

Special Report 116, Israel Under Attack



Since October 7, **over 16,000 missiles have been fired at Israel**, the overwhelming number of these were intercepted by the IDF. Others were allowed to fall in open spaces. On April 13 Iran fired two waves, together consisting of **110 ballistic missiles, 36 cruise missiles and 185 drones from Iran, Iraq, Syria and Yemen**, carrying a total of 60 tons of explosives. Some 40% fell on the way to their intended targets due to dysfunction. Of the remainder, all but five were brought down, mostly by Israel's Defense Forces (IDF) and others by US, UK, French and Jordanian forces. The five that landed in Israel caused light damage to a military runway and to a road on a military base.

On April 14, 2024, day after Iran's attack IRINN TV [Iran] aired a press conference in which **Iranian Armed Forces Chief of Staff IRGC General Mohammad Bagheri** and IRGC Commander-in-Chief General Hossein Salami spoke about the same-day **Iranian missile and UAV attack against Israel**. Bagheri said that the operation "achieved its goals" and that Iran does not intend to continue the operation further, unless Israel acts against Iran. He said the operation was targeted at the Israeli intelligence base and airbase from where the April 1, 2024 attack against the Iranian consulate complex in Damascus was planned and launched. Bagheri also claimed that Israel's air defenses and Iron Dome system were incapable of dealing with the attack, asserting that **the targets were "significantly destroyed"**. He also said that the U.S. failed to thwart the attack. General Salami said that the operation has created a "new equation" according to which Iran will retaliate from its own soil against any Israeli attack on Iranian interests. (MEMRI CLIP No. 11019).

At a military parade marking Iran's Army Day, which falls on April 18, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi commented on Iran's April 13 drone and missile attack on Israel, declaring that it was "precise and calculated" and that it "announces to the whole world and the superpowers, to America and the supporters of the Zionist regime, that Iran is in the arena, and that our armed forces are ready and waiting for the command to come from the Supreme Leader [Ali Khamenei]. **Our army is skilled and trained, and possesses updated military knowhow, and this skill sets our army apart.** The army is innovative and is equipped with updated technologies. The updated technologies, which prior to the Islamic Revolution [in 1979] were kept in the hands of other countries [and not Iran], are now in the capable hands of our armed forces and army. Iran possesses technological, industrial, and military independence, based on domestic production, thanks to the efforts of our youth in the army, in the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), and in the armed forces. Building strength, and building naval vessels and submarines, tanks, armored vehicles, and smart systems can increase our military might, as the superior power not only in the region, but in the world.

“After the 'Al-Aqsa Flood' [the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel], the 'Honest Promise' **[missile and drone attack on Israel on April 13, 2024] toppled Israel**, proving that it is weak as a spiderweb ... This operation was precise and calculated, and it announced to the entire world and to the alleged armed superpowers, to America and to the supporters of the Zionist regime, that Iran is in the arena, and that our armed forces are prepared and waiting for the command of the Supreme Commander. Operation 'Honest Promise' was limited in scope. Had it been broader, they [Israel] would have seen that nothing would have remained of the Zionist regime. But this was intended as a limited operation, to punish the Zionist regime, and to deal with the centers [from which] the actions against us [were taken]” (MEMRI clip 11283) Reports).

A regime that needs to resort to such blatant lies displays its own insecurity.

Israel, vowing to respond, is facing international pressure to stand down in light of Iran's colossal failure. Elliot Kaufmann of the wall Street Journal asks “What if the Oct. 7 invasion had been intercepted? Imagine the same Hamas attack but better Israeli defense, with more than 90% of the terrorists stopped before the border or shortly thereafter, and only minor Israeli casualties. President Biden would probably have done then what he is doing now, in the aftermath of Iran's intercepted attack: urge Israel not to respond in any serious way. Let Hamas live to try it again”. The only way Israel can be persuaded not to respond is if the international community wakes up, takes Iran's existential threats against Israel seriously, the US and other “infidel nations” by imposing effective, crippling sanctions on that pariah nation.

Fears are rising over the **fate of the remaining abductees** held in Gaza. Yet another of the abductees, known to have been alive in January, three months after he was abducted, was **murdered** by his captors in Gaza. The US, Egypt and Qatar called on Israel to concede still further to Hamas' demands by releasing some **900 (!) imprisoned militants** in exchange for 40 Israel abductees and allowing allow a larger number of civilians to return to the north, without screening them to ensure Hamas' militants do not mix with the returnees.

