



# ISRAEL MATTERS!

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Sholom

**Special Edition - Fighting in Gaza**

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## Israel Launches Operation “Cast Lead” Against Hamas

### U.S. Senate Supports Israel's Gaza Incursion

On January 8th, by a non-binding resolution, the U.S. Senate voiced strong support for Israel's battle against Hamas militants in Gaza, while urging a ceasefire that would prevent Hamas from launching rockets into Israel.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said before the vote, "When we pass this resolution, the United States Senate will strengthen our historic bond with the state of Israel, by reaffirming Israel's inalienable right to defend against attacks from Gaza, as well as our support for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process."

Noting that Israel was bent on halting Hamas rocket fire into its southern towns, Reid said: "I ask any of my colleagues to imagine that happening here in the United States. Rockets and mortars coming from Toronto in Canada, into Buffalo New York. How would we as a country react?"

Co-sponsor and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said, "The Israelis ... are responding exactly the same way we would." The vote expressed an "unwavering" commitment to Israel's welfare and recognized its right to act in self defense to protect citizens against acts of terrorism.



An IAF F-16 takes off for a strike on Gaza

On Dec. 27th, the sixth day of Hanukkah, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched Operation Cast Lead with the aim of striking the infrastructure of the Hamas terrorist organization as a result of the relentless terror attacks perpetrated by Hamas from the Gaza Strip and the continued firing of missiles at Israeli citizens.

The Israel Air Force began the operation by attacking terrorist targets including weapons smuggling tunnels, rocket launching sites, and a weapons and ammunition storage facility. The Israel Navy participated by striking targets that included storage facilities, Hamas outposts, tunnels used to transport weapons and terrorists, various launching squads, and weapons and rocket manufacturing sites.

The IDF struck the houses and outposts of senior Hamas operatives and targeted buildings in the Hamas government complex located in Tel Al-Hawa that were the center of the Hamas government operations, including the financial and organizational planning of terror attacks, destroying the offices of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Labor Ministry and the Ministry of Housing and Construction. The IDF also hit mosques that stored Kassam and Grad rockets and other weaponry.

The IDF announced that it sustained casualties both from combat and from "friendly fire" incidents. It reported that Hamas frequently fired at Israeli territory and IDF forces from within schools and by using civilians as human shields.

The IDF reported killing senior Hamas operatives, including the head of the Hamas rocket launching program in Jabaliya and the commander of Hamas' Gaza City area rocket launching program.

Military officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because operational plans had not been made public, said the army has a contingency plan for a fourth phase — the full reoccupation of Gaza and toppling of Hamas.

Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 after 38 years of military occupation.

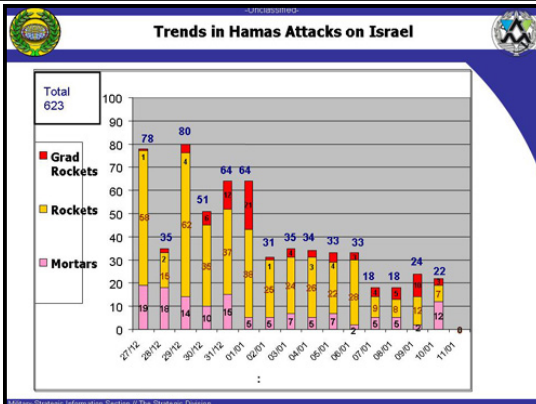
Editor's Note - Due to the lead time required for submission of *Israel Matters!* for the TBS Bulletin, the rapidly changing circumstances related to the fighting in Gaza might have unavoidably altered the information reported in this issue by the time it goes to press.

## Hamas Fires Missiles Attempting to Hit IAF Warplanes Flying Over Gaza

Israeli defense officials reported that Hamas gunmen have made several attempts using anti-aircraft missiles to hit Israel Air Force jets attacking targets in the Gaza Strip since the start of Operation Cast Lead. Air Force pilots know the clear threat against them and have been ordered to act in accordance with routine safety rules.

The IDF jets, and especially the assault helicopters, have been subject to missile threats in the Gaza Strip for a long time. The matter has become more urgent during Operation Cast Lead in light of the great number of IAF aircraft flying over the Gaza Strip. A vehicle carrying an anti-aircraft missile launcher was attacked in an Air Force strike in Gaza.

Hamas has been claiming for a long time that its fighters are using machine-guns against Air Force jets flying over Gaza. At the end of 2007, Hamas' military wing – the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades – claimed for the first time that its men had used antitank weapons against IAF jets. IDF officials believe that the arms smuggled over the years through the Philadelphi route tunnels include anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons.

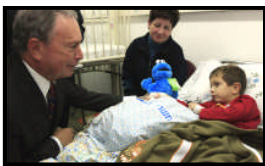


## Murbarak: Wants an Israeli Victory in Gaza

On January 5<sup>th</sup>, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stunned visiting foreign ministers in Cairo when he said he wanted Israel to emerge as the winner in the current conflict in Gaza.

