

# **Operation Change of Direction: Israel vs. Hezbollah in the summer of 2006**

*By*

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## **What caused the war?**

On July 12, 2006, at approximately 9 a.m., Hezbollah guerrillas attacked several targets inside Israel, killing three soldiers and wounding two others. The guerrillas took Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev back into Lebanon, where, if still alive, they remain captive.<sup>1</sup> This attack resembled a Hamas foray into Israel on June 25, 2006, which resulted in the deaths of two Israeli soldiers and the kidnapping of Corporal Galid Shalit. Initial efforts to recover Goldwasser and Regev ended when a mine detonated beneath a Merkava main battle tank, killing its crew. Entrenched Hezbollah fighters prevented the IDF from recovering the bodies and destroying the wreckage of the Merkava. Shortly thereafter, Hezbollah began firing Katyusha rockets and lobbing mortars at Israeli border communities and IDF posts. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) replied with aerial attacks on rocket launch sites.

Israel's response, Operation Change of Direction, involved air, land and sea attacks on targets in southern Lebanon and Beirut. The attacks had strategic, operational and tactical components. At the strategic level, Israel used air power in two ways. First, the IAF bombed Beirut International Airport and other targets important to Lebanon's economy and infrastructure. The bombings were intended to coerce the Lebanese government into fulfilling its responsibility to disarm Hezbollah under U.N. Resolution 1559, something Beirut probably was incapable of doing even if so inclined. Second, the bombings constituted a punitive measure retaliating for Beirut's accommodation of Hezbollah. At the operational level, dropping bridges and destroying highways inhibited the flow of rockets and other weapons from Syria into Lebanon. The IAF also targeted Hezbollah headquarters, communications facilities—including Hezbollah's broadcasting facility, the Al-Manar television station in Beirut—training camps, weapons storage areas and rocket launch sites, many of them located in or adjacent to apartment buildings and individual civilian dwellings in southern Lebanon. Meanwhile, the Israeli navy blockaded Lebanese ports to prevent weapons, terrorist reinforcements and supplies from entering Lebanon by sea.<sup>2</sup>

The fighting between Israel and Hezbollah raged from July 12 until Aug. 14 when a ceasefire took effect and generally held. This past summer's fighting between Hezbollah and Israel was a flare up in a war that began back in 1982 when Lebanese clerics, inspired by the Iranian revolution, founded Hezbollah to counter Israeli military operations in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah, which receives financial and political support from Iran and diplomatic and logistical aid from Syria, is implacably committed to the destruction of Israel, a goal which it shares with Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations.<sup>3</sup>

The basic patterns of last summer's fighting involved two components: 1) Israeli air and sea attacks on specific targets inside Lebanon, mostly in the south, and 2) Israeli ground actions on the Lebanese side of the border. Hezbollah continued its rocket attacks on Israeli towns and communities as far south as Haifa while responding to IDF incursions with ambushes and highly effective hit-and-run anti-tank rocket attacks. Although much of the international community lambasted Israel for civilian casualties resulting from the bombings, Israel did not target civilians. Hezbollah, by contrast, fired its Katyusha rockets at Israeli towns, including Haifa. An estimated 100 of the rockets that landed in Israel contained cluster bombs while many others were packed with ball-bearings.<sup>4</sup> Katyushas are unguided and highly inaccurate area weapons. Barring a "lucky hit" against troops in the open (and there was at least one such hit), Katyushas filled with ball-bearings have almost no effect on hardened military targets. While Katyushas with a full load of 48 pounds of explosives can, with a rare direct hit, damage structures, including bunkers, Hezbollah targeted Israeli civilians using Katyushas loaded with smaller explosive charges and comparatively larger proportions of ball-bearings. In the 32-day conflict, Hezbollah fired an estimated 4,000 Katyusha and Type-81 122 millimeter Chinese rockets into Israel with the primary intent of killing and maiming civilians, destroying civilian homes and businesses and even starting fires in farm fields, vineyards and orchards.<sup>5</sup>

### **Some moral issues raised by the war**

Israel was accused from many quarters of a disproportionate response to Hezbollah. This was both unfair and inaccurate. Hezbollah, Iran's advanced commando force against Israel, shares Tehran's goal of annihilating Israel. Since Israel withdrew its forces from southern Lebanon six years ago and no longer occupies any portion of the country, Hezbollah cannot claim that it is a resistance group.<sup>6</sup> Hezbollah remains a terrorist organization, albeit one that has morphed into a political movement.

