



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

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Operation Cast Lead

Update No. 7



**IDF soldiers on their way to the ground
operation in the Gaza
Strip (Baz Ratner for Reuters, January 3).**



**Direct hit on a house in Sderot (Photo: Zeev
Trachtman, January 4, 2009).**

Overview

- IDF forces continue operating in various focal points in the Gaza Strip. According to a defense minister announcement, Gaza City is partially encircled. The Palestinian terrorist organizations still avoid direct confrontations with the IDF **but the level of friction has risen**. They employ light arms, snipers, IEDs, anti-tank weapons and tunnels. Terrorist targets are still being attacked from the air and sea.
- Since the beginning of the ground operation one Israeli soldier was killed and at least 45 were wounded. So far, scores of terrorists have been killed during the ground operation. The Hamas propaganda machine, supported by Al-Jazeera TV, continues representing the casualties of Operation Cast Lead as civilians.
- Even after the IDF began the ground operation in the Gaza Strip, rocket fire continues. On January 4, 30 rockets fell in Israeli territory, several in Ashdod, Ashqelon and Sderot. The terrorist organizations still manage to fire several dozen rockets daily.
- **In the political arena**, contacts between Egypt and Hamas are expected to begin at Egypt's request, with a Turkish initiative to end the fighting on the agenda. So far no proposals or ideas for an agreement have been formulated and matured into a substantial plan.

IDF activities in the past 24 hours

Ground activity

- During the past 24 hours the IDF has continued the ground activity in the Gaza Strip which began on January 3. Its objectives are to complement the aerial attack by taking control of the areas from which rockets are launched, striking Hamas targets and preventing the continuation of its military buildup, all with the goal of eventually changing the basic security situation in southern Israel and strengthening Israel's deterrent power.
- On January 5 Defense Minister Ehud Barak told a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that "the operation is proceeding as planned, Gaza City is partially encircled and our forces have reached the ground objectives set out for them" (Ynet, January 5). The soldiers continue fighting terrorist operatives after having taken positions throughout the Gaza Strip (as of the early afternoon of January 5).

- During the ground operation IDF soldiers saw a suspicious object which they blew up, exposing three rocket launchers in the Zeitun neighborhood in the northern Gaza Strip, coming into close combat with terrorist operatives. Since the beginning of the ground operation, IDF forces have attacked scores of armed terrorists (IDF Spokesman, January 4).

- According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, IDF forces operating in eastern Gaza City met with strong resistance. A force which entered the house of a Hamas operative uncovered three tunnels leading out of it. They fought against armed terrorists in the house who tried to escape through the tunnels. During the fighting, the terrorists shot at the soldiers to draw them into one of the tunnels, apparently to abduct one of them, but the attempt failed (Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, Haaretz, January 5, 2009). The Hamas and other Palestinian and Arab media consequently issued a **fabricated story** about the abduction of an Israeli soldier (denied by the IDF Spokesman).

The call-up of reserves continues

- On January 4 the call-up of reserve forces was extended by order of the political-security cabinet. Thousands of reserve soldiers reported to their bases and are being prepared for ground operations in the Gaza Strip. They have been moved to training camps in southern Israel where they will undergo exercises until they are called to enter the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, January 4, 2009).



Reserve soldiers preparing to enter the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, January 4, 2009).

The Israeli Air Force and Navy activities

- Air and sea attacks also continue. During the past 24 hours the Israeli Air Force attacked more than 45 targets, including tunnels, vehicles, Hamas operative concentrations and rocket launching points. Mortar launching squads and armed terrorists spotted near IDF forces were also attacked. During the night of January 4 the IDF attacked more than 30 targets, including a Hamas bunker. Navy ships attacked a number of targets, including a bunker which served as a weapons storehouse, positions of the Hamas shore patrol and launching sites from which Grad rockets were fired at the city of Ashqelon.

