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The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict in Lebanon provides a useful illustration of some of the challenges the U.S. might face during a military intervention to engage an active non-state terrorist or guerilla threat in a weak, failing or failed state. During this conflict Israel sought to substantially degrade the threat posed by Hezbollah, a non-state guerilla militia operating with free rein along Israel's northern border from within Lebanon. Wishing to avoid a re-occupation of southern Lebanon, Israel sought to achieve its objectives through the application of precision standoff firepower and special operations forces. Israel's failure demonstrates the limits of these capabilities, widely credited for the U.S. success in Afghanistan in 2001, when employed without the benefit of an indigenous ally and against a more militarily developed guerilla adversary. Further, comparison of the al Qaeda enemy in Afghanistan and Hezbollah enemy in Lebanon demonstrates the dramatic impact that substantial state support can have on the tenacity and lethality of an irregular non-state force.

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Israel's Second Lebanon War: A Failure of Afghan Model Warfare?

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10 May 2007

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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10 May 2007

Abstract

The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict in Lebanon provides a useful illustration of some of the challenges the U.S. might face during a military intervention to engage an active non-state terrorist or guerilla threat in a weak, failing or failed state. During this conflict Israel sought to substantially degrade the threat posed by Hezbollah, a non-state guerilla militia operating with free rein along Israel's northern border from within Lebanon. Wishing to avoid a re-occupation of southern Lebanon, Israel sought to achieve its objectives through the application of precision standoff firepower and special operations forces. Israel's failure demonstrates the limits of these capabilities, widely credited for the U.S. success in Afghanistan in 2001, when employed without the benefit of an indigenous ally and against a more militarily developed guerilla adversary. Further, comparison of the al Qaeda enemy in Afghanistan and Hezbollah enemy in Lebanon demonstrates the dramatic impact that substantial state support can have on the tenacity and lethality of an irregular non-state force.

Israel's Second Lebanon War: A Failure of Afghan Model Warfare?

Introduction

One challenge of the Global War on Terrorism is the threat posed by non-state terrorist actors operating from weak, failing and failed states. Although the United States military is already engaged in pre-emptive interagency efforts to reduce the freedom of action terrorist groups enjoy in such areas, the possibility remains that the U.S. will again need to undertake a major military intervention in such a territory to engage an active non-state threat, as it did with al Qaeda in Afghanistan in 2001. In this respect, the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict in Lebanon provides a useful illustration of some of the difficulties the U.S. might encounter. During this conflict, now commonly referred to in Israel as the Second Lebanon War, Israel sought to substantially degrade the threat posed by Hezbollah, a non-state guerilla militia operating with free rein along Israel's northern border from within Lebanon. Wishing to avoid a re-occupation of southern Lebanon, Israel sought to achieve its objectives through the application of precision standoff firepower and special operations forces.[1] Israel's failure demonstrates the limits of these capabilities, widely credited for the U.S. success in Afghanistan in 2001, when employed without the benefit of an indigenous ally and against a more militarily developed guerilla adversary.

This paper will not seek to explain or explore Israel's decision to go to war or posit an opinion on whether or not that war was necessary, justified, moral or in Israel's best national interests; these aspects are particular to Israel's unique geopolitical and internal political

[1] The term "special forces" technically refers to a specific subset of the special operations forces of the U.S. Army but will be used here interchangeably with the term "special operations forces" for the sake of flow and readability. Herein, either term is meant to refer to a special operations force capable of conducting intrusive reconnaissance and targeting, regardless of service.

situation and largely irrelevant to the consideration of potential future U.S. parallels described above. Rather, this paper will limit itself to an examination of the military operational-level lessons learned from the Israeli experience in the Second Lebanon War. More specifically, it will seek to draw conclusions about some of the challenges a first-world military faces in attempting to reduce a foreign-based guerilla force through rapid application of precision standoff firepower and special operations forces. To do so, the Israeli experience in the Second Lebanon War will be compared against the American experience in Afghanistan as analyzed by Dr. Stephen Biddle in his study "Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy."[2] Viewing the Lebanon War within the context of Dr. Biddle's arguments regarding the so-called "Afghan Model" reinforces the validity of the conclusions Dr. Biddle derives regarding the U.S. success in Afghanistan. Israel's experience in Lebanon serves to confirm that though central to dynamic U.S. success in Afghanistan, synergistic employment of precision standoff firepower and special operations forces is insufficient in and of itself to guarantee success in even a limited conflict. Further, comparison of the non-state adversaries in each conflict demonstrates the dramatic impact that substantial state support can have on the lethality of an irregular guerilla force.

[2] Stephen Biddle, *Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2002). Biddle summarizes and updates this argument in a discussion paper entitled *Special Forces and the Future of Warfare: Will SOF Predominate in 2020?* generated for the National Intelligence Council's 2020 project, dated 24 May 2004 and available online at the NIC website at http://www.dni.gov/nic/.

