

LEARNING FROM LEBANON

Airpower and Strategy in Israel's 2006 War against Hezbollah

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From 12 July until 15 August 2006, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) waged a thirty-four-day war against the Iranian terrorist proxy organization Hezbollah in response to a well-planned raid by a team of Hezbollah combatants from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. That raid resulted in the abduction of two IDF soldiers, who had then been taken back into Lebanon for use as hostages.¹ Code-named Operation CHANGE OF DIRECTION, the greatly escalated counteroffensive that the raid prompted has since been widely regarded as the IDF's most inconclusive combat performance in Israel's history. Waged under the direction of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his minister of defense at the time, Amir Peretz, the campaign was dominated by precision standoff attacks by the Israel Air Force (IAF) and by IDF artillery and battlefield rockets, with no significant commitment of conventional ground troops until the last days of fighting before a cease-fire went into effect.

What mostly accounted for the frustration felt throughout Israel as the conflict unfolded was the fact that at no time during the thirty-four days of combat were IDF forces able to stem the relentless daily barrage of short-range Katyusha rockets that Hezbollah fired into civilian population centers in northern Israel until the cease-fire finally ended that deadly harassment.² Beyond that, the war's achievements fell well short of what Prime Minister Olmert had promised the Israeli people at the campaign's start, namely, an unconditional return of the two abducted soldiers and a decisive crushing of Hezbollah as an effective military presence in southern Lebanon. The IDF's lackluster performance severely undermined the long-standing image of Israel's invincibility in the eyes of the Arab world and the West. It also reflected manifold failures in strategy choice at the highest levels of the Israeli government, both uniformed and civilian.

The IDF's chief of staff at the time, Lieutenant General Dan Halutz, had previously served as commander of the IAF and was the first airman ever to have occupied the country's top military position. Because his initial response to Hezbollah's provocation was to rely almost exclusively on precision standoff attacks for their hoped-for coercive effects rather than opt for a concurrent large-scale commitment of IDF troops on the ground, the campaign's less than decisive outcome led many to conclude afterward that because he was an airman he had succumbed to a natural belief that airpower alone would suffice.

Furthermore, in a widespread early inference that persists to this day, many also adjudged that because of Halutz's initial choice of a strategy that forwent any significant use of ground forces, the IDF's eventual disappointing performance attested, at bottom, to a "failure of airpower." That premature and baseless inference ignored the important fact that from its initial moments onward the IDF's counteroffensive entailed not only around-the-clock strikes by IAF fighters and attack helicopters but also thousands of daily rounds of ground-force artillery and rockets fired into southern Lebanon against enemy targets, as well as covert hit-and-run raids into Hezbollah-infested territory by teams of Israeli special operations forces (SOF). Nevertheless, as a British Royal Air Force officer writing almost a year after the fighting ended observed, in commenting on the range of public impressions of the campaign experience to date, the idea that the IDF's flawed performance reflected a simple "failure of airpower" rather than an accumulation of larger sins of omission and commission by the Israeli civilian and military leadership "appeared at the time to be the most general understanding of this particular campaign within the more thoughtful elements of the media."³

All the same, a duly informed understanding of the campaign's essence must recognize that the Olmert government's chosen initial move for responding to Hezbollah's provocation was never simplistically an air-only gambit but rather a resort to standoff attacks that also included heavy use of IDF ground-force artillery and rockets. In this situation not just Halutz but also his civilian superiors and the IDF's leading ground commanders were not ready, at least at the outset, to commit to a major land push into southern Lebanon, owing to the high troop casualties that any such resort would inevitably produce. Without question, major errors in situation assessment and strategy choice were made by the topmost Israeli leadership, errors that were directly responsible for the campaign's less than satisfactory outcome. Yet if anything "failed" in this accumulation of poor leadership judgment calls, it was not Israeli airpower or any other instrument of warfare per se but rather a blend of ill-founded military and civilian decisions at the highest level with respect to the nature and aims of Israel's opponent; initially avowed goals that were unachievable through *any* mix of military force that the Israeli people and the international community would likely countenance; the

ultimate choice of a strategy for pursuing the campaign's objectives; and the government's mismanagement of public expectations as the counteroffensive unfolded.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF IDF COMBAT OPERATIONS

The *casus belli* for Israel's second Lebanon war came at 9:05 on the morning of 12 July 2006, when a well-practiced team of Hezbollah terrorists crossed the border at an unmonitored point and ambushed an IDF patrol during a fleeting vulnerable moment, killing three soldiers, capturing two more, and taking the latter back into Lebanon. Once the IDF's Northern Command became aware that one of its patrols had failed to check in, it immediately declared a HANNIBAL incident (for a suspected troop abduction) and dispatched another detachment equipped with a Merkava tank to search for the missing soldiers. Immediately after that unit crossed into southern Lebanon in pursuit of the abductors, it got suckered into a trap, resulting in the Merkava's being blown up by a mine and four more soldiers being killed. The event was observed by an IAF unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) orbiting overhead, and streaming electro-optical and infrared imagery of the explosion was transmitted in real time to monitors in IDF command posts and operations centers throughout Israel.

The first IAF contribution to the gathering campaign was a two-plane element of attack helicopters that had been launched to investigate the successive incidents. As soon as he learned of the abduction, Minister of Defense Peretz authorized the immediate execution of two preplanned response options—attacking all of Hezbollah's positions along the Lebanese border with Israel and closing off likely escape routes deeper inside Lebanon with quick-reaction air attacks. A little more than an hour later, the first wave of IAF strike fighters crossed into Lebanon. In this initial attack wave, F-16s destroyed all of Hezbollah's observation posts along the border and dropped the first of numerous bridges across the Litani River farther north. Concurrently, units of the IDF's 91st Division initiated massive artillery fire against Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon.

Shortly after noon that first day, Prime Minister Olmert convened a press conference and declared both emphatically and without any foundation in fact, "The events of this morning cannot be considered a terrorist strike; they are acts of a sovereign state that has attacked Israel without cause." He further announced that his government would assemble that evening to decide on a more definitive course of action and that the IDF's response would be "thundering."⁴

Further compounding that initial misstep, Olmert announced to Israel's parliament five days later, in a speech that showed no sign of any serious prior strategy deliberation, four objectives of his government's intended response—an unconditional return of the two kidnapped soldiers by Hezbollah, the establishment

of a “new situation” along the Israeli-Lebanese border, enhanced IDF deterrence against outside threats, and the disarming and removal of all Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon.⁵ The first of these avowed goals was excessive to a fault, since all Hezbollah’s leader, the fiery terrorist Hassan Nasrallah, would need to do to be able to claim “victory” would be to refuse to return the abducted soldiers, thereby depriving Olmert of the ability to make good on his promise to the Israeli people. More important, it also was counter to Halutz’s more realistic determination that any notion of seeking a return of the abducted soldiers should be rejected forthwith as unattainable—which instantly raises a most basic question as to why Halutz accepted it without challenge.⁶

Olmert’s second avowed goal was equally a reach, but at least it was achievable in principle, were a bold strategy to be followed. The third raised the obvious question of how. The fourth declared goal was as extravagant as the first. Although likewise achievable in principle, it could only be attained at a cost far greater than the Israeli people would most likely have been willing to pay in terms of IDF casualties incurred and a renewed Israeli presence in southern Lebanon with no end in sight.