- The main targets were the following, according to the IDF Spokesman:

- **Terrorist operatives:** In Khan Yunis the IAF attacked **Husam Hamdan**, a senior Hamas rocket launcher who was responsible for firing Grad rockets at the cities of Beersheba and Ofakim. **Muhammad Hilu** was hurt with him; he was responsible for Hamas's special forces in Khan Yunis and for long-range artillery fire against Israel.
 - **A Hamas bunker in the Gaza City area:** During the attack on the bunker many secondary explosions occurred and tunnels in the area collapsed. A number of **tunnels under the Philadelphi route** were attacked, as were the **houses of four Hamas operatives** which served as storehouses for weapons, **rocket launchers** and what was suspected of being an anti-aircraft gun.
- According to Palestinian reports, a money-changing office in the Gaza Strip was attacked, two Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives were killed in an attack in the Sabra neighborhood in Gaza City, and a commander of the Popular Resistance Brigades and Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives were killed.

IDF and civilian casualties during Operation Cast Lead¹

- Since the beginning of the ground operation on January 3, one Israel soldier was killed and about 40 were wounded. The soldier was Dvir Emanuelof, 22, from Givat Ze'ev in Jerusalem. He was killed fighting in the Jabaliya region of the northern Gaza Strip.
- In the ten days since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, three Israeli civilians and one soldier have been killed and over 100 wounded, ten of them critically.



**Dvir Emanuelof (IDF Spokesman,
January 4, 2009)**

¹ As of the morning of January 5, 2009.

Palestinian casualties

■ Since the beginning of the ground operation, scores of terrorist operatives have been killed. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, about 550 Palestinians have been killed, most of them terrorist operatives, and more than 2,400 wounded. **Hamas consistently lies to the media**, claiming that the dead and wounded were civilians, ignoring the great number of terrorist organizations killed.

Hamas reaction to the ground operation

■ Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesman Abu Obeida reported on battles waged between Hamas operatives and the IDF. He said that the operatives had detonated a number of IEDs along all the roads taken by the IDF. He claimed that there were many Israeli casualties, while a small number of Hamas operatives had been killed. He warned that the IDF would expect "surprises," such as the abduction of soldiers (Al-Aqsa TV, January 4, 2005).

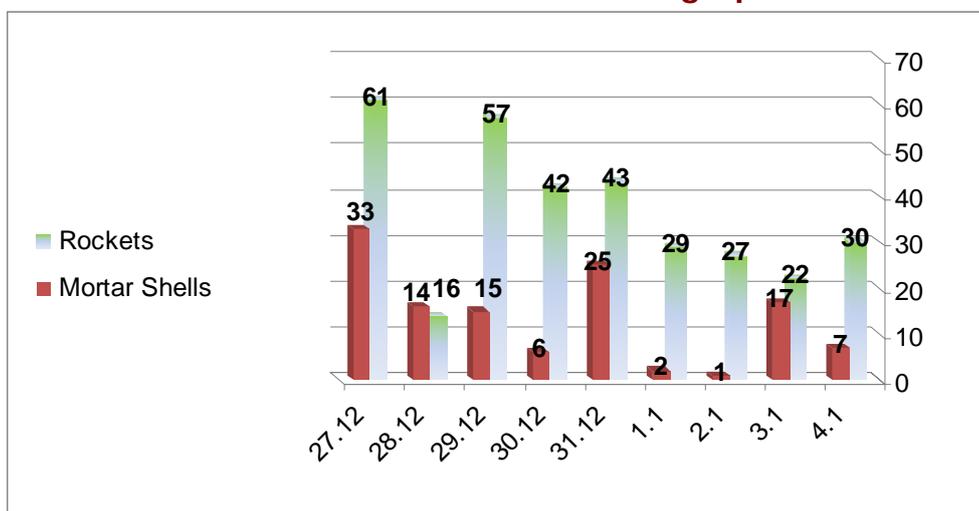
Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire into Israel

■ During the past 24 hours **30 rockets** fell in Israeli territory, three of them 122mm Grads, and seven mortar shells. A number of rockets fell in and around Ashdod, Ashqelon and Sderot. Three civilians were wounded and 11 went into shock; there was considerable property damage. In addition, a large number of mortar shells were fired at the IDF forces operating in the Gaza Strip. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead **325 rockets and 122 mortar shells** have fallen in Israeli territory.