The War

On 12 July 2006 Hezbollah staged a bold cross-border kidnapping attack against two IDF (Israeli Defence Force) HUMWVs patrolling the Lebanon border, abducting two Israeli soldiers, injuring two others and killing three more. Five more Israeli troops were killed during a subsequent IDF rescue mission into Lebanese territory. Hezbollah's objective was to use the kidnapped soldiers as leverage to secure an exchange for prisoners held in Israeli custody. Coming just a few short weeks after the kidnapping of an IDF soldier by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, however, and being interpreted by Israeli leadership as evidence of a dangerous erosion of Israel's deterrent credibility, this attack elicited a far more sweeping Israeli retaliation than previous comparable Hezbollah border-area actions.

On 13 July Israel initiated Operation CHANGE OF DIRECTION, a major aerial bombing campaign supported by artillery and naval bombardment and cross-border reconnaissance and raiding operations by special operations forces. Pounding Hezbollah's strongholds in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley and south Beirut, Israel also imposed a naval blockade and struck the Beirut airport and key highways, roads and bridges throughout Lebanon in an attempt to isolate Hezbollah from its military patrons in Syria and Iran. Hezbollah retaliated by unleashing a steady bombardment campaign of their own, launching hundreds of unguided surface-to-surface rockets against population centers in northern Israel.

Unable to accomplish its objectives from the air, Israel reluctantly and gradually complemented this effort with a ground offensive. By 23 July significant IDF ground forces had crossed into south Lebanon with the objective to rout Hezbollah forces and destroy Hezbollah's capacity to conduct massed rocket attacks, which had continued unabated despite heavy Israeli Air Force (IAF) and artillery bombardment. The IDF ground forces

encountered stiff resistance from Hezbollah fighters in hardened positions, suffering considerable casualties and delays in their penetration of south Lebanon. On 12 August Israel mounted a final push to strengthen its position in South Lebanon ahead of a United Nations ceasefire, tripling its forces over a weekend and advancing north to the Litani River. Despite this effort, Hezbollah rocketfire continued and Hezbollah ground forces continued to operate and hold territory in south Lebanon through the war's end.[3]

Objectives and Outcomes

In order to assess Israel's performance in the war it is necessary to review Israeli objectives. Although initial stated objectives included the immediate and unconditional release of the two abducted soldiers and disarmament of Hezbollah by the Lebanese government and armed forces, both of these seemed unrealistic from the outset, the former because it would constitute an unacceptable public acknowledgment of defeat for Hezbollah and the second because it was very likely beyond the capability of either the feeble Lebanese government or the fragmented and militarily outmatched Lebanese armed forces. The more compelling objectives articulated by Israel described a desire to restore the credibility of Israel's deterrence and to substantially reduce Hezbollah's military capability and dislodge it from Israel's northern border.[4] Though still difficult to quantify due to the absence of objective and verifiable data on Hezbollah's military strength, these last two objectives are the least subjective criteria by which to evaluate the IDF's performance and the most relevant to this discussion.

[3] International Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 48, Israel/Palestine/Lebanon: Climbing Out of the Abyss, 25 July 2006, pp.1.
[4] International Crisis Group, pp.18-19.

With respect to these objectives, the evidence available suggests that although significant damage was done to certain Hezbollah capabilities, its medium and long-range rocket forces in particular, and to much of its visible physical infrastructure, the organization remained in place and a viable fighting force through the end of the conflict, as evidenced both by its ability to retain and defend key terrain in south Lebanon and generate heavy rocket fires into northern Israel. Public acknowledgements of defeat by certain high-ranking IDF officers after the conflict and the establishment of the Winograd commission to investigate the conduct of the war serve to confirm Israel's failure to achieve its military goals.[5]

The Afghan Model

In his monograph "Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare," Dr. Stephen Biddle takes a critical view of what he calls the "Afghan Model," a concept of modern warfare that grew out of the American experience in Afghanistan and centers on the use of special operations forces and airpower, specifically air-delivered precision-guided munitions, to defeat dispersed guerilla opponents. Per Biddle, Afghan Model advocates maintain that use of special forces targeting with standoff precision strike achieves an effect that can be a full potential substitute for large-scale close combat on the ground. Dr. Biddle argues that this model represents a mislearning of the lessons from Operation ENDURING FREEDOM - Afghanistan. Specifically, Dr. Biddle argues that the Afghan Model fails to recognize the full significance and function of the U.S. indigenous allies, as represented by the Northern Alliance and later its counterpart alliance in south Afghanistan, and the large-scale land combat waged by these proxies against the Taliban and al Qaeda enemy. Dr. Biddle's thesis

[5] Steven Erlanger and Isabel Kershner, "Olmert Rebuked By Israeli Panel On Lebanon War," *The New York Times*, May 1, 2007.