As the first day of IDF strike operations neared an end, it became increasingly clear that the government’s preferred approach, at least for the time being, would be to rely exclusively on standoff attacks by IAF fighters and attack helicopters, supplemented as appropriate by IDF artillery and M270 Multiple-Launch Rocket System (MLRS) fire against known Hezbollah positions south of the Litani, rather than resorting to any early insertion of troops on the ground. Several months before, in planning for a possible showdown—of just the sort that was now unfolding—against Hezbollah, the IDF’s operations directorate had developed two fairly elaborate contingency-response options. The first, code-named ICEBREAKER (*Shoveret Ha’kerach* in Hebrew), called for a precision standoff-attack operation lasting from forty-eight to seventy-two hours, along with concurrent preparations for a possible limited land counteroffensive to follow promptly thereafter. The second, labeled SUPERNAL WATERS (*Mei Marom*), likewise envisaged several days of standoff-only preparation, a concurrent call-up of reserve forces for possible imminent commitment, and either a halt to standoff fires alone after forty-eight to seventy-two hours or a determined escalation to combined air-land operations aimed at decisively pushing Hezbollah’s forces in southern Lebanon north of the Litani River.⁷

As the crisis gathered, Halutz, determined to avoid any return to what Israelis had come to call “the Lebanese mud” (after the IDF’s forgettable eighteen-year presence in that country), opted not to implement either of these two preplanned options. He chose instead to pursue a standoff-only counteroffensive, at least for the moment, out of a desire to forgo needless risk of early troop fatalities, should

standoff attacks alone be enough to coerce the desired response on Nasrallah's part. In this considered choice, he gained the ready assent of both Olmert and Peretz, who likewise feared implicitly that Israel's rank and file would be unwilling to abide the large number of IDF casualties that the alternatives would almost surely produce. Accordingly, Halutz issued the order for previously tasked IAF fighter squadrons to begin preparing to execute, later that night, a carefully planned preemptive strike, code-named Operation *MISHKAL SGULI* (Specific Weight), against Hezbollah's known and targetable medium-range-rocket storage sites.

Although its success was not publicized at the time by the Olmert government, the IAF operation was conducted without a hitch during the early morning hours of 13 July. In the course of a thirty-four-minute offensive involving forty F-15I and F-16I fighters equipped with imaging infrared targeting pods, only some twenty Lebanese civilians (most likely Hezbollah supporters who happened to be occupying the targeted structures) were assessed by IDF intelligence afterward as having been killed. A senior IAF intelligence officer later characterized the performance as "a case study in operational perfection."⁸

The sudden and unexpected combination of Operation *MISHKAL SGULI* and a determined IAF strike soon thereafter on Hezbollah's Al Manar television station provoked, by way of an escalated enemy response, what two Israeli journalists termed "Hezbollah's rocket war."⁹ That sustained reprisal exposed, for the first time ever, the full extent of the vulnerability of Israel's home front to often deadly, if militarily ineffective, Katyusha fire from southern Lebanon. In addition to its continual barrage of short-range Katyushas, Hezbollah also, for the first time, fired a volley of medium-range rockets into northern Israel, several landing near the town of Afula, thirty miles south of the Lebanese border. One such rocket landed in the suburbs of Haifa during the afternoon of 13 July. That was the deepest that Hezbollah had ever struck into Israel.¹⁰ The attack had the almost instant effect of shutting down Israel's third-largest city and sending thousands of its residents down the southbound highways to escape.

In response to these escalated acts of enemy aggression, the Olmert government raised its own ante in turn by attacking the heart of Hezbollah's command and control complex in the *dahiye* section of south Beirut. Its air strikes into the *dahiye* began during the early evening of 14 July. All civilians were assessed as having previously evacuated the area after the IDF gave a twenty-four-hour advance warning of its intent to attack. In the initial wave, some fifteen headquarters buildings were destroyed by two-thousand-pound, satellite-aided GBU-31 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs) delivered by F-15Is.¹¹ A second target complex, consisting of Nasrallah's personal headquarters and residence, sustained forty JDAM hits within a minute. A senior Israeli official later confirmed

that Nasrallah himself had been targeted in that attack.¹² The military benefits of the attack were negligible; Nasrallah and other top Hezbollah leaders were most likely in an underground bunker that could not be breached by the munitions employed. Nevertheless, the IDF had deemed the *dahiye* complex to be so important, as the most visible symbol of Hezbollah's presence in Lebanon, that it had had no choice but to go after it with all determination.

Shortly thereafter, Hezbollah upped the ante yet again by targeting the Israeli naval vessel *Hanit* (Spear), a Saar-5 corvette built in 1994 and carrying some eighty crew members, which was patrolling in Lebanese waters eight miles west of Beirut. The attack was conducted by what soon proved to have been an Iranian-made variant of the Chinese-developed C-802 antishipping missile, a weapon that IDF intelligence had not even known was in Hezbollah's possession. The missile struck the stern of *Hanit* at 8:42 PM, killing four crew members and causing considerable damage. A second missile, targeted against another Israeli ship, overflew *Hanit* and, apparently inadvertently, struck and sank a foreign merchant vessel cruising thirty-five miles off the Lebanese coast. *Hanit*, disabled by the C-802 but still afloat, got out of the line of fire and eventually made its way back to Ashdod for repairs under its own power. It was later determined that the antimissile radar on board *Hanit* had been out of service the evening of the attack, that the watch officer in charge of the ship's defensive electronic systems had turned some of those systems off without informing the captain, and that the Israeli naval leadership had never directed its crews at sea to bring their antimissile capabilities to alert status—even after the campaign was under way. At bottom, *Hanit's* crew had not activated its defenses against the possibility of a cruise-missile attack because IDF intelligence had not identified such a threat.¹³ As a result, the ship was defenseless when it was attacked.