Removing a rocket from the center of Sderot
(Photo: Zeev Trachtman, January 4, 2009)

Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired at Israel during Operation Cast Lead



Humanitarian Aid Delivered into the Gaza Strip

Israel

Humanitarian aid from Israel to the Gaza Strip continues

■ On January 4 the crossings into the Gaza Strip were not opened for reasons connected to the beginning of the ground operation. However, on January 5 the delivery of humanitarian aid through the Kerem Shalom crossing was renewed. Approximately 80 trucks carrying supplies were expected to pass through during the day. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead **more than 400 trucks** and **10 ambulances** have entered the Gaza Strip. On January 5 a Red Cross worker in the Gaza Strip admitted to the BBC that goods were entering, saying that the main problem was distributing them.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni meets with relief agency representatives

■ On January 4 Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni met with representatives of the various relief agencies operating in the Gaza Strip. She told them that every day Israel helped deliver humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip. She said that “unfortunately, the hospitals in the Gaza Strip are used by Hamas as operations bases in every respect. Hamas operates from within the civilian population, exploits it for its own criminal needs and is therefore responsible for...the situation in the Gaza Strip” (Israeli Foreign Ministry, January 4).

■ The foreign minister updated the heads of the agencies regarding a new, joint humanitarian operations room for the foreign ministry and the coordinator of government activities in the territories, whose task it would be to deal with humanitarian requests made by the various agencies and to help find solutions for problems. The agency representatives congratulated the initiative and called for additional cooperation and aid during the operation.



Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and representatives of the relief agencies operating in the Gaza Strip (The Israeli Foreign Ministry, January 4, 2009).

Humanitarian aid through the Rafah crossing continues

■ The Arab-Muslim countries continue collecting and sending humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, most of it delivered through the Rafah crossing. **Saudi Arabia** is expected to send \$3 million worth of aid to the Gaza Strip. The **Libyan** ship Al-Marwa docked in El-Arish on January 4 with a cargo of 450 tones of humanitarian aid, and a second Libyan ship is on its way. The **European Union** will send \$4.6 million worth of aid to the Gaza Strip through the UN's relief apparatus (AP, January 4, 2009).

■ The governor of Northern Sinai said that the Rafah crossing would open on the morning of January 5, after it had been temporarily closed following IDF attacks in the Rafah area (Al-Jazeera TV, January 4, 2009).

Contacts and Initiatives for a Ceasefire in the Arab and Muslim World

Contacts between Egypt and Hamas

■ According to the newspaper Al-Hayat, a senior aide to the Egyptian intelligence head Omar Suleiman appealed to Khaled Mashal, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, to urge him to find a way of bringing the current crisis to an immediate end (Al-Hayat, January 4, 2009). Hamas acceded, and a delegation from the leadership in Damascus, including Imad al-Almi and Muhammad Nasser, is expected to leave for talks in Cairo on January 5 (Al-Aqsa TV, Reuters, January 5, 2009).

The Turkish plan for ending the fighting

■ Turkish prime minister **Recep Erdogan** finished a round of visits to Middle East countries. He spoke with the heads of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt, and presented them with the two-stage Turkish plan for ending the fighting ("the Turkish roadmap"). The plan is based on a one-year renewal of the lull arrangement between Israel and Hamas brokered by Egypt, and includes an opening of the crossings, with the emphasis on the Rafah crossing. According to the plan, international forces will be deployed in the Gaza Strip, similar to UNIFIL in Lebanon, including forces from Turkey and other Islamic countries, to oversee the lull and prevent rockets from being fired into Israel (Middle East News Agency, January 4, 2009). The idea to post international forces in the Gaza Strip was immediately rejected by PIJ leader **Ramadan Shallah**, who advised against sending international forces to the Gaza Strip, warning that they would come to harm.