is that SOF-directed precision firepower was not sufficient to exclusively decide the outcome of the war. While there can be little doubt that integration of these fires with ground maneuver yielded instrumental and necessary effects which helped to tip the preceding six-year stalemate between the Taliban and its indigenous adversaries in our favor, these effects in and of themselves would not have been sufficient to win Afghanistan. [6]

Dr. Biddle also describes a variation in the effectiveness of precision standoff strike and special operations forces when employed against different adversaries in Afghanistan. Arguing that there were significant differences in the nature and capabilities of the different enemy actors in Afghanistan, Biddle draws distinctions between the effectiveness of precision munitions and special forces against Afghan Taliban, foreign Taliban and hardcore al Qaeda fighters, with these capabilities being markedly more lethal against poorly motivated and trained Taliban than they were against ideologically committed and militarily proficient al Qaeda. In contrast to their Taliban co-combatants, al Qaeda fighters adapted rapidly, made better use of terrain for cover and concealment, and demonstrated a higher level of resilience and discipline in the face of American firepower.[7]

The Fundamental Differences

Prior to comparing Afghanistan to Lebanon it is important to first recognize two fundamental differences between the natures of the conflicts in each case. First and foremost is the absence of an indigenous Israeli ally in south Lebanon analogous to the U.S. partners in Afghanistan. Until Israel's unilateral withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000 it had maintained a local proxy force in the Christian militia South Lebanon Army, which served as

[6] Biddle, pp.6.
[7] Biddle, pp. 26-38.

an indigenous ground force ally to Israel in its struggle with Hezbollah. Following Israel's withdrawal, however, this organization collapsed and Hezbollah enjoyed uncontested control of south Lebanon.

The second fundamental difference is the disparity between the strategic objectives for which the U.S and Israel went to war. The U.S. sought the total destruction of al Qaeda and its Taliban allies and regime change in Afghanistan. Israel's objectives were much more limited, seeking only to reduce Hezbollah's ability to threaten north Israel by degrading it militarily and displacing it from south Lebanon.

Considered independently, either of these discrepancies would argue against the applicability of the Afghan Model argument to Lebanon. When considered together, however, the one mitigates the impact of the other. In light of Israel's modest objectives, the prerequisite of an indigenous ally is substantially alleviated. According to Afghan Model advocates, one of the principal functions of the indigenous ally is to occupy territory from which the enemy has been expelled.[8] Israel, though, never intended to occupy south Lebanon. From the outset of the conflict Israeli leadership disavowed any ambition to reestablish their former security zone in south Lebanon. Rather, Israel anticipated the vacuum created by their operations to be inherited by either the Lebanese Armed Forces, an expanded United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL) or some combination of the two.[9]

Afghanistan and Lebanon: A Comparison

[8] Biddle, pp. 24-25.
[9] Jan Mouawad and Steven Erlanger, "Israel Bombards Lebanon After Hezbollah Hits Haifa With Missiles," The New York Times, July 17, 2006; Thom Shanker, "To Disarm Shadowy Guerilla Army, Israeli Air Power May Not Be Enough," The New York Times, July 20, 2006; Steven Erlanger, "Troops Ready But Israel Bets on Airpower," The New York Times, July 23, 2006; Steven Erlanger, "Weighing Foreign Forces: Sea Change for Israel," The New York Times, July 24, 2006.

Like the U.S. in Afghanistan, Israel initially relied exclusively on its standoff precision firepower, special operations forces and related intelligence and surveillance capabilities to wage its war in Lebanon.[10] IDF spokespersons described a largely aerial campaign of

[10] Though beyond the scope of this paper, it would be interesting to consider the question of whether and to what extent their perceptions of the American campaign in Afghanistan influenced the IDF leadership's planning decisions during the Second Lebanon War. Insufficient time has passed for an objective historical analysis and key participants are yet in power and so still too bound by personal interests to offer properly distanced and frank perspectives. That said, one source from which anecdotal conclusions might be drawn is the collateral thinking of contemporaries in Israel's academic defense analysis community. In an article titled "The War in Afghanistan – Lessons for Israel," for instance, Schlomo Brom points to Afghanistan as proof that "a genuine change has taken place in operational planning and execution." This change, the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs, Brom credits to improvements in four areas: precision standoff capability, information dominance, dominance in outer space, and strategic reach. With respect to standoff capability, Brom emphasizes U.S. use of precision guided munitions and armed UAVs and development of an effective doctrine for real-time acquisition, attack and damage assessment in Afghanistan. With respect to strategic reach, Brom cites U.S. power projection capabilities and, specifically, the ability to rapidly deliver special forces units, capable of bringing large volumes of firepower to bear across great distances. Comparing the U.S situation in Afghanistan against a potential Israeli parallel, Brom posits the argument below:

> "According to information from the U.S. Department of Defense, an average of 80 to 100 attack sorties were flown in Afghanistan per day. The Israel Air Force could conduct a far larger number of sorties on an average day of fighting against its likely enemies. Moreover, Israel's likely rivals are stronger and better-equipped than the Taliban. While this may seem like a disadvantage, this is not necessarily the case: stronger and more developed traditional military forces offer many more attractive targets for campaigns derived from RMA-related doctrines."

