

PRELUDE TO APOCALYPSE

Dan Gordon - August 27th, 2006

Contrary to what is now the accepted wisdom in the media, Hezb'allah in its recent offensive against Israel neither "badly bloodied the Israel Defense Force," nor "fought it to a standstill" in Southern Lebanon. In fact, the opposite is the case. By any legitimate measure Hezb'allah was handed a resounding military defeat by the IDF in the recent fighting, and while the cancer that is Hezb'allah was not cured by Israel's soldiers, it was put into remission.

Hezb'allah is not your father's terrorist organization. This is not a group of loosely affiliated cells of would-be hijackers or suicide bombers. Hezb'allah is a terrorist army, trained like an army, organized like an army, funded and equipped like an army, with one glaring difference. The main use of its arsenal was terror aimed at Israel's civilian population while hiding behind Lebanon's civilian population. Its intent was to cause maximum civilian casualties amongst both. This was not by accident. This was by design.

This was Hezb'allah's war, planned and prepared for six years, funded by close to a billion dollars by Iran, aided by Syria. One of the great benefits to the West to come out of this war (if they choose not to turn a blind eye to it) is the certain knowledge that Hezb'allah is Iran's terrorist operational arm. It is the terrorist extension of Iran's expressed foreign policy.

It is not a coincidence that Hezb'allah launched its totally unprovoked attack across Israel's internationally recognized border, killing and kidnapping Israeli soldiers and dragging Lebanon and Israel into a war which neither one wanted *at exactly the moment* when the international community had issued its ultimatum to Iran. That ultimatum was: "Cease your efforts to develop nuclear weapons or face the sanctions of the International Community." Iran's response was Hezb'allah's war.

Even a cursory examination of Hezb'allah's statements, captured documents, the weapons it procured over six years and instantly deployed, provides an insight into their war aims and the battle plan to achieve those aims. Hezb'allah announced in the clearest possible way that it was its intent to turn Southern Lebanon into a graveyard for the IDF. This was not mere rhetoric. It was their plan.

Hezb'allah's Sigfried Line

Much has been made, and rightly so, of the arsenal of some 15,000 short,

medium and longer range rockets which Hezb'allah stockpiled for its offensive. What has gone largely unmentioned is the equally impressive number of anti-tank weapons Hezb'allah not only acquired but deployed throughout its system of fortresses, strongholds in literally every village in Southern Lebanon.

Hezb'allah's spin was that it built this Siegfried Line-like series of fortifications to defend Southern Lebanon from an Israeli invasion. The truth is both Hezb'allah and everyone else in the world knew perfectly well that when Israel left every centimeter of Lebanese soil in 2000, it did so with the intent never to return. It not only had no designs on Southern Lebanon, it dreaded doing so.

In addition Israel had made a strategic decision to sacrifice whatever advantages the buffer zone of Southern Lebanon offered for the perceived advantages of international legitimacy. Now, the logic went, should Hezb'allah attack us it will not be an attack against our troops in their country, rather they will be violating Israel's internationally recognized border and the world will have no choice but to recognize clearly who was the aggressor and who was the victim.

To a degree, that logic prevailed. Especially in the beginning of the conflict, though not (of course) in the U.N. where Israel had so painstakingly sought to achieve the legitimacy the Secretary General so quickly ignored.

In preparing its offensive, both Hezb'allah and Iran knew that Hezb'allah's terrorist army could never mount a successful ground invasion against Israel. The advantages they possessed for their offensive lay in their rockets and missiles which could hit Israel's civilian population and inflict mass casualties, and control of its own terrain and preparation of its own battle field. The idea was not to fight the IDF in Israel's territory, but to set a trap for the IDF in Hezb'allah's carefully prepared and massively fortified Siegfried Line of fortresses, strongholds and offensive positions connected by a series of truly impressive tunnel networks and bunkers meant to withstand and offset Israel's air advantage.

There was one other indispensable element to their war plan; the centering of their offensive capability against Israel's civilian population *within Lebanon's civilian population*. Much has been made in the Western press of Hezb'allah's benign social services function in Lebanon, of the hospitals and schools it has built.

The Press as Hezb'allah's Tool

Almost no notice, however, has been paid to the large numbers of these hospitals and schools which were built over its military bunkers and rocket

launching sites. This was perhaps both the most cynical and barbaric disregard for innocent civilian lives of all of Hezb'allah's and Iran's strategic choices. It was also the most successful.

The decision was predicated not on its knowledge of its enemy (Israel) but its true genius lay in its knowledge of the press. The calculus was simple: launch a rocket from within a civilian population; if you kill Jews that's a victory. If the Jews hit back and in so doing kill Lebanese civilians, that's a victory. If they don't hit back because they're afraid to hit civilians, that's a victory. Now repeat the process until you kill so many Jews they have to hit back and in so doing kill more Lebanese civilians. That's the ultimate victory, because they know that in striking just those chords exactly what music the press will play.

