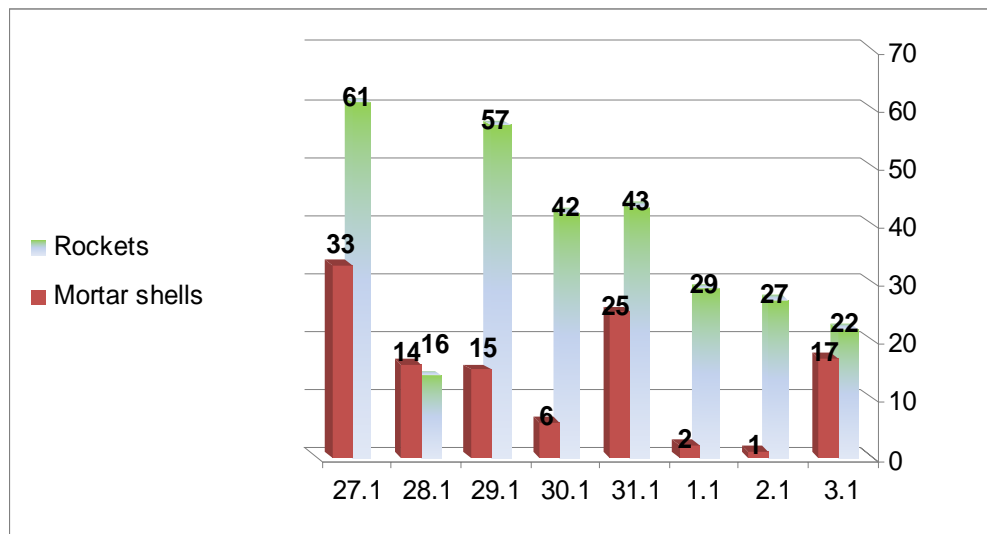
- i) **Thursday, January 1: Twenty-nine rockets** and two mortar shells landed. Some were long-range rockets and fell in Ashdod, sending 19 civilians into shock. Three rockets fell in Ashqelon during the day, sending a few civilians into shock.
- ii) **Friday, January 2: Twenty-seven rockets** and one mortar shell landed. Seven long-range rockets fell in and around Ashqelon, one of them on the central bus station. Some fell in and around Sderot. A few civilians went into shock.
- iii) **Saturday, January 3: Twenty-two rockets and 17 mortar shells** landed, identified in the cities of Netivot, Ashqelon and Ashdod, and other population centers.



Apartment house in Ashdod takes a direct hit on January 1 (Roei Idan for the Sderot Media Center, January 1, 2009).

13. On the night of January 3, after the beginning of the land operations, **four rockets** landed (one in Ashdod) and **nine mortar shells**. A number of mortar shells were fired at the IDF forces operating near the Jabaliya refugee camp, wounding 17 soldiers. On the morning of January 4 several rockets fell in Israeli territory. One fell in Ashdod, damaging a store. One was a direct hit on a house in Sderot. Several rockets fell in Ashqelon and in Israeli villages close to the Gaza Strip.

Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired at Israel during Operation Cast Lead



Humanitarian Aid for the Residents of the Gaza Strip

Humanitarian aid arrives from Israel

14. During the two days preceding the ground operation, humanitarian aid continued flowing into the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing. On January 1, **90 trucks** entered carrying humanitarian aid, and on January 2, **66 trucks**. In addition, on January 2, 226 Palestinian civilians with dual citizenship left through the Erez crossing and were evacuated to Jordan. On January 3 the crossings remained closed, as they are every Saturday, with the exception of Palestinians with humanitarian problems who were permitted to leave through the Erez crossing. Since the beginning of the operation 450 trucks carrying humanitarian aid have entered the Gaza Strip, as have 10 ambulances.



Left: Foreign nationals leaving the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, January 2, 2009). Right: Humanitarian aid delivered through the Kerem Shalom crossing (IDF Spokesman, January 2, 2009).

Opening the Rafah crossing

15. On January 1 the Egyptians opened the **Rafah crossing** to allow 450 Palestinians who had been delayed in Egypt to return to the Gaza Strip (Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa, January 1). About 200 wounded Palestinians have left through the crossing for medical treatment in Egypt and other countries.

16. In addition, during the past few days dozens of trucks have entered the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing, including those sent by other Arab countries. On the evening of January 3, the crossing was closed because of IDF attacks in the Rafah region (Wafa News Agency, January 3).

17. At the same time, the Egyptians continue taking security precautions along the Egyptian-Gaza Strip border, fearing that Palestinians will try to breach it now that the IDF has undertaken a ground operation (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, January 2). On January 2 hundreds of Palestinians tried to break through the border near the Rafah crossing. Exchanges of fire took place between the Egyptian security forces and armed Palestinians (Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa, January 2). On January 3 an Egyptian soldier was wounded in an exchange of fire with Palestinians (Agence France Presse, January 3).

18. The Arab-Muslim countries have been organizing humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. Most of the goods are delivered through the Rafah crossing. As of December 31, the following aid has either been given or pledged:

- i) **Jordan:** A number of wounded Palestinians were taken to Jordan by helicopter for medical treatment.

ii) **Saudi Arabia:** On January 1, 25 wounded Palestinians were air-lifted to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment. It also pledged \$8 million to the residents of the Gaza Strip.

iii) **Syria:** A convoy of 11 trucks carrying 200 tons of food and medicine was sent.

iv) **Bahrain:** Two planes carrying 80 tons of medicine were sent.

v) **Lebanon:** \$250,000 worth of food and drugs will be sent through Jordan to the Gaza Strip.

vi) **Sudan:** One ton of medical aid will be sent.

vii) **Qatar:** Four tons of medical aid will be sent.

