



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center**

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Examination of the weapons and equipment found on the Mavi Marmara indicates that preparations had been made in advance for an active confrontation with IDF soldiers, contrary to the claims made by IHH about “passive resistance” only. IHH possessed many offensive weapons, including clubs, bars, axes, and one or two firearms.¹



Operatives surrounding an injured IDF soldier whom they had captured. One of them (right) can be seen holding a knife (hundreds of knives had been prepared in advance for the confrontation) (Reuters, Adem Ozkose, May 31, 2010)



Operatives armed with improvised clubs made from the railings of the ship waiting inside the Mavi Marmara (Reuters, Adem Ozkose, May 31, 2010)

¹ This document is based on reports from the Israeli navy, photographs and documents seized on the ship, and testimonies collected from the ship passengers. It is a follow-up and update to our June 10, 2010 Information Bulletin: [“Additional information about the violent intentions of the IHH operatives during the voyage of the Mavi Marmara and the weapons found in their possession”](#).

Overview

1. **The extreme violence demonstrated by IHH operatives and their supporters** in the confrontation with the IDF on board the Mavi Marmara **had been, at the fundamental level, prepared in advance**, and carried out by a hard core of dozens of violent operatives. **It required to prepare in advance standard weapons and to make improvised ones. The standard weapons and the designated equipment were loaded on the Mavi Marmara in the port of Istanbul without any security check.** Analysis of the weapons and equipment **clearly shows that the plan was active fighting rather than passive resistance**, as recently claimed by IHH operatives and other activists interviewed by the media.

2. The large quantity of both standard and improvised weapons and equipment found on the Mavi Marmara **was designed for the following two uses:**

a. **Actual weapons meant to harm IDF soldiers attempting to board the ship.**

Those weapons include **firearms** (probably one or two) **and a variety of cold weapons** (Molotov cocktails, iron bars, wooden clubs, axes, knives, work tools, slingshots, stones, as well as assorted and packed nuts and bolts). Also loaded on the ship were **circular saws for cutting railings and chains** to make improvised "offensive" weapons, and probably also to cut climbing gear used by IDF soldiers.

b. **"Defensive" equipment meant to counter IDF activity and reduce injuries to the violent operatives fighting IDF soldiers.** That equipment included **bullet-proof vests** (including military-issue ceramic bullet-proof vests), **binoculars, communications devices, night vision goggles, gas masks, headlamps, and smoke flares.** Also loaded on the ship were **diving gear and fishing harpoons**, possibly based on the assumption that the Israeli navy would attempt to hit the ship from underwater. A "field hospital" was also built on the ship to treat those injured in the confrontation.²

² The operatives injured in the confrontation with the IDF included a relatively large number of first aid medics (three of them sustained severe injuries and two sustained mild injuries).



Preparations for the violent confrontation with the IDF: a field hospital built on the ship

The violent confrontation on the Mavi Marmara: active fighting planned in advance rather than passive resistance

3. In interviews granted to various media, IHH leader Bulent Yildirim and other activists who were on board the Mavi Marmara portrayed the fighting against the IDF as “passive resistance”, bringing up the claim that “non-lethal force” was used for “self defense” against IDF forces.

4. A BBC reporter (Panorama, August 16) showed Bulent Yildirim videos shot on the Mavi Marmara, in which IHH operatives are seen in a fierce combat with IDF soldiers using cold weapons (Yildirim did not deny the authenticity of the videos, claiming, however, that “Israel stole these images from us, but we are not denying it”). When asked: **“That is not passive resistance; that is fighting, do you see the bars?”** he replied: **“At this point it had become beyond passive resistance**, because the Israelis had been firing from the start [a claim that is **not true**]. These people defended themselves when being fired at.” He further noted, **“If we organize another ship and Israel attempts to board it, we will use our right for passive resistance—we will throw them into the sea”**.

5. Other operatives who were on board the Mavi Marmara also admitted that they had confronted IDF soldiers, claiming they acted out of “self defense” and used non-lethal force:

a. **Eyup Gokhan Ozekin, the advisor to the BBP party³ chairman who took part in the flotilla on behalf of the party, said that the people had decided to defend themselves within reasonable limits. “Even Greenpeace activists do not surrender that easily,” he said. He admitted that, prior to the actual flotilla incident, the**

³ A small party established in 2007, apparently an offshoot of the ruling AKP party.