The awful truth, which the Western Press was manipulated to ignore or downplay, was that Iran, through its terrorist operational arm Hezb'allah, had *invaded Lebanon from within*. Hezb'allah did not protect Lebanon, they occupied it and they used those Hezb'allah-occupied territories to launch Iran's offensive in response to the West's ultimatum to cease development of nuclear weapons.

Hezb'allah's Military Failure

From a military prospective there can be absolutely no doubt as to the results of Hezb'allah and Iran's offensive against Israel. It was a defeat. Every part of their war plan except the manipulation of the media failed.

Hezb'allah expected and planned for a massive charge of Israeli armor into Southern Lebanon. The amounts and type of anti-tank weapons they acquired and had operationally deployed in their forward positions as well as their secondary and tertiary bands of fortresses and strongholds through Southern Lebanon attest to this fact.

They intended to do in mountainous terrain what Egypt had so effectively done in the Sinai desert in the Yom Kippur war. In that war, Sinai indeed became a graveyard for Israeli armor. Hundreds of tanks were destroyed. Whole brigades were decimated in single battles by the Egyptians' highly effective anti-tank missile ambushes. In that war almost three thousand Israeli soldiers were killed. That was Hezb'allah's plan. It was a good one. And it failed.

Far from the prevailing impression in the media, the IDF was not "badly bloodied" nor "fought to a stand still," much less "handed a defeat." Just prior to the cease fire, Israel suffered twenty nine tanks hit. Of those, twenty five were back in service within twenty four hours. Israel suffered one hundred and seventeen soldiers killed in four weeks of combat. As painful

as those individual losses were to their families and to the Israeli collective psyche which views all its soldiers as their biological sons and daughters, those numbers in fact represent the fewest casualties suffered by Israel in any of its major conflicts. In 1948, Israel suffered six thousand killed. In 1967, in what was regarded as its most decisive victory, Israel lost almost seven hundred killed in six days. In 1973, Israel lost two thousand seven hundred killed and in the first week of the first war in Lebanon, Israel suffered one hundred seventy six soldiers killed.

Misapprehension of Casualties

Why then the impression of massive Israeli casualties in clear contrast to the actual numbers of those killed? It is because of the uniquely inverse relationship between the Israeli public and its army. The Israeli army is a citizen's army. It is made up of everyone's child, everyone's brother or sister, aunt or uncle.

On its television networks not only the names but the photographs of the fallen and the times and places of each funeral were announced repeatedly. Scores of reports dealing with individual soldiers and the shattered families they left behind were aired repeatedly. The nation as a whole mourned the loss of its children quite literally as if they were the sons and daughters of each and every family.

Were I, as an Israeli officer in the Military Spokesperson's Unit, to have made a statement to the Israeli press about the actual lightness of Israel's casualties, I would at the least have been relieved of duties, if not also of rank. Indeed, members of my unit volunteered to a man to go into Lebanon under fire to help retrieve the bodies of four fallen soldiers and make sure that reporters (who by that time were reported to be simply driving into Lebanon) could not broadcast pictures before the families were notified. We provided an additional covering force as well against Hezb'allah while medics and a Rabbi safeguarded the sanctity of the remains of four kids, younger than my twenty two year old son. We did so not only not under orders, but in violation of orders, because we were all of us fathers as well as soldiers, and these were not only our comrades in arms, but our sons. We were there to bring them home.

That is the emotion. But the numbers are different. They are the lightest casualties suffered by the IDF in all of its wars. Military historians will spend years deciphering why exactly this was so. Was Israel's government and its general staff, by its refusal to commit large numbers of forces for the first three weeks of combat, in fact making a highly intelligent strategic choice? Possibly.

Three Conclusions

Possibly it was dumb luck or divine intervention. Either way it meant three things:

1. Hezb'allah's ambush never happened because Israel didn't take the bait. Instead it used air power and then a series of probing raids, primarily by infantry to methodically, slowly identify and root out the enemy positions.
2. It meant that those small numbers of troops deployed into Lebanon in the first weeks of fighting had to do more with less than perhaps any other Israeli fighters in any other war. Certainly in other wars there were many individual battles in which so much was expected of and accomplished by so few. But no war comes to mind in which so few soldiers were deployed across an entire front. They performed brilliantly and with uncommon courage in the face of withering fire from heavily fortified and prepared positions.

These were draft-age soldiers: eighteen and nineteen year olds, commanded on the platoon and company levels by twenty something's, none of whom had ever faced anything remotely like the combat against Hezb'allah's terrorist army. In spite of what many see as the logistical and command failures of their superiors, they performed brilliantly and achieved their objectives.