Hezbollah, Hamas, al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Palestinian Jihad and virtually all of Israel's Muslim neighbors, with the possible exception of regimes in Jordan, Egypt and Turkey, share two total war goals: the destruction of Israel and the return of Palestine to Islam. As Carl von Clausewitz pointed out in his 1832 classic, "On War," "The political objective—the original motive for the war—will determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it will require."<sup>7</sup> In other words, violence inevitably rises to the level of the political objective. Israel is in a struggle for its national survival.

During and after Operation Change of Direction, many unfairly and inaccurately criticized Israel for purposefully targeting civilians. Hezbollah's strategy included using civilian structures as launch sites and southern Lebanon residents as human shields for attacks aimed indiscriminately at Israeli civilian targets. Israel, by contrast, blanketed southern Lebanon with leaflets warning civilians to leave the area. Israel used broadcasts and even automated telephone calls to warn residents to flee the war zone.

By contrast, long before last summer's hostilities erupted, Hezbollah teams modified homes and apartment buildings to store munitions, including Katyusha rockets. Hezbollah undertook these unsolicited home improvements in structures near the Israeli border. When the war began, according to an article by James G. Zumwalt in the Washington Times,

Designated leaders of Hezbollah combat teams received envelopes, each containing an address of one of the modified homes. The team quickly deployed to its assigned location, immediately breaking through the exterior wall of the sealed room. Each envelope contained aiming and firing instructions for the object pre-positioned inside the room before it was sealed—a surface-to-surface missile atop a launcher. After removing part of the room’s roof to allow for unobstructed flight and on command, the team was to fire the missile, raining death and destruction down upon Israel’s civilian population.<sup>8</sup>

Israel was not caught by surprise. Israeli intelligence identified this threat ahead of time and to a large extent the IAF negated this tactic. Nevertheless, Hezbollah designed a tactical plan calculated to maximize civilian casualties not only in Israel but also among the Lebanese living in southern Lebanon.

### **Operation Change of Direction and the larger Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

The summer 2006 conflict between Hezbollah and the IDF comprised another outbreak of violence in the continuing Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it was not a distinct war. Hezbollah may have acted at the behest of Iran to take attention away from its nuclear weapons programs. Additionally, Hezbollah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, also may have been inspired by Hamas’ June 26 capture of Corporal Galid Shalit. Nasrallah later admitted to being surprised by the scope and intensity of Israel’s response.

Although Israel inflicted substantial casualties and degraded Hezbollah’s capabilities, Hezbollah’s forces acquitted themselves well against 30,000 Israeli soldiers backed by armor supported by the IAF. Accordingly, Hezbollah emerged politically stronger in Lebanon and with new-found respect among its Arab neighbors. Additionally, Hezbollah stock soared in the world of terrorism. Given that terrorist groups compete for funding and recruits, Hezbollah gained substantially from its attacks on Israel. If to secure the return of Goldwasser and Regev Israel released Hezbollah fighters in its custody, it would only reward aggression and bolster the efficacy of terrorism.

Syrian forces, on alert since July 13, remain at a heightened state of readiness.<sup>9</sup> It also has been reported that Syrian army advisors have been in Gaza sharing tactical “lessons learned” from this past summer’s fighting between Hezbollah and the IDF with Hamas’ fighters and terrorists.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the flow of weapons from Syria into Lebanon continues despite the presence of French-led U.N. Intervention Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Many in Israel believe that the 10,000 French-commanded UNIFIL forces in southern Lebanon will protect Hezbollah without doing much—if anything—to prevent it from attacking Israel and may even protect Hezbollah from any Israeli retaliation.