The Second Lebanon War appears to support Brom's assumptions on two counts; the IAF was capable of generating a larger daily sortie count and Hezbollah was a stronger and better equipped adversary than the Taliban. Hezbollah ultimately proved not, however, more susceptible to the effects of RMA warfare. See Schlomo Brom, "The War in Afghanistan – Lessons for Israel," *Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies – Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 4, No. 4, February 2002.

In his examination "Can Air Power Alone Win Modern Wars?" Retired IAF General David Ivry makes references to Afghanistan as demonstrating the new and extraordinary potential of modern airpower. Ivry concludes that air power alone cannot achieve a decisive victory in limited wars, *with the important exception of "punishment operations*," which he avers justify almost exclusive use of airpower. Ivry defines punishment operations as actions with very limited strategic goals, one of which being maintenance of a balance of deterrence. It may be that Israeli military leadership characterized their campaign in 2006 Lebanon as such a punishment operation. If so, however, their objective to appreciably degrade Hezbollah's capability appears to exceed Ivry's definition. See Gen. David Ivry, "Can Air Power Alone Win Modern Wars?," *The Fisher Institute for Air and Space Strategic Studies Strategic Analysis*, June 2005.

More recently, in the article "The Military Battle Against Terrorism: Direct Contact vs. Standoff Warfare," published just four months prior to the outbreak of the war, Gabriel Siboni draws on Gen. Ivry's conclusions to examine airpower's role in the war on terror. Siboni makes specific mention of Lebanon in his conclusion, stating that "There may be many cases where standoff warfare will be the primary operational alternative (for example, post-disengagement Gaza or *Lebanon*). In such cases analysis shows that the ability to attain significant achievements is very limited." If IDF leadership were aware of Siboni's opinion, they either disagreed with it or felt it did not apply to their operations in Lebanon, possibly because they did not consider substantial diminishment of Hezbollah a "significant achievement." See Gabriel Siboni, "The Military Battle Against Terrorism: Direct Contact vs. Standoff Warfare," *Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies – Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 9, No.1, April 2006.

precision strikes using laser and satellite guided munitions, augmented by "pinpoint" infiltrations of commandos in the south to identify Hezbollah targets and conduct damage assessment.[11] Likewise, as the C.I.A. deployed special operators in Afghanistan to forge local alliances and collect usable intelligence on al Qaeda and the Taliban, Israel's Mossad activated long-dormant sleeper cells in Lebanon to gather intelligence and "paint" targets for attack from the air.[12] And as American unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) provided continuous remote reconnaissance of the Afghanistan battlefield, Israel made extensive use of its own UAVs, flying 1,350 sorties and accumulating more than 20,000 flight hours in reconnaissance, surveillance and targeting missions.[13] The degree of similarity between the standoff fire technologies applied by the U.S. and Israel is highlighted by their like usage of the same types of munitions, evidenced by Israel's mid-conflict requisitions for additional shipments of the same American-manufactured GPS-guided, bunker-busting and cluster bombs that had been made famous by media coverage of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.[14] [15]

Like the early bombing in Afghanistan, however, the strategic air campaign in Israel proved inconclusive.[16] The IAF claimed to have destroyed 80 percent of Hezbollah's medium and long range rocket capabilities in the first few days of the war but were unable to reduce Hezbollah's capacity to generate significant short range rocket fires into Israel from

[11] Avi Kober, "The Second Lebanon War," *Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies*, Perspectives Paper No. 22, September 28, 2006, pp.2; Joe Charlaff, "Learning Valuable Lessons From the Lebanon Conflict," *Jane's Homeland Security And Resilience Monitor*, April 01, 2007, pp.2; Alon Ben-David, "Debriefing Teams Brand IDF Doctrine 'Completely Wrong'," *Janes's Defence Weekly*, January 03, 2007, pp.1.

[12] "Israeli Intelligence in the Second Lebanon War," *Jane's Intelligence Digest*, September 15, 2006, pp.1-2.

[13] Alon Ben-David, "Israel Reflects – New Model Army?," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 11, 2006, pp.6.

[14] David S. Cloud and Helene Cooper, "U.S. Speeds Up Bomb Delivery For the Israelis," *The New York Times*, July 22, 2006; David S. Cloud, "Israel Asks U.S. to Ship Rockets With Wide Blast," *The New York Times*, August 11, 2006.

[15] Michael O'Hanlon, "A Flawed Masterpiece," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No.3, May/June 2002, pp. 47-63.