IDF intelligence officials strongly suspected that a team of skilled Iranian technical experts had either fired or supervised the firing of the C-802 against *Hanit*. Soon after, the head of the IDF's operations directorate, Major General Gadi Eisenkott, disclosed that the enemy combatants who fired the C-802 had received targeting information from Lebanese naval radar stations in Beirut and elsewhere. Those facilities were accordingly struck by IAF attack helicopters.¹⁴ The head of the IDF's planning directorate, then-Brigadier General Ido Nehushtan of the IAF, subsequently reported that the air attacks on Lebanon's port areas had been aimed expressly at eliminating the radar installations said to have supported Hezbollah's attack on *Hanit*. He added, "We see this [C-802] attack as a very clear fingerprint of Iranian involvement." Nehushtan characterized the struck radar facilities as emerging targets of opportunity: "Sometimes new targets come up, like the sea radar, that we will go after."¹⁵ In all, ten Lebanese radar stations along the coast were struck on 15 July and were either destroyed or disabled. The IDF

concurrently imposed a naval blockade along Lebanon's coast, closing the main channel to both incoming and departing traffic.

During the first seven days of fighting, the IAF flew some two thousand fighter and attack-helicopter sorties, engaging around 650 targets with more than a thousand munitions.¹⁶ Yet by the end of that first week it was becoming increasingly apparent that standoff attacks alone would never bring about the Olmert government's declared objectives. All the same, despite that gathering recognition, Israel's ground commanders were making it unambiguously clear that they had no appetite whatever for a reprise of the massive land invasion that Israel had launched into Lebanon in 1982. A former chief of staff, retired lieutenant general Amnon Lipkin-Shahak of the ground forces, frankly acknowledged the IDF's deep reluctance to commit a large number of troops to close combat with Hezbollah, owing to the all but certain prospect of heavy losses.¹⁷

On 20 July, however, in its largest troop activation in four years, the IDF began mobilizing three reserve divisions and concurrently broadcast warnings for all civilians residing in southern Lebanon to evacuate to safer environs north of the Litani. Taken together, those two steps foreshadowed a major Israeli ground push sooner or later. As the move to significant ground operations drew nearer, a debate arose within Israel's defense community over whether limited forays with SOF teams would suffice or whether the IDF should now commit larger numbers of heavy infantry and armored forces. One serving general predicted that the IDF would continue to rely mainly on air operations for the time being, out of a hope that the United States and the international community would not press Israel for an early curtailment of the fighting: "We have no . . . desire to go back in force into Lebanon. But if I'm wrong and there's not enough time and if airpower proves ineffective, then we'll do it."¹⁸

With the continuing daily onslaught of short-range rocket fire into northern Israel, ever more vocal calls began to be heard for a massive ground incursion aimed at driving Hezbollah's forces out of southern Lebanon once and for all. The Olmert government, however, continued to opt for the existing, lower-key ground operations, out of a clear realization that a major land offensive would yield no instant solution to the Katyusha problem. Yet on 26 July, as a reluctant but determined IDF ground push drew closer, General Nehushtan, the head of the IDF's planning directorate and an IAF fighter pilot, told Halutz, "Without a major ground campaign, the IDF [cannot] stop the Katyusha rockets. You must bring this before the government. You need to tell them straight that without a major ground operation, we cannot remove the Katyusha threat. If the government does not approve it . . . we should tell them that they must stop the campaign now." The same day, the IDF's deputy chief, Major General Moshe Kaplinsky, likewise went to Halutz: "We can't go on like this. You must demand a

ground offensive at tomorrow's cabinet meeting."¹⁹ This time Halutz agreed that both were right.

The next day, Olmert's inner council approved a formal call-up of the now-mobilizing IDF reservists (some thirty thousand in all), while still ruling out for the time being a major escalation on the ground. Only on 1 August, after another week of resisting a ground offensive, did the IDF's leaders finally bow to the inevitable and begin preparing for a major incursion into southern Lebanon. This halting embrace of a major ground assault as the campaign continued to drag on was an all but explicit testament to the dawning realization among Israel's top leaders that standoff attacks alone had failed to bring about the government's avowed goals. It also highlighted their gradual understanding that the continuing rocket attacks constituted a centerpiece of Hezbollah's strategic concept of operations.

The 9 August meeting of Olmert's cabinet, which the next day yielded the decision to commit IDF troops to major combat, was the most momentous leadership gathering of the thirty-four-day confrontation. By then, the IDF had accepted the inevitability of a large-scale ground push if the government's eventually expressed determination to reduce the rate of enemy rocket fire into northern Israel was to be honored. To be sure, there remained a deep-seated reluctance at all levels to follow through, but the IDF's leaders saw no other alternative at that point. With the benefit of hindsight, had such an alternative been adopted by the IDF from the campaign's start, it might well have produced a more decisive outcome for Israel. However, it came instead only at the last possible moment, just days before a cease-fire brokered by the United Nations was to go into effect.

The formal order for forward-deployed Israeli troops to move in force into southern Lebanon reached IDF Northern Command's headquarters at five o'clock in the afternoon of 11 August. Two days later, aerial preparation by the IAF and insertions of heli-borne Israeli troops into southern Lebanon sought to extend the IDF's ground presence all the way to the Litani. Not surprisingly, the IDF suffered its highest casualty rate during those last three days of peak-intensity fighting. On 15 August the cease-fire previously agreed to by both sides went into effect. At that, civilians in northern Israel at long last emerged from their bomb shelters, and Nasrallah, fully mindful of the crucial importance of the war of narratives, artfully claimed to have achieved a "strategic and historic victory."²⁰

In the war's eventual tally sheet, the IDF's ground contribution entailed some thirty thousand troops operating in southern Lebanon. As for friendly losses, the final report of the Winograd Commission (so named for its chair, Elyahu Winograd, a retired judge) convened by Olmert to assess his government's performance in the campaign cited 119 IDF troops (half reservists) killed in action, 628 wounded, and 45 Israeli civilians killed by rocket attacks. Hezbollah claimed a mere eighty-one of its fighters killed in action, though the IDF insisted that

the true number was substantially higher. Official IDF figures later stated that Hezbollah, in fact, lost around six hundred trained combatants—more than a tenth of the organization’s estimated total personnel strength.²¹ For its part, the IAF flew nearly nineteen thousand sorties throughout the thirty-four-day campaign.