In consultation with the US, Egypt, Qatar and other countries, and in response to President Biden's pleas, Israel offered Hamas a **six week cease-fire in the war in Gaza**, the release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and the return to the north of tens of thousands of displaced north Gaza residents in exchange for the release of 40 abductees – women, children, the elderly, and the wounded. **Hamas rejected Israel's proposals** and offered terms it knew Israel could not accept: the release of merely 20 abductees following a six-week ceasefire and Israel's commitment to transform it, upon receipt of the 20, into a permanent cessation of hostilities, buttressed by international guarantees, and the unlimited return of the north Gaza population, without screening.

International pressure, preeminently President Biden's public statements, have led Hamas to believe it could achieve all its strategic goals simply by waiting. The more civilian casualties there are, the more suffering is incurred by the population in Gaza, the better so far as Hamas is concerned because it leads to greater the pressure on Israel. Prior to the atrocities of October 7, **Hamas factored in the likely cost to Gaza – loss of life, destruction of infrastructure and of Gaza's economy**. These were premeditatedly engineered to ensure

that, after the war, Hamas retains enough of its military and governmental capacities to rejuvenate and renew its machinations against Israel.

What does Hamas need to win its war with Israel? Simply to survive. If Hamas survives, if it prevents Israel from achieving any one of the war aims that Israel defined for itself, it scores a victory regardless of the cost to the civilian population (rather, by way of that cost), to Gaza's infrastructure (to be restored and improved upon by do-gooders in the international community) or even the number of casualties among the organization's militants (the only real cost that counts),, but which can be overcome). It would all be a price worth paying. Hamas is now more popular among Palestinians in the West Bank. So long as it is capable of intimidating everyone else in Gaza Strip, it has achieved its strategic goals. **Hamas believes it can come out of this conflict a winner**, having lost the military battle but having won the political one – after all, war is but a instrument to achieve strategic political purposes.

Meanwhile, **peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia** has been stalled, the populations of the Arab countries that signed peace accords with Israel are aroused, international public opinion has been stirred against Israel, US-Israel relations have been eroded, as have Israel's relations with the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and other European countries.

Israel withdrew most of its forces from Gaza and is now preparing for **the next stage in Rafa**, Hamas' last remaining stronghold. The first step in that directions will be to ensure the safety of the civilian population by relocating them to safe areas.

Iran, Israel and the US

Adapted from an interview published in Fathom, April 17, 2024. with Michael Doran, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Peace and Security in the Middle East at the Hudson Institute and co-host of the podcast Counterbalance.

The present United States administration does not view itself as the leader of a coalition against Russia, Turkey, Iran, North Korea and China,. It views the United States as *the manager of an existing global system*. The Russian invasion of Ukraine or the Hamas' attack on Israel are viewed as a rogue actors operating against the system. So they ask themselves, 'How do I put the system back into good repair, and how do I compel rogue actors to join the system, or operate if not directly in cooperation with the system, then as less of an obstruction to it?'

It was amazing to note how, when Putin invaded Ukraine, the administration kept talking about trying to give Putin an off ramp. Now they're trying to give Hamas an off ramp. The administration does not seek victory for Israel, or for the American coalition. Rather, it is asking 'how do we de-escalate the situation?'

The present administration came into office wanting to reverse Donald Trump's maximum pressure campaign against Iran. They considered President Trump's policy the grand strategic blunder of the new century. Conversely, they have a vision of regional order in which the United States and Iran have a strategic understanding, an accommodation. They do not believe that the Iran will become a partner, but they do believe in the possibility of a mutual non-belligerency agreement. So Gaza is not an opportunity to stick it to Iran. They see Gaza as something outside of the mutual non-belligerence agreement for which they were working, and they want to tamp it down so they can get back to the business of organizing the region in parallel with Iran.

If the United States continues to do what it's doing – to restrain its ally and allow Iran's proxy to survive – Iran is going to end up getting the upper hand. Iran has already demonstrated to the world that, to achieve a desired goal, it can orchestrate all elements of the resistance alliance and bring its proxies to work in tandem. It has disrupted international trade and shown China “Hey, if you're going to have a war with Taiwan and you want to obstruct the United States' efforts to move an aircraft carrier group or two of the into the area, and if you want to threaten global supply chains, we can help you with that”.