19. International relief agencies and various countries are also sending humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. On January 1 **UNRWA** distributed 750 thousand aid packages to the Gazan population (Al-Jazeera TV, January 1). **Spain** pledged medical aid worth \$1.5 million. **Britain** will contribute \$10 million. **Russia** sent two planes of humanitarian aid, which landed in El-Arish. **Turkey** sent ten trucks carrying 11 thousand aid packages which will enter the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing.



Left: A consignment of humanitarian aid from Syria on its way to the Gaza Strip via Jordan (Al-Jazeera TV, January 3, 2009). Right: Humanitarian aid from Turkey delivered through the Kerem Shalom crossing (IDF Spokesman, January 2, 2009).

Disturbances in Judea and Samaria

20. Over the weekend disturbances continued in Judea and Samaria to protest the IDF activity in the Gaza Strip. In some cases demonstrators confronted IDF forces. The Palestinian security services were present at the main demonstrations in Judea and Samaria, confronting them to keep them from facing the Israeli security forces. A number of Palestinians were wounded by riot control equipment used to disperse the demonstrations.

Reactions

Hammas

21. The first reaction of Hammas's military-terrorist wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, to the IDF incursion was to threaten the forces with "a bitter fate," noting that "the Zionist enemy is now approaching the trap prepared for him by the al-Qassam fighters." One of the local Hammas commanders said that the organization's preparedness had not been damaged during the week of aerial bombings and that its operatives continued engaging in routine activities (Palestine-info website, January 4, 2008).

22. **Musa Abu Marzuq**, deputy head of Hammas's political bureau, said that the war in the Gaza Strip had so far harmed many civilians, but that Israel had not harmed the movement's top military commanders. He harshly criticized the position taken by the Arab countries and called on them to work to put an end to the Israeli activity and for the opening of the Gaza Strip crossings (PalPress website, January 2). He said the "resistance" (i.e., the terrorist organizations) would do everything to protect the Palestinian people, including the use of weapons "which no one has seen so far" (BBC, January 3).

Egypt

23. Egypt appealed to Hammas, despite the bad blood between them, and asked them to send a delegation to Cairo to discuss a return to the lull arrangement (Al-Safir, January 3).

24. President **Hosni Mubarak** appealed to Israel and the Palestinians to stop the fighting, and said his country was always willing to help the Palestinians (Egyptian TV, January 2). At a press conference, Egyptian foreign minister **Ahmed Abu al-Ghait** again accused Hammas of responsibility for the situation, saying it had presented Israel with the opportunity to attack the Gaza Strip "on a silver platter." However, he appealed to Israel to stop the attacks (Middle East News Agency, January 1).

Iran

25. Demonstrations and rallies in support of Hammas and condemnation of Israel continue in Iran, along with criticism of the "silence" of the Arab countries. After the Friday prayers hundreds of Iranians demonstrated against the IDF activity in the Gaza Strip and shouted slogans against Israel in Palestine Square (ISNA News Agency, January 2). More than 4,000 students held a solidarity march in Tehran, shouting slogans against Israeli and the United States. Some of the statements made were the following:

i) Iranian president **Ahmadinejad** criticized Israel, claiming its actions were worse than those of “Pharaoh in Egypt” (PressTV website, January 1). He also held a telephone conversation with the chairman of the Islamic Conference to examine ways of helping the Gazan (Islamic Republic News Agency, January 1).

ii) Iranian foreign minister **Mottaki** warned Israel not to enter the Gaza Strip, saying that if it did, it would be severely harmed. He said that Israel would have had no justification if the Arab countries had untied, condemned the action and isolated Israel. He said that a number of Arab countries had “betrayed Hamas” when they promised that Israel would not attack it (ISNA News Agency, January 2).

iii) **Saeed Jalili**, Iranian National Security Council Secretary, left for Damascus to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip with senior Syrian officials (ISNA News Agency, January 2). He also spoke with Khaled Mashal, head of Hamas’s political bureau in Damascus (ISNA News Agency, January 3).



Iranian National Security Council Secretary Saeed Jalili (Al-Jazeera TV, January 2 and 3, 2009).

Hezbollah

26. Senior Hezbollah figures have been trying to encourage Hamas and the Palestinians, and have harshly criticized the events in the Gaza Strip, the silence of the Arab countries and the fact that they have not threatened Israel with intervention on the Palestinian side:

i) **Hassan Nasrallah**, Hezbollah secretary general (who makes an almost daily media appearance), encouraged Hamas, saying that the movement had absorbed the first blow, and that he did not doubt it would be victorious over Israel (Al-Manar TV, January 2). He criticized the Arab countries for their position and called on the Gazans to hold out against Israeli aggression and what he called “Arab irresponsibility” (Al-Manar TV, January 2). He also said that faith in Allah and in dying the death of a martyr for the sake of Allah ensured the continuation of the “resistance” and gave it an advantage in its confrontations with Israel. He added that not even the failure of the “resistance” in the Gaza Strip would not lead to wiping it out.

ii) **Naim Qassem**, Hezbollah's deputy general secretary, gave a speech encouraging the residents of the Gaza Strip, saying that faith and will would lead to victory, not the use of weapons (Lebanese News Agency, January 2). He also said that Iran had nicknamed Israel "the enemy of humanity" and that if the fighting continued for another few days, not only would Israel have to face the Gazans, but "a nation of fighters" (Lebanese News Agency, January 3).

27. Throughout Lebanon demonstrations and protest marches were held, including in Beirut, Tripoli, Tyre, Nabatia and other places. Following the IDF activity in the Gaza Strip and the fierce Hezbollah reactions it prompted, the Lebanese army and UNIFIL increased their patrols along the Israeli-Lebanese border (NowLebanon website, January 2).