Yet as effective as the IAF’s combat performance was in a narrow sense, the Olmert government’s originally stated goals of recovering the two abducted soldiers and extirpating Hezbollah as a viable fighting force in southern Lebanon were not achieved. During the war’s last twenty-four hours Hezbollah fired an all-time high of 250 Katyushas into northern Israel, offering a ringing testimony to its tenacity and to the IDF’s inability to reduce the rate of short-range rocket fire to any significant degree at any time throughout the campaign.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

For the most part, in mission areas in which it naturally excelled the IAF performed to its usual high standards of competence. Indeed, the service exceeded the government’s expectations in many respects. Any shortfalls in its effectiveness were due mainly to an absence of adequate actionable intelligence on such vital targets as hidden stockpiles of Katyushas. Bearing credible witness to this performance, the Winograd Commission’s final report, issued in January 2008, concluded that the IAF had displayed “exceptional capabilities” and had turned in some “impressive achievements” throughout the course of the counteroffensive. That document further noted that the scope of IAF operations had been “unprecedented” and that the service had “executed most of its preplanned assignments well.” It added that the service’s performance in some cases “helped to compensate for the severity of the ground force’s failure [in key respects].”²²

To be sure, the airspace over Lebanon presented a relatively benign operating environment for the IAF. There were no air-to-air threats or significant enemy surface defenses to contend with, aside from sporadic fire from infrared surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft artillery. In all, out of its total of nearly nineteen thousand combat and combat support sorties flown the IAF experienced just one aircraft loss as a direct result of enemy fire (a CH-53 helicopter during a night troop insertion operation during the campaign’s last days) and three more due to accidents. As that record well attested, IAF aircrews were essentially able to operate with impunity throughout Lebanon’s airspace, enjoying both freedom from attack and freedom to attack. The IAF’s most notable combat achievements were its unprecedented level of sustained combat-sortie generation, its first-ever preemptive attack against an enemy ballistic missile inventory, its skillful integration of UAVs into both independent air operations and joint air-ground combat, and its courageous combat airlift and search and rescue operations under often intense enemy fire.²³

More than in any previous combat involvement by the IAF, precision strike operations played a prominent role in Operation CHANGE OF DIRECTION. Precision-guided munitions (PGMs) made up 36 percent of the total number of air-delivered weapons expended. For targets in built-up areas, where the avoidance of collateral damage was a major concern, the use of PGMs of various sorts was more on the order of 60 percent. In one instance, a series of attacks against Hezbollah's command and control complex in the *dahiye* sector of south Beirut, *all* of the weapons expended were PGMs of one sort or another.

Yet alongside these achievements, the IAF also experienced its share of difficulties throughout the course of the second Lebanon war. Two problem areas in particular—Hezbollah's short-range rockets, which were dispersed across southern Lebanon, and unsuccessful attempts to eliminate the terrorist organization's most senior leaders—were occasioned by an absence of adequate real-time intelligence regarding the location of those high-value assets. Two other areas in which the IAF was fairly faulted both during and after the war—the extent of Lebanese noncombatant casualties inflicted by bombing and the associated damage done to Lebanon's civilian infrastructure and economy—were the results of ill-advised targeting choices handed down by the Olmert government. Finally, in the realm of air-land integration once ground combat got under way in earnest, both the IAF and the IDF's ground forces later acknowledged multiple breakdowns in their efforts at coordinated joint-force employment resulting from their not having routinely conducted serious large-force training exercises throughout the preceding six years. During those years, the IDF had been almost exclusively fixated on the more immediate and pressing lower-intensity problem of dealing with the Palestinian *intifada* in the occupied territories.

With respect to the intractable Katyusha challenge, Hezbollah fired some 720 of those short-range rockets into northern Israel during the war's first week alone. Six days of relentless IAF retaliatory attacks on the terrorist organization's key military and infrastructure assets throughout Lebanon did nothing whatever to dissuade Nasrallah from continuing this rocket war against Israel. Nor did the IAF's attacks reduce to any significant degree Hezbollah's ability to keep firing Katyushas into Israel virtually at will. By the beginning of the campaign's third week, a steady rain of incoming rockets, an average of 170 or more a day, had driven more than a million residents of northern Israel either into bomb shelters or to safer haven farther south. This unrelenting onslaught finally drove home a clear awareness among Israel's security principals that the short-range rocket challenge presented by Hezbollah was a core strategic threat to Israel's civilian population.

The heart of the IDF's predicament lay in the fact that the Katyushas were essentially untargetable for standoff attacks. Concentrated within a six-mile-deep

strip along Israel's northern border with Lebanon, the rockets were typically hidden in nondescript buildings and storerooms attached to private homes. It was all but impossible for fighter aircrews looking through their targeting pods from altitudes of twenty thousand feet or higher to distinguish a launcher being readied for firing from its surroundings, thanks to Hezbollah's accomplished techniques of dispersal, concealment, and collocation of its launchers with civilian structures. In addition, enemy rocket squads purposely embedded themselves among innocent civilians, whom they used without compunction as human shields, posing for the IAF the constant danger of inadvertent noncombatant casualties.

General Halutz later recalled the persistence of daily harassment by Hezbollah's Katyushas as a "major source of frustration" for the Olmert government.²⁴ Yet the IDF's own failure to undertake any concerted effort to negate the short-range rocket threat, or even to take it seriously until the campaign's last week, was the main reason for the counteroffensive's indecisive conclusion and the associated perception that Hezbollah's survival to fight another day represented an IDF failure. From a purely tactical perspective, of course, Hezbollah's Katyushas, even at worst, were like mosquitoes—annoying in the extreme but of no real military consequence. Yet Hezbollah's rockets were comparable in effect to Iraq's Scuds fired into Israel in 1991 in terms of their political and strategic utility—a factor that the IDF's leadership never fully recognized or duly acted on. The problem was not so much the actual physical destruction, injuries, and fatalities caused by the Katyushas as the intolerable spectacle of large numbers of Israeli citizens hunkered down in shelters for days on end as a result of that unending threat. Ultimately, to negate the Katyushas in a timely way the IDF would have had to go in on the ground in large numbers at least to the Litani River. The Olmert government's determination to avoid high troop casualties at all costs drove the IDF to rely instead largely on standoff attack operations rather than undertake such a costly land offensive.

Not long after the cease-fire went into effect, many were quick to fault the IAF for having failed to negate the Katyusha threat. That charge, however, was without merit. No one in the IAF had ever suggested that such negation was something that Israel's air assets could effectively attempt, let alone ensure. On the contrary, the IAF's leaders freely espoused the opposite view, and their clear stance in that respect was well known by the government long before CHANGE OF DIRECTION was initiated. Just a month before the crisis broke, the IDF had rehearsed its plan for exactly such a situation in a command-post exercise that began with an abduction incident much like the one that eventually occurred on 12 July. At the time, the IAF's commander, Major General Eliezer Shkedy, made it clear that the IAF could not prevent Hezbollah from launching short-range rockets at will, that the IAF's success rate against Katyusha stocks would be only

around 3 percent at best, and that effective neutralization of these hidden rockets would require determined IDF ground operations.²⁵ An important lesson driven home by this experience for the IDF was the absolute need, from the very start of any future crisis of a comparable nature, to be more forceful in controlling the expectations of both the civilian leadership and the Israeli rank and file regarding what airpower could and could not be expected to deliver.²⁶

THE SECOND LEBANON WAR IN STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