[16] Michael O'Hanlon, pp.51.

south Lebanon.[17] Having exhausted its pre-war target sets, the IDF became increasingly reliant on special operations forces and UAV surveillance for targeting support.[18]

In south Lebanon, meanwhile, commandos and UAVs encountered significant challenges in locating Hezbollah targets, particularly the short range Katyusha rocket launch apparatus. A primitive, indiscriminate weapon, the Katyusha rocket requires only a rudimentary and makeshift launch system which proved stubbornly difficult to identify by reconnaissance. Fixed launchers were easily camouflaged in undergrowth or hidden in homes, garages and apartments and mobile launchers mounted on flatbed trucks were indistinguishable from civilian-use trucks.[19] Ultimately unable to accomplish their objectives through the combination of precision standoff fires and special forces alone, Israel was forced to also commit ground forces to a costly close combat effort to clear Hezbollah from south Lebanon.

In his examination of Afghanistan, Dr. Biddle notes a clear disparity in the effectiveness of standoff fires and special operations forces against the Taliban and their more capable al Qaeda comrades. U.S. forces enjoyed vivid success early on against the Taliban, who made little or no effort to conceal or properly fortify their positions. These positions, often observable from kilometers away, were quickly identified by special operations forces and destroyed by precision-guided munitions. This changed later on in the

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[17] Steven Erlanger, "Israel Carries Out Raid Deep Into Lebanon," *The New York Times,* August 19, 2006. It is difficult to verify the IAF's claimed effectiveness against medium-to-long range rockets, however, and the IAF's supporting assertion that Hezbollah's failure to expend these weapons in significant quantities is evidence of their destruction is dubious; this might also reflect a conscious decision by Hezbollah to conserve these weapons for future use during a truly existential conflict. Similar IDF attempts to use Katyusha rocket launch rates as a measure of effectiveness proved consistently inaccurate throughout the conflict.

[18] International Crisis Group, pp.19.

[19] Noam Ophir, "Back to Ground Rules: Some Limitations of Airpower in the Lebanon War," *Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies Strategic Assessment,* Vol. 9, No.2, August 2006.

war, however, as the nucleus of the opposition shifted from Afghan Taliban to al Qaeda. Making effective use of terrain for camouflage and protection, al Qaeda fighters proved to be much more dangerous and tenacious opponents. These forces frustrated the U.S. formula of standoff precision engagement, eventually forcing the U.S. and its Afghan allies to engage them in protracted close combat.[20] It is this al Qaeda enemy that most closely resembles the Hezbollah adversary that engaged Israel in Lebanon. This similarity is most clearly evident in the final phases of each conflict, during the U.S. Operation ANACONDA offensive against al Qaeda's strongholds in the eastern mountains of Afghanistan and the IDF's final ground invasion in south Lebanon.

Despite the fact that combat operations in both Operation ANACONDA and the IDF invasion of south Lebanon were preceded by a pre-battle intelligence blitz by reconnaissance aircraft, UAVs, satellites and electronic monitoring and eavesdropping assets, neither the U.S. nor the IDF was able to satisfactorily identify their enemy's positions. In ANACONDA, fewer than 50 percent of all al Qaeda battlefield positions were identified prior to ground contact. Most fire received by U.S. forces came from unseen and unanticipated fighting positions, mostly natural caves and ridges obscured from overhead and sometimes from ground-level observation by the rocky, mountainous terrain.[21] Likewise, in fighting at places like Bint Jbail and Maroun al-Ras in Lebanon, the IDF found itself vulnerable to sudden and lethal ground fire as Hezbollah ambushed its forces from carefully prepared hidden firing positions. Reports of IDF soldiers wounded in south Lebanon describe fierce battles with Hezbollah fighters concealed in bunkers and tunnels that emerge

[20] Biddle, pp.13-16.
[21] Biddle, pp. 26-32.

to fire rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and anti-tank missiles, then quickly disappear again.[22] Both al Qaeda and Hezbollah demonstrated good use of cover for movement as well. Along Highway 4, south of Kandahar, Afghanistan, for example, a group of al Qaeda fighters used a system of wadis to approach to within 200 meters of U.S. and Afghan ally forces before opening fire. In villages and towns in south Lebanon, Hezbollah knocked holes in the walls between rooms and buildings to move quickly without exposing themselves to Israeli observation and fire.[23]

Al Qaeda and Hezbollah both proved adept not only at hiding their positions from standoff sensors and special forces observation, but also in reinforcing them against the lethal effects of precision munitions. During ANACONDA, al Qaeda positions at Objective Ginger survived over a week of heavy sustained bombing to fire on the U.S. infantry that eventually overran them.[24] In a similar example from Lebanon, the IDF identified Labboune Hill, a small hilltop just a few hundred meters from the border, as the origin of daily Katyusha launches. The IDF directed multiple airstrikes and intense artillery bombardments against it but failed to quell the rocket fire from this location. During post-conflict investigation, the IDF discovered a deeply buried bunker system, complete with firing positions, operations rooms, dormitories and weapons and ammunitions stockpiles. This was just one of the many such hardened facilities Hezbollah had constructed throughout south Lebanon in the six years since Israel's withdrawal. The extent of Hezbollah's defensive preparations was all the more

