



ISRAEL MATTERS!

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Sholom

co-chairs: Dr. Martin Laskin and Allan Myer



January 2019

Israeli Snapshots-End of the Year

Operation Northern Shield

The Israel Defense Force (IDF) has launched Operation Northern Shield. What's it about and what does it mean?

Northern Shield is a military operation on the Israel side of the Israel-Lebanon border for the purpose of exposing and destroying Hezbollah's cross-border attack tunnels dug from Lebanon into Israel. Reports of Hezbollah tunneling activity near Metula, the northernmost town in the Galilee, has been going on for a number of years. Until recently, that was all there was- reports and supposition. However, thanks to recent intelligence efforts plus the introduction of new advances in engineering and detection technologies countering Hamas tunnels from Gaza, Hezbollah tunnels can now be found... and they are.

Levav Weinberg, the grandson of Holocaust survivors, is a farmer and one of Metula's 1,600 residents. His orchard sits very near the Lebanese border and adjacent to the Lebanese village of Kfar Kila. Earlier this month, 500 of Levav Weinberg's Pink Lady apple trees were uprooted to clear space for IDF earth movers and tunnel-detection equipment to work. At first, Weinberg may not have been particularly happy to find the IDF in his well-tended orchard but that changed quickly when the first tunnel was uncovered. As this article is being written, two more tunnels have been discovered: a second in Metula and a third closer to the Mediterranean coast. The two tunnels that ended in Metula began under civilian houses in nearby Kfar Kila.

Unlike the sandy soft soil terrain near Gaza, where in the past two years, the IDF has uncovered 17 tunnels crossing into Israel, Metula's rocky, unyielding earth seemed to suggest that reports of tunneling were mistaken. Obviously, they were not, and Operation Northern Shield is well underway.

With Hezbollah continuing to serve as one of Iran's strongest and most reliable surrogates, this tunneling activity provides another glimpse at Iran's military doctrine in the region. Iran's Quds Force continues to find, equip, arm and train Hezbollah and other proxy militias in the region, building them as Iran's forward power bases. As Israel's widely respected INSS research institute pointed out in a recent note, "The overarching framework of this challenge is to counter Iran's manifold threats to Israel, to the region, and to the international community: its nuclear project, its Quds Force proxy war machine, its ballistic proliferation, and its terror activities and sponsorship." In this regard, today's declared IDF Military Strategy seeks to postpone and avoid war while maintaining the IDF advantage in case it breaks out; by disrupting enemy force buildup and

continuously increasing Israel's own capability-through intelligence measures, information, diplomatic, economic, covert, and military operations, all of which are crafted in ways that seek to stay beneath the threshold of war. Operation Northern Shield is part of that effort.

Some have called the past few years, "The Campaign Between Wars." Others have called this period, "The Twilight War." Title or no title, the undeniable reality is that Israel is responding to Iran's use of Hezbollah military proxy on its border with Lebanon wholly consistent with its operational military strategy.

The Musical Component of the BDS Movement

How wonderful it was earlier this year to witness Israel winning the 2018 Eurovision song contest with Israeli songster Netta Brasila's "Toy" beating finalist songs from Cyprus and Austria in the popular vote. It was the first time in 20 years that Israel won this wildly popular international song contest. Because of Netta's victory, the 2019 Eurovision will be held in Tel Aviv this coming May. The idea behind the Eurovision song contest is that it embodies the unifying power of music and song that bridges cultural divides and brings people of all backgrounds together through a shared love of music. Every year, the Eurovision song contest joins millions of people together in a massive display of cultural exchange and celebration of music. That's the good news.

Now comes "ugly." The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement has organized a campaign to urge people to boycott Eurovision 2019 simply because it will be held in Tel Aviv. This past month the BDS movement leaders launched a formal petition calling on people to stay away and demanding that broadcasters from Europe not take part. Already broadcasters from Ireland and Portugal are facing mounting pressure to pull out of the competition. Of course, in doing so, the BDS leaders are also subverting the event's underlying spirit of unity among nations. Their efforts to attack Eurovision 2019 do absolutely nothing to advance the cause of peace, and nothing to promote understanding. And there's more. The BDS movement has also launched a full-scale campaign to boycott Netta's European Tour using the hashtag #DontToyWith Apartheid" in reference to Netta's winning song. Yes, ugly.

Search Youtube for "Netta's winning song" or try <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CziHrYYSyPc>

By the way, there is a wonderful, albeit small, U.S. non-profit organization fighting the BDS movement's attempt to stop artists from accepting engagements in Israel... and it is a tough fight. You can find this organization at www.creativecommunityforpeace.com

Allan Myer