The administration said it was going to deter the Houthis – a ragtag militia. But we failed to do so. Now we say, ‘Oh, well’ instead of trying to deter the Houthis by directing our forces to kill senior Houthi leaders and Iranian liaison officers supplying the Houthis, shut down Iran' supply routes to the Houthis, destroy Houthi arsenals, and support anti-Houthi elements in Yemen who will do the work for us, we say, “Let's bring calm to the region by restraining Israel, our ally, and then the Houthis will stop attacking international shipping”. As President Biden and his advisors see it, the question is, “do we escalate against the Iranians and the Houthis and bring order to the region, or do we restrain the Israelis because we want quiet until the elections in November?” They've chosen to short-term course of action, namely to restrain Israel.

Just as the Ukrainians are the United States ally is combating Russia in our stead, the Israelis are combating Iran. They can be a tool in our hand to weaken Iran so that we don't have to enter into direct conflict with that rogue nation. But, instead of building them up so they can help protect our position in the region, we're tearing them down and strengthening the Iranians. It makes no sense.

A young Iranian voice

https://twitter.com/elicalebon/status/1780426488749371420?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Etweet

Antony Blinken's A-historical Advice for Israel

By John Spencer And Liam Collins THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. *Wednesday, April 10, 2024, pg. A15*

The Biden administration is keeping the pressure on Israel not to invade Hamas's final stronghold, in Rafah. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last month that such an assault would be “a mistake” and “not necessary.” Three months earlier he claimed that Israel could defeat Hamas by using “targeted operations with a smaller number of forces.”

In their new book, “Conflict: The Evolution of Warfare from 1945 to Ukraine,” Gen. David Petraeus and historian Andrew Roberts argue that intelligence-driven special-ops raids aren't enough to wage successful counterinsurgency campaigns. Such efforts must be combined with a population centric strategy, requiring sizable conventional forces to “clear, hold, build” in insurgent sanctuaries. The same goes for counterterrorism campaigns that involve drone strikes and precision bombing. President Obama conducted hundreds of drone strikes against terrorist networks between 2009 and 2017. In many cases, those strikes may have been the only prudent or politically viable option. The fallacy emerges, however, when policymakers believe that raids and precision attacks are the best options simply because they're popular.

Hamas isn't a typical terrorist group. It governs Gaza with significant military capability, including prepared defenses, hundreds of miles of defensive tunnels, and thousands of rockets. Its fighters were believed to number 30,000 to 40,000 at the start of the war, and most of them hide among the civilian population. This makes a strategy reliant on targeted raids extremely difficult. Whereas so-called decapitation strikes may be an effective strategy against small terrorist groups, their success would be dubious against an enemy of Hamas's size. There is no historical evidence that commando raids or a series of precision strikes have defeated a deeply entrenched urban defender

America's record of fighting in enemy-held cities underscores how a raid-and-strike approach is ineffective. When U.S. forces prematurely terminated the First Battle of Fallujah in the spring of 2004, they were left to conduct only strikes and occasional raids against al Qaeda targets within the city. This approach was so fruitless that the coalition was forced to conduct the Second Battle of Fallujah six months later, involving a large conventional force that had months to prepare against a much smaller force than Hamas is today. When coalition forces cleared Ramadi and other Iraqi cities between 2004 and 2006, they used a combination of precision strikes and a large coalition presence. Ditto for the Battle of Mosul in 2016-17, when the U.S.-backed Iraqis employed conventional land and air power against a much smaller force in a less defensive posture than Israel faces in Gaza.

Recent history has shown that commando raids and precision strikes are a tactic, not a strategy to win a war. No matter how much Washington argues to the contrary, Israel understands the fallacy.

Israeli Settler Violence

I share the anger expressed at the mindless murder of a 14 year old Israeli, shepherding his sheep. In the same breath, I decry the violent and equally mindless response of Israeli settlers reported in the news. The settlers, including the murdered youth, should not have been there in the first place. Nor does his murder justify perpetuating acts of violence against Palestinian villagers, who had nothing to do with the damnable act. The indolence of the Israeli government in restraining the settlers and punishing those of them who attacked villagers and destroyed property is a moral blot on our nation. I am ashamed of such conduct.