A more immediate danger could be that Syria, emboldened by Hezbollah’s perceived tactical successes, may attempt a surprise attack to retake the Golan Heights. That almost certainly would not happen without assurances of support from Iran. More ominously, strategic analyst Caroline Glick posited in a Nov. 3 Jerusalem Post article that Egypt’s deployment of 5,000 troops to Gaza’s southern border is a move designed to prevent Israel from mounting any operation aimed at disrupting the weapons smuggling “that is quickly providing Palestinian terrorists with the means to transform Gaza into

south Lebanon.”<sup>11</sup> Glick maintains that Egypt is preparing its armed forces for a confrontation with Israel as part of a larger Middle East war. Glick warns,

From the ideological indoctrination of forces, to its massive armament programs, to the relocation of its military installations, units and logistical bases to both sides of the Suez Canal, to the training of its troops to fight ‘an unnamed country on Egypt’s northern border,’ Egypt has done more than Iran to ready its forces for war against Israel.<sup>12</sup>

### **Israel, Hezbollah and the wider geopolitical-religious terrain**

Israel is on the front line in a global struggle for the future of civilization. Afghanistan and Iraq are other fronts in World War IV. This is a total war on a global scale.<sup>13</sup> If the United States and Israel do not prevail, civilization will plunge into a dark night of barbarism exceeding anything Adolph Hitler envisioned for a world dominated by the Third Reich.

At its essence, World War IV is a religious war. Islamist Jihadists, whether Sunni or Shiite, are committed to establishing a global caliphate with Islam as the world’s only religion—a world without Israel, indeed without Jews. In this new world, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and atheists would face two choices: conversion to Islam or slavery. Anyone who stands in the way will be liable for extermination. If this enemy obtains weapons of mass destruction, given the totality of its war aims, it will use them.

With the exception of Poland and possibly Britain, secularized Europe, suffering from a case of cultural and moral cirrhosis, lacks the will to fight the Islamist Jihadists. Only people of faith can understand the intense passions that feed religious warfare. Most Jews, especially those in Israel, understand it. Some Christians, especially dispensationalists and fundamentalists, do too; many mainline liberal Protestants, however, do not.

Since the Treaty of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years War in 1648, war in the Judeo-Christian West has been predominantly a political phenomenon. In the years since, while Christians engaged in pogroms against Jews in Russia and Poland and the Nazis made the Final Solution a priority, in general Christian nations went to war with other Christian nations for political, rather than religious, reasons. In these wars, millions of men and women willingly laid down their lives supporting various national causes. But never, with the exception of the Japanese kamikazes encountered in World War II, did Western nations face an enemy anxious to die, rather than merely willing to die, for its cause. That makes this enemy far more dangerous than any encountered in recent memory.

Peace has a totally different meaning in the Islamist Jihadist world than it does in the Judeo-Christian West. The Dar al-Islam, the “House of Islam,” is an exclusively Muslim world. By contrast, the non-Muslim world is the Dar al-Harb, the “House of War.”

Christianity, Judaism and Islam, similar in some respects, are distinctly different in others. All are monotheistic, though Muslims generally maintain that the triune God of Christians makes Christianity polytheistic. Christianity and Islam, unlike Judaism, are evangelistic in that both religions share an imperative to convert others. The differences reside in the details.

Christians and Jews believe the Bible leads to salvation in two somewhat related ways. In Judaism salvation is a national phenomenon involving both a nation (Israel) seeking to serve God and the individual's "struggle" with God. In the Christian New Testament, salvation involves a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ based on faith. Salvation, however, is the main point of both the Old and New Testaments. Christians and Jews also share a belief that man was created in God's image and that all human life—even the life of an enemy—has value.