Muslim leadership had made a decision to resist any attempt (by the IDF) **to take over the ship**, claiming, however, that there were no weapons on board the Mavi Marmara (Zaman, Turkey, June 3, 2010).

b. Former marine soldier **Kenneth O’Keefe**, a British and US national who is listed as an Irish citizen on the passenger list, said the following: “I was given the opportunity to either be a part of filming or witnessing, or actively defending the ship, **and I made a decision to defend it...**” [Q: Although that could lead to confrontation?] “Yeah... the real problem here is the occupation, the blockade, that is the problem, it must end. **Now, if it requires confrontation in which we use non-lethal force to defend ourselves and our mission, so be it.**”

6. When Lubna Masrawa, the Free Gaza coordinator of the flotilla, was asked whether the (political) goal of drawing attention to the Gaza Strip was worth the price in human lives (nine operatives who were on board the Marmara were killed), she said that there is no “resistance” without paying a price (Panorama, BBC, August 16).⁴

7. It should be noted that 7 out of the 9 people killed had declared (either directly or through their relatives and associates) their wish to die as martyrs.⁵

Evidence showing IHH operatives had firearms in their possession

8. **The information we have indicates that the operatives who fought against the IDF on board the Mavi Marmara had one or two firearms, at least one of which was used against the Israeli naval commandos as soon as the first soldiers rappelled from the helicopter. The operatives threw those weapons into the sea during the fighting to avoid incriminating themselves. In addition, IHH operatives used three weapons grabbed from the Israeli naval commandos against the IDF; two of them appear to have been thrown into the sea.**⁶

⁴ “I was scared, and I was really scared when I saw all the blood. I didn’t want anyone to die, but **there is no resistance, there is no freedom, without paying a price.**”

⁵ See our July 13, 2010 Information Bulletin: [“According to well-documented information, seven of the nine Turks killed in the violent confrontation aboard the Mavi Marmara had previously declared their desire to become martyr \(shaheeds\). Eight of them belonged to Islamist Turkish organizations and not one of them was a peace activist or human rights worker.”](#)

⁶ A senior Israeli naval commando officer related that the **Turkish operatives were highly skilled in the use of the weapons.** In one incident, a gun was snatched from an IDF soldier **and was rapidly used against other IDF soldiers.** The gun was found with an empty cartridge and with the bolt locked back, meaning that all rounds had been fired. Two other weapons snatched from the first soldiers who rappelled from the helicopter were never found; it appears they were thrown into the sea.

9. According to a testimony from a senior Israeli naval commando officer (**supported by a forensic report**), **four shells not in use by the IDF** were found on the Mavi Marmara. Furthermore, **one Israeli naval commando soldier was hit by a 9-mm bullet not in use by the IDF as soon as he descended from the helicopter to the ship** (it is unclear what weapon was used; it may have been a gun). Among the equipment found on the Mavi Marmara **was also a telescopic rifle sight** (the rifle itself was not found). Commando soldiers who took part in the battle also testified that live rounds had been fired on them.

10. More evidence on the firearms used by the operatives who confronted the IDF:

a. **The captain of the Mavi Marmara**, who was questioned by the Israeli naval commandos (during the fighting) about weapons in the possession of the operatives, **said that the weapons had been thrown into the sea** (from a testimony by a senior commando officer). In an interview granted to a Turkish newspaper, IHH leader **Bulent Yildirim** admitted that the **weapons taken from soldiers neutralized by IHH operatives had been thrown into the sea; it was his claim, however, that they had not been used**: “We took their weapons, and using them would have been considered self defense. We threw the weapons into the sea, however” (Yakit, June 3, 2010).

b. Communications between the Israeli naval commando soldiers on board the Mavi Marmara and the boarding operation headquarters show that they were shot with firearms while on the ship. For example, a soldier is heard asking: “They had real weapons?” Another soldier shouts (under pressure) in response: **“Yes, yes, real weapons! They’re firing on us!... [unclear sentence, possibly “It’s real weapons down here!] ...and then [probably addressing his fellow soldiers]... Live weapons below, be careful! Live weapons here, be careful!”** (Panorama, BBC, August 16, playing back a recording of the exchange).

Actual weapons

11. Following are the “offensive” weapons found on board the Mavi Marmara:

a. **One hundred metal bars of various lengths**; the bars had been made from the railings of the ship. **Seven electric circular saws** had been loaded on the ship to cut railings and chains into improvised weapons (**iron bars and iron chains**). **Bulent Yildirim admitted that his men had used iron bars**, claiming, however, that they did so to defend themselves from the Israeli commando soldiers (Yakit, June 3). An IHH operative injured in the fighting (probably on the upper deck of the Mavi Marmara) told a BBC reporter: “At that point we cut metal bars from the ship. We didn’t have many of

them. If the Israelis would reach the ship, we were going to use them. That was our intention.”⁷



Iron bars cut from the railings of the ship



Circular saws loaded on the ship to cut the railings and iron chains. According to a testimony given by Mavi Marmara Chief Officer Gokkiran Gokhan, such saws are not normally found on ships.

b. **Fifty wooden clubs improvised from readily-available items found on the ship.** Also found were **standard clubs that had been loaded on the ship** and hidden inside rolled-up blankets.