As the foregoing discussion has shown in enough detail to make the point, the inconclusive result of Israel's 2006 war against Hezbollah in no way reflected a "failure of airpower," a gross mischaracterization of the Olmert government's flawed approach that unfortunately remains the predominant view among many to this day. The initial belief that the many frustrations experienced by Israelis during the second Lebanon war all emanated simply from the parochial pursuit of an air-only strategy by the fighter pilot who happened to be serving at the time as the IDF's chief has remained remarkably persistent over time despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.²⁷

In fact, the IDF's combat doctrine that prevailed on the eve of the second Lebanon war was in no way air-centric beyond the bounds of reason in the context of the many challenges that Israel faces across the conflict spectrum. Although a career fighter pilot by background who naturally believed in the transformed character of contemporary air warfare capabilities, General Halutz had repeatedly voiced balanced views on the evolved role of airpower in joint warfare. He freely admitted his long-standing recognition that an air arm by itself, whatever its combat advantages, "cannot stick the flag on a hilltop."²⁸

More important, the doctrinal elevation of precision standoff attack over close-quarters ground maneuver as the IDF's preferred approach to modern warfare was not, as many have suggested, a forced concoction by Halutz derived from his natural prejudices in favor of airpower. On the contrary, that reorientation had been first instituted several years before the second Lebanon war by the IDF's then-chief of staff, Ehud Barak, a ground-forces general. Barak had determined that in light of recent technology improvements and the accumulation of American aerial-warfare successes since Operation DESERT STORM, the primary focus of IDF options planning for major contingencies should be, as one Israeli scholar put it, "on fire and not on maneuver, on neutralizing the enemy and not on decisively defeating it via conquest of territory."²⁹

Finally, Halutz had scarcely been left unprepared by his upbringing as an airman to serve in the position of IDF chief of staff. After the disappointing conclusion of Israel's second Lebanon war, some retired IDF ground force critics complained that he had spent his entire service life in an antiseptic airman's

world totally removed from the gritty realities of “boots on the ground.” Yet the fact is that on entering the general-officer ranks Halutz gained exposure to ground-force issues to a degree uncommon for an airman, thanks to a succession of senior seasoning assignments in Israel’s joint arena. Starting in 1998, he served a two-year tour as head of the IDF’s operations directorate. In 2004, after his subsequent four-year stint as IAF commander beginning in 2000, he moved up to become the IDF’s deputy chief of staff before being picked in 2005 by then–Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as the first IAF general to be trusted with the nation’s top military leadership position. Halutz testified to the Winograd Commission that on assuming the position of chief of staff he had felt that he was entering office with “a large measure of familiarity with the essence of ground operations.” He added that when Barak, by then minister of defense, had appointed him commander of the IAF in 2000, Barak had commented that Halutz was already “the greenest blue helmet in the IDF.”³⁰

True enough, on the surface, and to many unversed in the details of ongoing combat operations at the time, the first two weeks of Operation CHANGE OF DIRECTION indeed bore ample signs of being an air-only effort. We now know, however, with the benefit of subsequent revelations regarding the Olmert government’s inner deliberations as the campaign unfolded, that Halutz never insisted on such an approach based on a belief that it offered the most promising solution to mission needs. On the contrary, after the campaign ended he declared categorically in response to charges that he had wrongly sought to achieve the government’s goals with an air-only strategy, “I never said an aerial campaign would suffice [for the IDF] to prevail. The original plan was to combine an aerial campaign with a [possible eventual] ground maneuver.”³¹

Halutz also stressed repeatedly that he had never used the term “airpower” in characterizing his counteroffensive plan. Rather, what he had sought to employ to useful effect was standoff *firepower*. The IDF’s response to Hezbollah’s provocation of 12 July, Halutz rightly emphasized, was neither initiated as, nor ever envisaged as being, an air-only campaign. In clear testimony to that fact, IDF operations from the campaign’s first day until the cease-fire went into effect also included the firing of some 173,000 artillery shells and MLRS rounds, more than were expended during the much more intense Yom Kippur War of 1973.³²

If the flaws in the IDF’s performance during its second Lebanon war did not emanate from misplaced reliance on the assumed promise of airpower, then wherein lies their explanation? The main reason behind the Olmert government’s initial strategy for responding to Hezbollah’s provocation was simply that no one among the senior Israeli leadership, military or civilian, wanted an open-ended ground war. It was not as if, as one American commentator later put it, General Halutz was somehow “guilty of ‘preventing’ the ground forces from otherwise

carrying out *their* preferred and *the* optimum plan.”³³ The IDF’s ground commanders were equally opposed to a major land push for numerous reasons, not least of which was the fact that Israel’s ground forces were unprepared for major combat against a robust opponent like Hezbollah, having conducted only domestic policing actions against the Palestinian resistance during the preceding six years.

Yet at the same time, Halutz wanted to teach Hezbollah a lesson that its leaders would not soon forget. Ever since the IDF’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, Nasrallah’s combatants had systematically taken up positions vacated by the departing Israeli forces. The preeminent challenge for the IDF in that situation, it naturally followed, was to contain Hezbollah’s looming military presence, notwithstanding the many tactical advantages that the terrorist organization accrued from its new perches just across the Lebanese border.

During his previous assignment as the IAF’s commander, Halutz had maintained that the Barak government’s policy of answering with restraint Hezbollah’s continued tests of the limits of Israel’s tolerance—unprovoked border incidents and random rocket firings into northern Israel—was prejudicial to the nation’s security interests. He later demanded, in an order to the IDF’s operations directorate in May 2006, a concrete contingency plan against Hezbollah.³⁴ With the final provocation of the abduction on 12 July 2006, Halutz decided that the time had come to engineer a sea change, to implement a fundamentally different approach—hence his decision to code-name the IDF’s counteroffensive Operation CHANGE OF DIRECTION.

In any case, the decision to begin the campaign with standoff-only attacks was not Halutz’s alone. It was the consensus view among Israel’s top civilian and military leaders, because it appeared to be the country’s best available option as an initial response. As Lieutenant General Shaul Mofaz, a land combatant, former IDF chief of staff, and serving member of Olmert’s cabinet, later explained in his testimony to the Winograd Commission, “If you can do it from the air, it is better. I do not believe any of us would want to use ground forces if you can attain [your objectives] otherwise.”³⁵

Another reason for initiating the counteroffensive with standoff-only attacks was the leadership’s keen appreciation that, as noted above, Israel’s ground forces were not ready for major combat. As one IDF unit commander later recalled in this regard, “Our main problem was that everyone in the army knew what had to be done, and [yet] no one wanted to do it, especially since we knew that it would cost us a lot of casualties.”³⁶ During the government’s initial deliberations over such a daunting strategy alternative, the IDF’s deputy chief, General Kaplinsky, and other land force generals warned Olmert that a major ground invasion could cost the IDF as many as four hundred soldiers killed in action.³⁷

In his memoirs published in 2010, Halutz reminded readers of the more modest goals that he had issued to the IAF and to Northern Command: “The IDF embarked on the Lebanon II war with predefined aims. These aims were limited. Not one of them defined the war as aiming to destroy, crush, or wipe out the Hezbollah organization from the map of Lebanese reality.”³⁸ Yet the inescapable fact remains that the former IDF chief’s prime minister had avowed precisely such a goal, to all intents and purposes, in a public pronouncement six days into the campaign. That declaration by the nation’s top leader gave instant rise to unrealistic expectations on the part of the Israeli public, expectations that the IDF lacked the wherewithal to fulfill with any combination of air and ground forces that domestic and international opinion would likely countenance. Worse yet, it played perfectly into Nasrallah’s hands by allowing him to claim at the campaign’s end, with complete credibility in the eyes of the Arab world and of most Western observers, that Hezbollah had emerged “victorious” from the IDF’s counter-offensive simply by having survived.