3. When the vast bulk of Israel's force was finally deployed, made up primarily of its reservists, these soldiers achieved in forty eight hours what many believe they should have been given weeks to accomplish. Despite logistical failures, some times fighting without food or water, Israel's soldiers, regular army and reserves alike, handed Hezb'allah a decisive military defeat. All of Hezb'allah's Siegfried Line-like system of fortresses and strongholds, their network of command and control bunkers along Israel's Northern border were destroyed, abandoned or under the control of the IDF by the end of the hostilities. Hezb'allah's mini terrorist state within a state south of the Litani had been dismantled.

Israel's War Aims *Achieved*

Its a terrorist capital within a capital in Beirut, its command and control center and infrastructure were in ruins. In the end it sought and accepted a cease fire resolution in the United Nations which provided the framework for Israel to achieve all of its stated war aims.

This last point is of no minor consequence both in terms of what Israel achieved and failed to achieve in the counter offensive it waged against Hezb'allah. I can speak to this subject with some degree of expertise since I

was one of the people tasked with putting into a simple declarative sentence what the IDF's mission was as handed down to it by Israel's democratically elected political leaders. The sentence defining the IDF's mission read as follows.

“To bring about the conditions on the ground which will enable the International Community and the government of Lebanon to live up to their obligations under UN resolution 1559, to end the rocket attacks against Israel's civilian population in the North and to bring about the release of Israel's kidnapped soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regeve.”

That was the IDF's stated mission and that is exactly what it did.

Whether as a result of the decisions of its political leadership and general staff, or in spite of them, Israel's soldiers, sailors and airmen brought about the conditions on the ground which enabled a U.N. Resolution that, on the face of it, provided for the implementation of the majority of UN Resolution 1559, called for the extension of Lebanon's sovereignty and the deployment of its army along Israel's border for the first time in thirty years, and called for a fifteen thousand troop strong U.N. force to back up the Lebanese army and help it disarm Hezb'allah, as well as enforce an arms embargo on its terrorist army.

France, in recognition of its special relationship with Lebanon would boldly announce that it would head up such a force with thousands of its troops. Instead it landed fifty soldiers in rubber dinghies; until shamed by Italy into upping its ante. What of the International Community and the Government of Lebanon, in whom Israel's political leadership placed so much faith to turn their words into actions? To use the applicable Yiddish phrase: *gornischt* (nothing).

Just as the Spanish Civil War was a preview of what European Fascism had in store for the world, so do I believe, that Iran's offensive against Israel carried out by its Terrorist Army operational arm, was a preview of what Islamofacism has in store not only for the West but for the moderate regimes of the Middle East, which in case anyone forgot to notice, controls the oil on which the West survives.

What they failed to gain militarily they accomplished through the manipulation of the Western Media, which were their willing dupes and through the ineptitude and weakness, if not down right appeasement of the political leadership of the International community. This has all but guaranteed that this war will be but round one.

The Larger Stakes

The soldiers of the IDF bought their country's and the International Community's political leadership a chance to keep the Iranian/Hezb'allah cancer in remission. If that opportunity is squandered, no future Israeli political leadership will dare to limit its war aims again to simply creating conditions on the ground that will enable the International Community not just to protect Israel's legitimate rights and interests but their own. When one is faced with an apocalyptic fascist enemy which not only employs a terrorist foreign legion to do its bidding, but seeks to acquire nuclear weapons which it clearly announces will be part of its strategy to wipe you and your country, your family and all your loved ones off the face of the earth, there is *no* proportional response.

If this indeed was the equivalent of the Spanish Civil War, then the world must know that what followed was one last chance before the abyss. For the Jewish people and the State of Israel, that abyss contains the very Holocaust which Ahmadinijad both denies and vows to complete. We will not accommodate the International Community by acquiescing to our own destruction.

This situation, however, is not just Israel's problem. We are but the Little Satan. America and the West to the Islamofascists are the great Satan. It would be a simple matter indeed for Iran, in flexing its muscles against America, to dispatch Hezb'allah terrorists to Northern Mexico. There, equipped with little more than the very same rockets used to target Haifa, Hezb'allah could target Los Angeles. Now picture that scenario with even a modest nuclear payload. It would no longer be a question of how we stop terrorists from getting into the United States. With the same rocketry they used against Israeli citizens, Iran's terrorist army would only need to get into Northern Mexico in order to hit America's second largest city with a nuclear device. What then would America do? Invade Mexico?

If through appeasement the West fails to take action to prevent the conflagration which looms on the horizon, then let there be no doubt that its flames will engulf us all. For its part, this time Israel must be ready, and it must entrust its fate into no one's hands but its own.

Dan Gordon is the writer of such films as [The Hurricane](#), [Murder in the First](#), [Wyatt Earp](#), and [The Assignment](#). He served as a captain in the reserves in the IDF during the recent war.