[22] Greg Myre, "Israel's Wounded Describe Surprisingly Fierce, Well-Organized and Elusive Enemy," *The New York Times,* August 12, 2006.
[23] "Deconstructing Hezbollah's Surprise Military Prowess," *Jane's Intelligence Review,* November 1, 2006, pp.5.
[24] Biddle, pp. 35-36.

astonishing for the fact of having gone largely undetected despite near daily IAF reconnaissance overflights and veritable collocation with UNIFIL observation posts.[25]

Hezbollah command and control also remained intact despite massive and repeated pounding of their headquarters compound and underground bunkers in southern Beirut. On 19 July alone, 23 tons of explosives were dropped on a bunker believed to be used by Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah; yet Hezbollah reported no casualties and the attack yielded no detectable disruption of the organization's operations.[26] Through massive stockpiling of in-place stores Hezbollah also reduced its dependency on active logistics, denying the IAF the opportunity to interdict resupply convoys. By maintaining the bulk of its formidable short range rocket arsenal in south Lebanon, within striking distance to Israel, Hezbollah remained capable of launching salvo after salvo, drawing from what seemed to be a limitless supply of these weapons, throughout the war.[27]

Al Qaeda and Hezbollah preparations effectively mitigated the impact of special operations forces and standoff precision weapons, ultimately compelling both the U.S. and its local allies in Afghanistan and the IDF in Lebanon to commit significant ground forces to intense and extensive close combat. As U.S. forces mounted slow and painstaking cave-to-cave searches to clear al Qaeda's mountain hideouts in Afghanistan, so the IDF combed villages and countryside in south Lebanon in their ultimately unsuccessful effort to rout Hezbollah from the territory adjacent the border.

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[25] "Deconstructing Hezbollah's Surprise Military Prowess," pp.2.
[26] Jan Mouawad and Steven Erlanger, "Death Toll Rises in Mideast Fight; Bunker Bombed," *The New York Times*, July 20, 2006; Amir Kulick, "Hezbollah vs. the IDF: The Operational Dimension," *Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 9, No.3, November 2006, pp. 4.
[27] "Deconstructing Hezbollah's Surprise Military Prowess," pp. 3.

A New Kind of Adversary

As important as the commonalities between al Qaeda and Hezbollah are, the differences are no less significant. Hezbollah is not the al Qaeda cadre of 2001 Afghanistan. These organizations shared certain traits, with fanatic motivation, sound military discipline and a penchant for battlefield adaptation among them. Both also consisted largely of hard-core and full-time or former full-time professional soldiers, a contrast to many of al Qaeda's Afghan Taliban contemporaries. The critical distinction is that Hezbollah benefited from the substantial material and training support of its state sponsors in Syria and Iran, the advantages of which were graphically demonstrated by its unsettlingly impressive performance in the Lebanon war.

Principal among these advantages was Hezbollah's access to sophisticated modern weapons on a mass scale. Hezbollah's proficient and widespread employment of third generation Russian anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) inflicted excrutiating losses on IDF armor formations. Hezbollah ATGMs penetrated 45 percent of tanks struck, a considerable performance against the vaunted Israeli-made Merkava, lauded by some as the best-protected tank in the world. These weapons proved equally lethal when adapted to other uses. Hezbollah fighters employed ATGMs for urban anti-infantry purposes, for instance, by firing them through the walls of buildings and houses where IDF soldiers sought cover. The ATGMs punched through cinderblock walls just as they would through tank armor, often killing or wounding all IDF soldiers in the room. In an anti-aircraft role Hezbollah also used

an ATGM to shoot down an Israeli transport helicopter, killing all five crew. In all, ATGMs accounted for at least 50 of the IDF's 119 combat fatalities.[28]

Hezbollah's successful cruise missile attack on the Israeli patrol ship INS Haanit is another example of the impact of state-provided sophisticated weaponry. Though the 2000 attack on the USS Cole and like tactics of the Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam had demonstrated the asymmetric anti-ship threat posed by seaborne suicide bombers, Hezbollah's successful engagement of the Haanit with an Iranian-manufactured C-802 coastal defense cruise missile[29] represents a watershed step forward in the offshore threat a state-supported guerilla force can generate against the conventional naval forces of its adversaries.