On this point, important for a proper understanding of where the IDF’s campaign plan ultimately went wrong, Halutz remarked in passing and all but dismissively in his memoirs that “among the public and also at the political level, there were unrealistically high expectations that were built, among other things, by flawed public relations.”³⁹ Yet as correct as that statement was, strictly speaking and as far as it went, it was exactly that palpable disconnect that in the end proved most consequential. The disconnect between what the prime minister had promised the Israeli people during the campaign’s first week and what the IDF had set about more modestly to accomplish on the battlefield yielded an outcome that gave both self-interested and neutral onlookers alike every reason to conclude that the IDF’s counteroffensive had ended in “failure.”

In fact, Prime Minister Olmert, seemingly on impulse, promised considerably more during the campaign’s first week than all of Israel’s forces together could possibly have delivered at a price that anyone in the country would have been willing to pay. For his part, General Halutz evidently failed to preempt that egregious overreach by making it unambiguously clear to his political superior beforehand what the IDF could and could not do. As a result, he and Olmert marched to different drummers throughout the campaign, a fact that was largely responsible for the mounting sense among the Israeli people and most outside observers as the endgame neared that Israel had failed to achieve its avowed goals. Nasrallah lost no time in leveraging the point for maximum propaganda value by claiming a “divine victory” for Hezbollah as the cease-fire went into effect.⁴⁰

In the end, informed observers can reasonably disagree in hindsight about the appropriateness of Halutz’s standoff-only initial move for Operation CHANGE OF DIRECTION. That choice, it bears repeating, was shared at first not only by the

Olmert government's top civilian leaders but also by the IDF's leading ground-force commanders. Yet it is all but impossible to avoid concluding that for whatever reason, Halutz failed to prevent his prime minister from writing a check that the IDF could not cash—that is, from articulating unattainable goals on the campaign's sixth day and thereafter allowing them to persist in the minds of Israeli citizens and outside observers. That lapse had profound adverse consequences for how the campaign has been viewed ever since, however more tolerably, and even positively, that matters may ultimately have turned out for Israel—a point to which we will return.

There was nothing wrong in principle with the Olmert government's decision to respond to Hezbollah's provocation with escalated force. Yet its chosen response was apparently not explored in all its ramifications before being set in motion. Clearly there was more than one conceivable alternative available to the IDF in the immediate aftermath of the provocation. By all signs, however, those alternatives were not systematically identified, explored, or rank-ordered by the civilian leadership or General Halutz. As a result, the IDF initiated its counteroffensive without anyone in the government's having given adequate thought to the campaign's likely conclusion.

An especially glaring deficiency in the government's chosen approach was that from the very start it offered no ready way of dealing with Hezbollah's Katyusha fire should coercion solely through standoff attacks fail to elicit the desired result. A no less glaring failure of situation assessment and strategy, this time particularly on the IDF's part, was that until very late stemming the rate of short-range rocket fire into northern Israel was never high on its list of priorities. Indeed, both the IDF's uniformed principals and the government's civilian leaders misunderstood fundamentally the strategic significance of the Katyushas until they finally awakened, in the campaign's last days, to the corrosive effect that the unrelenting, daily rocket fire was having on Israeli morale. Until then, their tendency had been to dismiss the Katyushas as representing merely a nuisance factor.

Yet another shortcoming in the IDF's planning and conduct of the war was a failure of insight into the true essence of the opponent it was facing. Indeed, Israel's entire security establishment erred in not recognizing from the campaign's start that it was fighting not just a homegrown Lebanese terrorist organization but a well-equipped and well-resourced vanguard of Iran. An associated issue here has to do with what was needed to defeat a stateless opponent, a challenge that entailed a fundamentally new paradigm of combat. Nasrallah, for his part, as the IAF's Brigadier General Itai Brun later pointed out, "correctly identified Israel's need for a clear and unambiguous victory in a short war. Thus, Hezbollah only had to survive" and to demonstrate its survivability by continuing to fire

rockets at a peak rate right up to the cease-fire. Hezbollah's strategy was, at its heart, "victory through nondefeat."⁴¹

In hindsight, the immediate challenge presented to Prime Minister Olmert and his government by Hezbollah's provocation of 12 July 2006 was clear and simple. If going in on the ground massively from the very start was unacceptable, then the proper opening move by the IDF should instead have been a sharp but short standoff reprisal with the aim of causing as much physical harm to Hezbollah's military infrastructure as possible within a finite period of time. With Nasrallah having thus been made to feel the greatest possible pain for his transgression, the punitive response would then have been abruptly halted, in the satisfaction that a clear message had been sent to Hezbollah and its Iranian sponsors.

If, alternatively, the Olmert government had deemed it essential to eradicate once and for all Hezbollah's ability to rain at will short-range rocket fire on innocent Israeli civilians, a properly targeted campaign of precision standoff attacks accompanied by a large-scale ground counteroffensive to regain control of southern Lebanon up to the Litani River was the only serviceable option. Either way, the image of Israel and the credibility of its deterrent would be preserved. No halfway solution would have worked, and yet that is exactly the kind of option that the Olmert government attempted to find in the end.

All of that said, looking back on Israel's second Lebanon war six years later, one can fairly ask whether the IDF's campaign was really that much of a lost cause after all. To begin with, it was easy enough for Nasrallah to proclaim in the war's early aftermath that he had "prevailed" simply by virtue of having survived. Yet the fact is that as a result of the IDF's sustained onslaught, his organization took a major beating and paid a high price for its abduction of the two Israeli soldiers. The IDF by its own accounting killed more than six hundred of his most seasoned combatants and severely wounded around a thousand more.⁴² In addition, a considerable portion of Hezbollah's military infrastructure throughout Lebanon was destroyed or badly damaged by the IDF's relentless aerial and artillery bombardment. The campaign also made for an instructive experience for the IDF, in that it unmasked the true nature of Hezbollah, its strengths and weaknesses, how it fights, and the lethality of its Iran-supplied rockets and antitank weapons. By undertaking its response with such sustained intensity and vigor, Israel showed its determination to deal with Hezbollah using grossly disproportionate measures should a future challenge by the terrorist organization be deemed to require such force majeure.