European foreign ministers, headed by Karel Schwarzenberg of the Czech Republic, met with Mubarak before traveling on to Jerusalem for a meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. At that meeting the ministers confided that Mubarak had told them 'Hamas must not be allowed to emerge from the fighting with the upper hand.'

## In Israel, Bloomberg Shows His Support



New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg was in Sderot in early January when a public-address system warned of a rocket attack. With shouts in Hebrew and English, the mayor was whisked by Israeli and American guards into a protected room. The rocket, and a second one, missed the town. Mr. Bloomberg later played down the event. "Let's not overstate the risks to me," he added. "The risks are to the people of Sderot, on the ground, in their homes, in their businesses." In Sderot, Mr. Bloomberg visited a house that suffered a direct hit from a Hamas-launched rocket just four hours earlier. Mayor Bloomberg also visited the underground pediatric department of the Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon, where he met with children and passed out stuffed toys (picture).

Mr. Bloomberg flew to Israel to express support. He landed the morning after Israel's assault in Gaza began. "I think I speak for an awful lot, almost all Americans, who think that Israel is doing the right thing in defending itself," he said in Ashkelon, offering a message of unequivocal support he would repeat throughout his visit.

Clip and display to show your support for Israel! For a color version download and print this issue of *Israel Matters!* from the TBS website.

# I SUPPORT THE IDF

# כל הכבוד לצה"ל

**Israel and the Israel Defense Forces need your encouragement and support. The following, reprinted from an earlier *Israel Matters!*, are recommended ways to show support.**

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	INTERNET WEBSITE
<b>A Package From Home</b>	The mission of A Package From Home is to strengthen the spirit and resolve of each Israeli soldier and to show appreciation for the sacrifices they make in securing the safety and survival of Israel and its people. The organization sends thousands of packages to Chayalim Bodedim (soldiers without family in Israel) and combat soldiers. Each package contains a letter of appreciation from children and adults from all over the world for their part in securing the country.	<a href="http://www.apackagefromhome.org">www.apackagefromhome.org</a>
<b>American Friends of Magen David Adom - ARMDI</b>	Magen David Adom (MDA – Israel's equivalent to the Red Cross) and its team of trained volunteer and professional medical responders provides the entire nation's pre-hospital emergency medical needs, including disaster, ambulance and blood services.	<a href="http://www.afmda.org">www.afmda.org</a>
<b>Friends of the Israel Defense Forces</b>	Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (FIDF) is the American partner of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers. FIDF helps support social, educational and recreational programs and facilities for the young men and women soldiers of Israel who defend the Jewish homeland.	<a href="http://www.israelsoldiers.org">www.israelsoldiers.org</a>
<b>Hadassah Medical Center</b>	Hadassah University Medical Center, Jerusalem, is known for pioneering new medical techniques. A premier teaching hospital and research center, the Medical Center is equipped with the most sophisticated diagnostic, treatment and research equipment enabling its world renowned faculty to furnish the most modern medical care in an atmosphere that embraces excellence.	<a href="http://www.hadassah.org.il/">www.hadassah.org.il/</a> <b>English</b>
<b>Jewish Agency for Israel</b>	A global partnership committed to the Jewish future that stands on a history-making track record. Together with the United Jewish Communities (UJC) in North America and Keren Hayesod - United Israel Appeal around the world, its partnership has brought 3 million people to Israel. The Jewish Agency believes that Israel stands at the heart of the Jewish future.	<a href="http://www.jewishagency.org">www.jewishagency.org</a>
<b>Sar-El</b>	The Hebrew acronym meaning "Service for Israel", administers the VFI program in Israel. Sar-El was formed in 1982 through the initiative of General A. Davidi (Ret.) who enlisted volunteers to help alleviate manpower shortages during the war in Lebanon. The majority of volunteers work on army bases alongside or under the direction of soldiers and perform duties that allow soldiers and other professional staff to focus their time where their skills are most needed.	<a href="http://www.sar-el.org/">www.sar-el.org/</a>
<b>Taglit – Birthright Israel</b>	An innovative partnership between the people of Israel through their government, local Jewish communities, and leading Jewish philanthropists provides the gift of first time, peer group, educational trips to Israel for Jewish young adults ages 18 to 26. The program was created to send thousands of young Jewish adults from all over the world to Israel as a gift to diminish the growing division between Israel and Jewish communities around the world; to strengthen the sense of solidarity between Israeli youth and Jewish communities around the world, and to promote the role of Israel as a powerful resource in Jewish learning.	<a href="http://www.birthrightisrael.com">www.birthrightisrael.com</a>
<b>Volunteers for Israel (VFI)</b>	The mission of Volunteers for Israel is to connect Americans to Israel through volunteer service. VFI partners with military and civilian organizations that enable volunteers to work side-by-side with Israelis and to promote solidarity and good will among Israelis, American Jews, and other friends of Israel. See Sar-El, above.	<a href="http://www.vfi-usa.org/index.html">www.vfi-usa.org/index.html</a>