Though neither new nor sophisticated, Hezbollah's seemingly infinite arsenal of short range Katyusha surface-to-surface rockets proved even more significant for its psychological effect on the Israeli population and decisive influence on how the world perceived the war's outcome. A crude and generally ineffective weapon for military purposes, Hezbollah possessed sufficient quantities of these rockets to employ them en masse for strategic effect for the duration of the 34 day war. All told, Hezbollah launched 4,228 rockets at Israel, generating an average rate of fire of 130 rockets per day through the course of the conflict.[30]

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[28] Ben-David, "Israel Reflects – New Model Army?," pp. 5; "Deconstructing Hezbollah's Surprise Military Prowess," pp. 8; Steven Erlanger and Richard A. Oppel, Jr., "A Disciplined Hezbollah Surprises Israel With Its Training, Tactics and Weapons," *The New York Times*, August 7, 2006; Richard A. Oppel, Jr., "Largely Empty, Stronghold of Militia Is Still Perilous", *The New York Times*, August 14, 2006.

[29] Mark Mazzetti and Thom Shanker, "Arming of Hezbollah Reveals U.S. and Israeli Blind Spots," *The New York Times*, July 19, 2006.

[30] "Deconstructing Hezbollah's Surprise Military Prowess," pp.7; Ben-David, "Israel Reflects – New Model Army?," pp. 6. These figures are even more remarkable in light of the significant combat efficiencies the IAF was able to realize in their quest to degrade the Katyusha threat. In one of its remarkable achievements during the war, the IAF attained possibly unparalleled success in closing the "sensor-to-shooter" loop in its round-the-clock effort to diminish Hezbollah's rocket capacities. Leveraging a networked system of special forces, UAVs, ground radars and on-call precision air and artillery fires, the IAF was able to significantly compress the

In addition to weapons, Hezbollah also possessed flak-jackets, night-vision goggles, and satellite communications, all also presumably by virtue of its benefactors in Iran and Syria. Assessed by Israeli soldiers who engaged them as tactically superior to the regular armies of many regional Arab states, the Iranian hand in Hezbollah's training was palpable. In Hezbollah, Iran and Syria had helped to create a new kind of guerilla adversary, a non-state enemy "trained like an army and equipped like a state."[31]

Conclusions

The point here is not that precision standoff munitions or special operations forces are irrelevant or ineffective in conflicts against guerilla opponents. Quite the contrary, as Biddle states in his analysis, these capabilities played an essential and central role in the U.S. success in Afghanistan, consistently swinging the balance in favor of America's Afghan allies when they engaged the Taliban. The point Biddle makes and that Lebanon reinforces is that these capabilities are not in and of themselves sufficient to ensure victory, especially against a more mature irregular force of the ilk of al Qaeda and Hezbollah. A resolute and adaptive guerilla adversary can effectively mitigate the effects of standoff precision fire and persistent deep reconnaissance. Al Qaeda did so through shrewd use of natural terrain for

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elapsed time between a Katyusha rocket launch, post-launch location of the firing position by Israeli radar or reconnaissance assets and destruction of the launch site by directed air or artillery strikes. The IAF reported response times as fast as 45 seconds from launch to strike and UNIFIL observers recorded response times as averaging two minutes from rocket launch to post-launch strike. Either figure represents a substantial achievement, especially against a low-signature non-emitting target, and compares favorably, if not surpasses, NATO performance against similar time sensitive targets in Kosovo. Yet Hezbollah's vast pre-positioned stores, in combination with the inexpensive and disposable nature of the launchers, rendered the IAF's achievements irrelevant to the final outcome. See Noam Ophir, "Look Not to the Skies: The IAF vs. Surface-to-Surface Rocket Launchers," *Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 9, No.3, November 2006; Ophir, "Back to Ground Rules: Some Limitations of Airpower in the Lebanon War;" "Deconstructing Hezbollah's Surprise Military Prowess," pp. 3.

[31] Erlanger and Oppel, "A Disciplined Hezbollah Surprises Israel With Its Training, Tactics and Weapons;" Myre, "Israel's Wounded Describe Surprisingly Fierce, Well-Organized and Elusive Enemy."

concealment and protection. Hezbollah accomplished similar results through the preparation of man-made camouflage and defenses and effective use of urban terrain.

The guerillas' success in both cases in evading detection on geographically constrained battlefields saturated with air, space and ground sensors sounds a cautionary note for those seeking battlefield omniscience through advancements in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance technologies. Despite the considerable advantages of sensor density and ever more sophisticated collection technologies, an intelligent and flexible enemy can often still manage to avoid detection and prosecution.

Lebanon also confirms the substantial and essential role that indigenous allies play in the Afghan Model equation. Absent a local proxy, Israel was ultimately compelled to commit its own ground forces to south Lebanon in significant numbers to close with Hezbollah in pursuit of the objectives standoff warfare failed to achieve. This was despite the fact that Israel's objectives did not include the occupation of vacated territory, a function some Afghan Model proponents define as the principal value of the indigenous ally.