Damascus-based PIJ leader Ramadan Shallah:
 “International forces sent to the Gaza Strip will be harmed”
 (Al-Jazeera TV, January 5, 2009)

Difficulties experienced by Hamas’s propaganda apparatus (as of January 5, 2009)

■ Hamas’s newspapers **Al-Risala** and **Felesteen**, both issued in the Gaza Strip, have ceased publication (Felesteen on January 4, 2009). **Al-Aqsa TV** continues broadcasting, but its quality is poor. **Al-Quds TV**, which broadcasts from beyond the Gaza Strip, is operating as usual. Most of Hamas’s websites are operating, but the important one used by the **Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades** stopped operations on January 4. To sum up, Hamas’s propaganda apparatus had been damaged, so far only partially, but nevertheless it continues sending its messages to many target audiences through the Qatari channel Al-Jazeera TV, which as usual, serves Hamas’s propaganda effort.



A rare appearance by Mahmoud al-Zahar on Al-Aqsa TV, in a picture of low technical quality. Reading a prepared statement, he claimed that the “rockets of the ‘resistance’ we manufacture defeated the theory of Israel security” (Al-Aqsa TV, January 5, 2009).

■ One expression of the difficulties Hamas’s propaganda network is having in functioning is the disruption in reports of Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades claims of responsibility for shooting and fighting against the IDF. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, and especially since the initiation of the ground operation, claims of responsibility are not made quickly or uniformly as in the past. The reports of Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades activity broadcast over local radio and television stations are not detailed or accompanied by much visual material.

■ The popular **Al-Jazeera TV** continues its biased, distorted coverage of events in the Gaza Strip, providing a platform for anti-Israel demonstrators throughout the world and broadcasting the frenzied propaganda of radical Islamic spokesmen. Its broadcasts include Hamas propaganda and appalling pictures of the dead and wounded in Gaza's hospitals. The dead are represented as **civilians**, and no mention of terrorist operatives' being killed is made. The false claim is often made that Israel hides the number of its dead soldiers. The Hamas media also represent the dead as innocent civilians slaughtered by Israel, with no reference to their being terrorist operatives.

■ Hamas's local leadership has yet to show itself publicly, with the exception of a few rare appearances by Mahmoud al-Zahar and Ayman Taha. The void is currently filled by Hamas spokesmen Musheir al-Masri and Fawzi Barhoum, Hamas administration spokesman Taher al-Nunu, and the Hamas leadership in Damascus. Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesman Abu Obeida is often interviewed but it is unclear to what degree his statements are accurate representations of Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades activity on the ground.

Reactions from the Arab-Muslim world

Iran

■ Senior Iranian figures have warned Israel of the results of an ground operation. For example, the head of the Iranian parliament, **Ali Larijani**, said that Gaza would become a graveyard for the IDF forces ("the forces of the Zionist regime"). He praised the fortitude of the terrorist organizations ("the resistance") against the IDF (Mehr News Agency, January 4, 2009). Iranian foreign minister **Manuchehr Mottaki** appealed to the Arab countries and the international community to take more serious steps in view of Israel's ground incursion into the Gaza Strip (ISNA News Agency, January 4, 2009).

■ Various other themes were present in the statements of Iranian senior figures and Iranian propaganda:

- **Accusing Israel of "crimes" against the Palestinians:** The Iranian media repeatedly shows pictures of crying Palestinian children, dead "shaheeds" (senior Hamas terrorist Nizar Rayyan is represented as a "shaheed") and razed houses. No mention is made of the rockets fired by Hamas, except for exaggerated descriptions of the panic Iran claims they sow on the Israeli home front.
- **Attacks on Egypt and President Mubarak:** An Iranian student organization calling itself "The Iranian Justice-Seeking Students Organization" offered a prize of one

million dollars to anyone anywhere in the world who would kill “the criminal Egyptian president” Hosni Mubarak (Iran’s Fars News Agency, January 4, 2009). Iranian students who barricaded themselves inside the Mashhad airport demanded that the Iranian government close the Straits of Hormuz “until the treacherous Egyptian regime opens the Rafah crossing” (Iran’s Fars News Agency, January 4, 2009).