In sum, the IDF's campaign against Hezbollah was not quite the unqualified setback for Israel that many had initially thought. Consider, in this regard, the new strategic reality that the second Lebanon war occasioned for both Hezbollah

and Israel. From the first weeks of his elevation to Hezbollah's leadership in 1992 all the way up to the start of Operation CHANGE OF DIRECTION, Nasrallah had lobbed short-range rockets into northern Israel from time to time with maddening regularity and impunity. Yet not a single rocket was fired from Lebanon into Israel during the years after the campaign ended until three were launched, desultorily and without effect, during the IDF's twenty-three-day operation against Hamas in the Gaza Strip in December 2008 and January 2009. Even though Hezbollah had by that time accumulated more short-range rockets than ever before, its leaders were quick to disavow any responsibility for those launches. This suggests that Nasrallah's postcampaign motivations and conduct were most decidedly affected by the significant bloodying that was dealt to his organization by the IDF in July and August 2006.

Finally, Hezbollah's role as a forward combat arm of Iran was starkly dramatized by the campaign experience, thus bringing into sharper focus the IDF's already keen appreciation of the seriousness of the Iranian threat. Moreover, Israel's sobering experience during the second Lebanon war drove home the emergent fact that a nonstate opponent of Hezbollah's sophistication was far more than just a nuisance factor for the country's security planning. On the contrary, with its revealed ability to hold large numbers of Israeli civilians at risk, the radical Islamist movement had in fact become what one Israeli analyst described as "a strategic threat of the first order."⁴³ In light of the substantial setback that was dealt by the IDF's counteroffensive both to Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and to the overarching strategic interests of Iran, to say nothing of the calm that has prevailed along Israel's northern border ever since the cease-fire went into effect in August 2006, one can fairly say about CHANGE OF DIRECTION what Mark Twain once said of Wagnerian opera—it's not as bad as it sounds. The only real remaining downside, as the IAF's Brigadier General Brun frankly admitted in an after-campaign reflection, is that "we [the IDF and the Olmert government] failed to protect Israel's civilian population and did not succeed in shortening the war."⁴⁴

ON BALANCE

Operation CHANGE OF DIRECTION represented the first time in Israel's six-decade history that a major confrontation ended without a clear-cut military victory. The campaign's less than satisfactory outcome for Tel Aviv did not emanate from any particular single-point failure, least of all on the part of the IAF's universally acclaimed combat edge. Rather, in the words of two informed Israeli commentators, it stemmed from "an overall accumulation of circumstances."⁴⁵ More to the point, the war's outcome in no way represented a failure of Israel's air assets to perform to the fullest extent of their considerable, though not unlimited,

capabilities. Instead, it reflected an overarching deficiency in strategy choice, the most flawed elements of which were a failure by the IDF to update standing contingency plans for the immediate needs of the challenge at hand; an inconsistency between avowed goals, available means, and will to pursue them successfully; and placement by the leadership of friendly casualty avoidance above mission accomplishment in its rank-ordering of combat priorities.

Viewed in retrospect, it was clearly an overreach for Prime Minister Olmert to announce the all but unattainable goal of extirpating, in a single and limited combat operation, Hezbollah's deeply entrenched military presence in southern Lebanon. As a former IDF ground force general later observed in this regard, the government's decision to rely mainly on precision standoff attacks rather than to commit strength on the ground in pursuit of the prime minister's ephemeral goal stemmed not from any preexisting bias on Halutz's part in favor of airpower but rather from his superiors' "setting unrealistic objectives . . . and [then] creating the illusion that they were achievable . . . at a low price."⁴⁶ That is, buying into a baseless view of what airpower (or, more correctly, standoff firepower) alone could achieve by way of coercing desired enemy behavior was not where the Olmert government went astray. Rather, its most consequential misstep was taking an unreflective view of what military power of *any* kind, unaided by an effective strategy, might achieve in a campaign in which declared goals were so ambitious and unbounded.

That misstep going into Israel's war against Hezbollah in July 2006 was roundly corrected by the time the IDF was ready, a little more than two years later, to embark on its campaign against Hamas in response to similar rocket firings from Gaza against civilian population centers in southern Israel. Indeed, if there ever was an instance of lessons indicated by one disappointing combat performance being truly *learned* and assimilated by a defense establishment in preparation for its next high-stakes showdown, this was an exemplary case in point. The IDF's response to the insights driven home by its sobering experience during the second Lebanon war represents a classic example of institutional adaptability and self-improvement. As the director of the IDF's Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies recounted in an after-action reflection on the implications of Israel's response to Hezbollah in 2006, the IDF internalized a substantial number of appropriate conclusions from its manifest errors in planning and readiness. These conclusions included assessed needs for significant increases in regular and reserve ground force training, for renewed emphasis on high- as well as low-intensity warfare contingencies in planning, training, and force development, and for greater stress on cross-service integration in planning and training across the entire spectrum of likely future warfare.⁴⁷

For their part, the IAF's leaders gleaned a similar but more service-specific set of conclusions from their rocky experience of working with Israel's ground forces during the second Lebanon war. Those conclusions included a need for deeper and more intimate mutual acquaintance and understanding between Israel's air and land warfare communities; joint planning of ground schemes of maneuver that routinely include IAF participation from the very start; stronger IAF representation at division and brigade levels; and decentralized control of attack-helicopter operations in air-land warfare.⁴⁸

The IDF's subsequent twenty-three-day counteroffensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip in late December 2008 and early January 2009 stood in marked contrast to the Olmert government's flawed conduct of the second Lebanon war. It was dominated by a more realistic matching of desired ends with available means. It also featured a greater willingness by Israel's political and military leaders to risk paying the campaign's likely price if need be.⁴⁹ In the more focused and disciplined way in which they planned and carried out their successful campaign against Hamas, those leaders substantially erased any residual doubts about the credibility of Israel's deterrent against any would-be regional challengers, for at least the near term.