Islam differs in that while Christians and Jews seek personal and/or national salvation, many Muslims believe Allah sent Mohammad with the true religion destined to supplant all others. Any accommodations with Christianity and Judaism can be only temporary. Radical Muslims see Christians and Jews as interlopers in Allah's world. Armed struggle—jihad—is the process through which the world must be converted.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, any land ever conquered by Islam remains eternally the property of Allah, the Dar al-Islam. Places like Spain, southern France, Greece, parts of the Balkans, all territories ever under Muslim rule and later liberated or re-conquered by Christians, are considered stolen and must be returned to Allah. Given that assumption, Islamist Jihadists believe no Muslim can accept a Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, all three religions have millenarian and apocalyptic worldviews. Judaism holds that a messiah will come, save Israel from destruction, and establish peace between all nations. The lion will lay down with the lamb within the Kingdom of God on earth. Christians believe that their Messiah, Jesus Christ, will return, Satan will be vanquished, and the lion will lay down with the lamb when the kingdoms of this earth become the Kingdom of the Lord.

Shiites hold that at the "End of Days," after an apocalyptic final struggle, the twelfth and last imam will come to earth to establish a global caliphate. Jews will be dead. Anyone not converted to Islam will be dispatched to hell—a place of extreme torment exceeding anything envisioned by most Christian notions of eternal separation from God. Christians and Jews share a more compatible worldview than they do with Muslims.<sup>16</sup>

### **What has changed?**

What has changed since July? After Operation Iraqi Freedom eliminated an immediate threat from Iraq, the IDF shifted its focus to combating Palestinian terrorism and countering occasional attacks from Hezbollah along its northern border, perhaps losing some conventional war-fighting capabilities. Syria's army does not present a major challenge and, according to Caroline Glick, Israel's political and military leaders remain oblivious to a growing Egyptian threat. Iran is too far away to pose a conventional threat and presently lacks the nuclear weapons and delivery capabilities needed to make good on President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's threats of annihilation. Israel's enemies may be somewhat emboldened by the perception that Hezbollah bested the IDF in southern Lebanon.

### **What are the short-term and long-term prospects?**

Barring messianic intervention, conflict will continue in the Middle East. Any periods of relative calm resulting from ceasefires will be temporary respites given that the thrust of many Islamists remains the elimination of Israel.

In the short term, Iran holds the keys to what happens in the Middle East. If Iran goes nuclear, the Imam Khomeini and President Ahmadinejad, leaders who subscribe to this notion that the Twelfth Imam will arrive in the aftermath of an apocalyptic war, are likely to attack Israel, triggering a vigorous nuclear retaliation.<sup>17</sup> A nuclear war at the epicenter of the world's energy resources would foster a global catastrophe of apocalyptic proportions.

Even with Iran out of the equation, the prospects for long-term peace are not good. Too many in the Arab world are opposed to peace. Arab regimes need "victimized" Palestinians to focus their exploited masses on a demonized Israel as the source of their problems. A lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians would require these regimes to confront Israel directly while also explaining the real causes of widespread poverty among their peoples. Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups will accept only temporary ceasefires with their ultimate goal being the obliteration of Israel. Even if the Palestinian leadership were to abandon that long-term goal, the truly committed in Hamas, al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and similar groups, will not. They will turn to terrorism to disrupt any accommodation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The keys to Israeli security are its military strength and deterrent credibility, both conventional and nuclear. Israel has survived for 58 years by maintaining a strong military and by demonstrating the will to use it decisively. Arab states, even those implacably opposed to Israel, can be deterred. Even if peace may be too difficult to achieve, accommodations are possible if Israel remains strong.

Terrorists with heavenly mandates, however, cannot be accommodated. Some may be deterred if they understand that engaging in terrorism leads inevitably to death. Fanatics dying to kill, however, are best stopped by killing them first.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Nasrallah: Serious Swap Talks Under Way," JTF Daily Briefing, November 1, 2006, [http://www.jta.org/page\\_view\\_breaking\\_story.asp?intid=5385&ref=daily\\_briefing](http://www.jta.org/page_view_breaking_story.asp?intid=5385&ref=daily_briefing) (accessed November 1, 2006). While negotiations under the auspices of the Red Cross between Israel and Hezbollah have taken place, Hezbollah as of Nov. 1 had refused to provide evidence that Goldwasser and Regev were alive.