Posters calling for the hanging of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (IranPressNews, January 5, 2009).

■ Beyond ranting at Israel and rhetorical support for the Palestinians, senior Iranian spokesmen have not committed themselves to helping the Palestinians, and some of them denied reports stating that Iran was supporting Hamas. For example, **Muhammad Ali Ja’afari**, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, said that the residents of the Gaza Strip did not need military aid from other countries because the geography of the Gaza Strip made it possible for them to continue the “resistance.” He said they had an sufficient number of weapons to protect [Gaza] city and that since they could make their own rockets, they did not need aid from other countries (ISNA News Agency, January 4, 2009). **Kazem Jalili**, spokesman for the Iranian parliament’s foreign committee, denied Western reports that Iran was sending weapons to the Gaza Strip (Iran’s Fars News Agency, January 4, 2009). **Daoud Ahmadi-Nizad**, secretary of the committee for passive defense, appealed to students who had barricaded themselves in the Maher-Abad airport, rejecting their request to be sent to Gaza² (Iran’s Fars News Agency, January 4, 2009).

Jordan

■ Protests continue throughout Jordan, including demonstrations and rallies. The main protest rally took place in the sports center in Amman and was attended by tens of thousands of demonstrators from all parts of Jordan, as well as members of the parliament, especially from the oppositions factions. When the rally ended, demonstrators tried to go to the Israeli embassy, but security forces dispersed them (Ammon News Agency, January 2, 2009). The

² According to the Iranian media, **Mahmoud Muzafar**, chairman of the young people’s wing of the Red Crescent Society, said that 100,000 young Iranians expressed willingness to be sent to the Gaza Strip (Iran’s Fars website, January 4, 2009).

Israel ground operation led to a greater wave of demonstrations, which led the Jordan security forces to increase their presence around the Israel embassy in Amman and on the streets leading to it. (Saraya Portal, January 4, 2009).

■ As popular demonstrations were being held, Jordanian leadership harshly criticized the Israeli action, representing it as “aggression against innocents.” **Jordan’s King Abdallah** stressed that the kingdom and all its resources were on the side of the Palestinians and that Jordan would make every effort to stop the “Israeli aggression” in the Gaza Strip. (He also demanded that the UN Security Council pass an immediate resolution to stop the Israeli action (Jordanian News Agency, January 4, 2009).

■ The issue of Jordan’s diplomatic relations with Israel was raised during the protests. **Nader Dahabi**, Jordanian prime minister, said that if Israel did not stop its military operation, Jordan would weigh all its options, including a change in diplomatic relations. A group of parliament members sent him a memorandum demanding Jordan sever diplomatic relations with Israel, expel the Israeli ambassador and undertake an extensive propaganda campaign against the operation in the Gaza Strip (Ammon News Agency, January 4, 2009).

Syria

■ The Syrians continue political contacts with their ally, **Iran**. Ali Larjani, head of the Iranian parliament, is supposed to visit Syria and Lebanon to discuss the events in the Gaza Strip. His visit was preceded by that of Saeed Jalili, Iranian National Security Council secretary, who already visited Syria and met with its leaders (ISNA News Agency, January 3). The Syrian media continue broadcasting intensive anti-Israeli propaganda and incitement about the IDF action in the Gaza Strip, and show pictures of the dead and wounded.



Filler broadcast on Hezbollah’s Al-Manar TV: “The Gazan resistance will crush your soldiers” (Al-Manar TV, January 5, 2009).