NOTES

1. Hezbollah, which means "Party of God" in Arabic, is a virulently radical transnational Islamist movement that first arose in Lebanon in the 1980s and 1990s. It further deepened its roots there in the early aftermath of Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 after the latter's occupation of that region for eighteen years following the first Lebanon war, of 1982. It is lavishly funded by Iran and is unswervingly devoted to the destruction of Israel. For an overview of the terrorist organization, see Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007).
2. The Katyusha is an inaccurate, unguided 107 mm or 122 mm rocket with a range of between twelve and twenty miles. It is essentially the same weapon as that employed by the Soviet army against the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front during World War II. Hezbollah had an estimated thirteen thousand or more of them stockpiled in southern Lebanon when the war began.
3. Group Capt. Neville Parton, Royal Air Force, "Israel's 2006 Campaign in the Lebanon: A Failure of Air Power or a Failure of Doctrine?," *Royal Air Force Air Power Review* (Summer 2007), p. 81.
4. Roger Cohen, "Price of Disengagement: Beirut and Gaza Burn," *International Herald Tribune*, 15 July 2006; "The Crisis Widens," *Economist*, 15 July 2006, p. 45.
5. Maj. Gen. Isaac Ben-Israel, IAF (Ret.), *The First Israel-Hezbollah Missile War* (Tel Aviv: Program for Security Studies, College of Policy and Government, Tel Aviv Univ., May 2007; available in Hebrew only), p. 19; Amos Har'el and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 107–108.
6. Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, IAF (Ret.), interview, IAF Headquarters, Tel Aviv, 26 March 2008.
7. Head of the IAF's Campaign Planning Department during Operation CHANGE OF

- DIRECTION, interview, IAF Headquarters, Tel Aviv, 26 March 2008.
8. Brig. Gen. Itai Brun, IAF, Director, Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies, interview, Gililot Base, Tel Aviv, 26 March 2008.
 9. Har'el and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, p. viii.
 10. Karby Leggett, Jay Solomon, and Neil King, Jr., "Threat of Wider Mideast War Grows," *Wall Street Journal*, 14 July 2006.
 11. Lt. Col. David Eshel, IDF (Ret.), "Summary of Israeli Air Force Strikes: 12–21 July 2006," *Defense Update: News Analysis by David Eshel*, www.defense-update.com/.
 12. Ken Ellingwood, "Hezbollah Wields Improved Arsenal," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 July 2006.
 13. Mark Mazetti and Thom Shanker, "Arming of Hezbollah Reveals U.S. and Israeli Blind Spots," *New York Times*, 19 July 2006.
 14. Alon Ben-David, "Hizbullah Hits Israeli Corvette," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 26 July 2006, p. 18.
 15. Greg Myre, "Israel Widens Scope of Attacks across Lebanon," *New York Times*, 16 July 2006.
 16. Helene Cooper and Steven Erlanger, "U.S. Appears to Be Waiting to Act on Israeli Air-strikes," *New York Times*, 19 July 2006.
 17. Jay Solomon, Mariam Fam, Karby Leggett, and Neil King, Jr., "Israel Weighs Ground Offensive in Southern Lebanon," *Wall Street Journal*, 20 July 2006.
 18. Gerald F. Seib, "Mideast: Israel Draws Little U.S. Ire," *Wall Street Journal*, 22 July 2006.
 19. Quoted in "IDF Shake-Up over Hezbollah War," *JINSA Online*, 23 March 2007, www.jinsa.org/.
 20. John Kifner, "Fragile Cease-Fire Allows Thousands to Return Home," *New York Times*, 15 August 2006.
 21. For further discussion and documentation of these and related figures, see Lambeth, *Air Operations in Israel's War against Hezbollah*, pp. 70–71.
 22. *Final Winograd Report on the Second Lebanon War* (Washington, D.C.: February 2008), chap. 9, "Arms, Combat Support Units, and Special Operations," s.v. "The Air Force, Facts," paras. 8, 18, 24, and 26.
 23. For more detailed amplification on these and other achievements, see Lambeth, *Air Operations in Israel's War against Hezbollah*, pp. 73–133.
 24. Halutz, interview.
 25. Har'el and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, p. 62.
 26. Brig. Gen. Yohanan Locker, IAF, head of the Air Division, interview, IAF Headquarters, Tel Aviv, 27 March 2008.
 27. In an early example of this persistent misconception, the usually balanced and authoritative London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), in its annual survey of the international security scene issued several months after the war ended, concluded that Halutz, IAF airman and presumed air-power enthusiast that he was, had "convinced the militarily naïve [Israeli] political leadership . . . that air power *alone* could bring Hezbollah to its knees." *Strategic Survey 2007: The Annual Review of World Affairs* (London: IISS, 2007), p. 231 [emphasis added].
 28. Arie Egozi, "Israeli Air Power Falls Short," *Flight International*, 1–7 August 2006.
 29. Ofer Shelah, *The Israeli Army: A Radical Proposal* (Tel Aviv: Kinneret Zmora-Bitan, 2003), p. 37.
 30. "Testimony by Lieutenant General Dan Halutz, IDF Chief of Staff, to the Winograd Commission Investigating the Second Lebanon War," unpublished English translation from the original Hebrew, Jerusalem, 28 January 2007 [hereafter Halutz, testimony].
 31. Alon Ben-David, "Israel Introspective after Lebanon Offensive," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 23 August 2006, pp. 18–19.
 32. Halutz, interview.
 33. William M. Arkin, *Divining Victory: Air Power in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air Univ. Press, 2007), p. 134 [emphasis original].
 34. Halutz, testimony.
 35. Testimony by Minister of Transportation Shaul Mofaz to the Winograd Commission Investigating the Second Lebanon War.
 36. Har'el and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, p. 119.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

38. Dan Halutz, *Begova Einayim* [At Eye Level] (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot Books, 2010; available in Hebrew only).
39. Ibid.
40. Quoted in Arkin, *Divining Victory*, p. 242.
41. Brig. Gen. Itai Brun, IAF, "The Second Lebanon War, 2006," in *A History of Air Warfare*, ed. John Olsen (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2009), p. 314.
42. Halutz, *Begova Einayim*.
43. Ron Tira, "Shifting Tectonic Plates: Basic Assumptions on the Peace Process Revisited," *Strategic Assessment* (Tel Aviv) (June 2009), pp. 100, 102.
44. Brig. Gen. Itai Brun, IAF, "The Second Lebanon War as a 'Wake-Up Call': A Strategic Perspective and Major Lessons Learned" (undated briefing charts, Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies, Glilot Base, Tel Aviv).
45. Har'el and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, p. ix.
46. Brig. Gen. Shlomo Brom, IDF (Ret.), "Political and Military Objectives in a Limited War against a Guerilla Organization," in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, ed. Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2007), p. 20.
47. Brun, "Second Lebanon War as a 'Wake-Up Call.'"
48. Brig. Gen. Ya'akov Shaharabani, head of the IAF Helicopter Division, interview, IAF Headquarters, Tel Aviv, 31 March 2009.
49. For a fuller account of this second IDF campaign and the many improvements in joint combat performance reflected in it, see Lambeth, *Air Operations in Israel's War against Hezbollah*, pp. 221–76.

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