Improvised clubs are made by cutting iron railings from the ship



Preparations for a possible confrontation; operatives are seen putting on bullet-proof vests and equipping themselves with iron bars

⁷ BBC's Panorama, August 16.



Standard and improvised wooden clubs found on board the Mavi Marmara



Club-wielding operatives preparing for the confrontation. Visible in the middle of the photograph is a pack of rolled-up clubs about to be unwrapped and handed out to the operatives.



Operative holding an improvised club made from the railing of the ship (YouTube)



Operatives confronting IDF soldiers and beating them with clubs

c. **Two hundred knives of various sizes.** Most of the knives were taken from the Mavi Marmara's kitchen and its six cafeterias. **In addition, dozens of packages of knives had been brought on board** (each about 7" long) **to be used for combat.**



Various kinds of knives used as weapons. On the bottom right is a dagger.



Boxes of knives loaded on the ship



Knives and boxes of knives



An injured IDF soldier taken by IHH operatives to the bottom of the ship. Both photographs show an operative (right) holding a knife (Reuters, Adem Ozkose, May 31, 2010)

d. **Twenty fire axes** taken from the ship's fire cabinets.



A fire axe used as a weapon

e. **Several Molotov cocktails.** A senior Israeli naval commando officer related that he had seen a stack of Molotov cocktails on board the Mavi Marmara.



f. **One hundred work tools of various kinds.**



Hammers (some of them weighing up to 10 lbs.), screwdrivers, picks, and other work tools turned into improvised weapons

g. One hundred units of pepper spray.



h. Various kinds of slingshots. Some of the slingshots had inscriptions saying "Hezbollah". Also found were about 1500 marbles and stones of various sizes, as well as nuts and bolts intended to be thrown at Israeli naval commando soldiers.



Marbles (left) and slingshots (right) prepared in advance for fighting



Packed and assorted marbles (right)



Packed and assorted nuts and bolts



Slingshot with an inscription saying "Hezbollah"

Defensive equipment

12. The following defensive equipment was found on board the Mavi Marmara:

- a. **About 150 bullet-proof vests. Some of them were military-issue vests with a ceramic plate.** Imprinted on the vests was the **Turkish symbol, the crescent**. The vests were also supposed to be used by the journalists who covered the fighting.



Vests with Turkey's symbol, the crescent



Pile of bullet-proof vests found on board the Mavi Marmara



Operative wearing a vest and equipped with binoculars



Pile of vests

- b. **Optical gear: 4 telescopic sights, 20 personal binoculars, 4 night vision goggles.**



Optical gear (binoculars and night vision goggles) seized on the Mavi Marmara



Optical gear seized on the Mavi Marmara (bottom right)

c. **Communications devices:** a significant number of Motorolas for communication between operatives who took up positions on the ship. The information we have indicates that **each and every hardcore IHH operative was equipped with a communications device to use during the ship's voyage.** One of the ship's officers testified that communications devices had also been handed out to the ship's crew; however, they operated on different frequencies than those given to the IHH operatives.

d. **Fifty smoke flares.**



e. **Three hundred gas masks and another 200 protective filters.** A senior Israeli naval commando officer testified that the operatives on board the Mavi Marmara had fought with gas masks on for a considerable period of time.



Gas masks found on board the ship



Preparations for the confrontation: an operative in a bullet-proof vest putting on a gas mask



Pile of gas masks



Pile of gas masks

f. **One hundred and fifty headlamps.**

g. **Diving gear:** found on board the ship were four complete sets of diving gear (flippers, goggles, suits, and oxygen tanks) as well as two fishing harpoons. Diving gear is part of the standard equipment usually found on a ship. In our assessment, however, it is possible that at least some of that gear, including the fishing harpoons, was brought on board the ship in anticipation of an underwater attack on the ship by the Israeli navy.



Diving gear

Weapons which caused injuries to IDF soldiers

13. According to an Israeli navy report, **8 IDF soldiers were injured in the fighting**; three of them sustained serious to moderate injuries. All the injured soldiers were part of the group which descended from the first helicopter and was met with **strong resistance from the Turkish operatives**.

14. **The injuries sustained by the IDF soldiers include the following:**

- a. **Two soldiers sustained gunshot injuries.** One of them suffered an injury to his knee from non-IDF ammunition as soon as he descended from the helicopter; the other suffered an injury to his stomach from an IDF weapon snatched from one of the soldiers.
- b. **One soldier was stabbed with a knife.**
- c. **Five soldiers sustained head injuries from axes, clubs, and other tools.**
- d. **Four soldiers sustained arm and leg injuries from club blows.**

Note: a number of soldiers were injured by **several kinds of weapons, so that the categories overlap**. For example, the soldier who was shot in his knee was also beaten on his head with an iron bar and stabbed close to his ear with a knife.