<sup>2</sup> Global Security.org site, "Operation Change of Direction," October 12, 2006, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon-change-of-direction-chron1.htm>. (accessed November 1, 2006), pp. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, ed. *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, (Congressional Research Service). (Washington, D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006), pp. 34-36.

<sup>4</sup> "Hezbollah Used Cluster Munitions in War with Israel," *Agence France Presse* release, October 20, 2006. [http://news.yahoo.com/s/aft/20061019w1\\_mideast\\_afp/mideastconflict\\_061019135140&](http://news.yahoo.com/s/aft/20061019w1_mideast_afp/mideastconflict_061019135140&) (Accessed November 6, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Hezbollah and the Lebanese government claim the Shaba Farms area occupied by Israeli forces belongs to them. The United Nations, however, supports Israel's claim that this territory, along with the Golan Heights, is Syrian territory. Israel is likely to return both right after porcine aviante.

<sup>7</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, edition. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 81. Clausewitz continued, "Generally speaking, a military objective that matches the

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political object in scale will, if the latter is reduced, be reduced in proportion; this will be all the more so as the political object increases its predominance. Thus it follows that without any inconsistency wars can have all degrees of importance and intensity, ranging from a war of extermination down to simple armed observation.”

<sup>8</sup> James G. Zumwalt, “Deadly Hezbollah Chess Match,” The Washington Times, October 26, 2006, <http://www.washtimes.com/functions/print.php?StoryID=20061025-092622-2090r>.

<sup>9</sup> “Syrian Army Maintains High War Preparedness, Continues to Smuggle Arms to Lebanese Hizbollah,” DEBKA File, October 15, 2006, <http://www.debka.com/headline.php?hid=3357>.

<sup>10</sup> See: Leslie Susser, “With Hamas Stockpiling Weapons, Israel fears ‘New Lebanon’ in South,” JTA Daily Briefing, October 19, 2006. [http://www.jta.org/page\\_print\\_story.asp?inarticleid=17168](http://www.jta.org/page_print_story.asp?inarticleid=17168) and “Syrian Military Instructors in Gaza for the First Time, There to Impart Hizbollah’s Combat Methods to Hamas Terrorists—Israeli Intelligence Chiefs to Cabinet. DEBKAAFILE, October 15, 2006 <http://www.debka.com/headline.php?hid=3357>.

<sup>11</sup> Caroline Glick, “Israel’s Encirclement,” The Jerusalem Post, November 3, 2005. <http://www.gamala.org.il/english> (accessed on 5 November 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Eliot Cohen of Johns Hopkins University’s School for Advanced International Studies, among others, has maintained the world is already engaged in World War IV. Former Republican Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich calls it World War III. If the 40 plus year Cold War, a struggle between competing ideological blocks and between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies for geo-political hegemony, qualifies as World War III, then the war with Islamist Jihadists would rightly be dubbed “World War IV.”

<sup>14</sup> The word “jihad” can have several meanings. It can be the personal struggle, defined in the Koran as “striving in the path of God.” It can also mean a personal obligation on the part of individual Muslims to defend the *umma*. While no legitimate interpretation of the Koran renders the meaning as supportive of terrorism and murder, it is a rallying cry of many terrorist groups. See: Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. (New York: Modern Library, 2003), pp. 28-42.

<sup>15</sup> For an excellent elaboration see Walid Phares, *Future Jihad: Terrorist Strategies Against America*. (New York: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 25-45.

<sup>16</sup> Professor Moshe Sharon, “Agenda of Islam: War Between Civilizations,” October 13, 2006, <http://www.gamla.org.il/english&freeman.org>. (Accessed 5 November 2006).

<sup>17</sup> The Israeli government reveals nothing about its nuclear arsenal. Estimates vary, but the generally-accepted figure is that Israel has had nuclear weapons since the early 1970s and currently possesses between 200 and 300 nuclear bombs.