In Hezbollah, furthermore, Iran and Syria have helped to produce a new species of guerilla. This enemy is trained to the standards of a modern army, with state-like access to advanced weaponry, yet unfettered by the legal and moral obligations of a state and able to disperse into the local population at will. Through the experience of 18 years of war with the IDF and a massive infusion of assistance from Iran and Syria, Hezbollah has evolved into possibly the world's premier irregular force, a hybrid guerilla-terrorist army with the wherewithal to hold its own against a world-class military. Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006 resembles al Qaeda in Afghanistan in 2001 in some key qualities, but is ultimately a far more fearsome and capable foe. Were the situations reversed and the U.S. to face Hezbollah

across a battlefield in Lebanon, the prospects for a rapid and decisive American victory like that in Afghanistan would be dim.

Lessons for the United States

The Second Lebanon War is particularly relevant for examination from the U.S. perspective for two reasons. First, it is significant due to the nature of the belligerents. The IDF represents a technologically advanced, first world military similar qualitatively, if not quantitatively, to the U.S. military. Hezbollah, on the other hand, represents a light irregular non-state force operating from the territory of a dysfunctioning nation unable or unwilling to disarm it, similar in these respects to the type of adversary the U.S. is likely to face in its continuing worldwide campaign against terrorism. Secondly, the type and scale of operation Israel executed, a limited incursion to degrade a non-state threat and restore near-term security, is likely to become increasingly attractive to the U.S. government and public as an alternative to the more ambitious and costly occupation and state-building efforts the U.S. has recently undertaken in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even the ideal end state of such an operation would represent only an interim and sub-optimal solution, whose limited objectives permit the underlying causes of the problem to persist and the threat to potentially rematerialize. Yet in light of the likely future prospects of force constraints, absence of necessary international consensus and capability, and policymaker and public fatigue with the real and political costs incurred during the prolonged pursuit of an elusive permanent solution, a stopgap approach of imperfect and temporary solutions may soon be deemed sufficient.

Israel's experience illustrates the limitations of "revolutionary" military technology when employed against an adaptive irregular adversary. Due to the high correlation between

the tactics and technologies of the militaries of Israel and the United States, the following Israeli lessons can be generalized to potential U.S. actions versus foreign guerilla or terrorist organizations:

1. An imaginative and well-prepared guerilla can become resistant to the exclusive and synergistic effects of persistent intrusive reconnaissance and standoff precision firepower. Overestimation of the effects possible through the application of these capabilities can be disastrous.

2. State sponsorship can have a dramatic impact on the lethality of a non-state adversary. With sufficient manpower and material investment, a state-supported non-state irregular force can acquire an efficacy rivaling that of a first-world military in a limited war. The evolution of the non-state entity can be largely imperceptible, even under vigilant intelligence scrutiny.

3. Resolution of a non-state threat by force- and time-limited military incursion remains a precarious proposition. Against a capable and adaptive adversary, significant ground warfare is likely inevitable, and absent an indigenous ally of comparable skill and capacity to the enemy, protracted close combat should be anticipated.

In his monograph, Dr. Biddle draws related recommendations regarding U.S. future force shaping. He argues against any imprudent expansion of special operations and standoff strike air power at the expense of regular ground forces made under the rationale that Afghan Model warfare has made large land combat armies irrelevant. The Israeli experience in Lebanon buttresses this argument, substantiating that the U.S. success in Afghanistan was

dependent on certain essential preconditions, and did not augur the obsolescence of large-scale land combat. Lebanon, then, argues for the maintenance of a balanced force.[32]

With respect to the specific adversaries of al Qaeda and Hezbollah, it appears unlikely that al Qaeda will coalesce back into the semi-regular formations that existed in Afghanistan prior to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, but this eventuality is not inconceivable. The most likely place for this to happen is probably Africa, a continent rife with failed and failing states within which it could incubate and solidify. Hezbollah itself, though listed as a terrorist organization and given to statements and sentiments antithetical to the United States and U.S. interests, has taken pains to disassociate itself from al Qaeda and refrained from direct or attributable actions that might precipitate U.S. military intervention against it. Yet similarly inspired and resourced organizations can be expected to learn from Hezbollah's example and seek to replicate it elsewhere. The most dangerous of these may be the Shia Mahdi Army militia in Iraq, which enjoys a similar sponsor-client relationship with Iran but has the additional advantage of a vast shared border with its state benefactor. Whether this militia would be able to replicate Hezbollah's scale of supply or defensive preparations under current conditions, during a U.S. occupation, is uncertain, but recent reports of it having received Iranian provided training and explosives are ominous indicators.[33] Were the U.S. to withdraw from Iraq and the Mahdi Army granted a sanctuary within which to consolidate and develop, like the one Hezbollah enjoyed in the intervening years following the IDF's departure in 2000, any reintroduction of U.S. forces might face an adversary of the same species that faced Israel in Lebanon last summer.

[32] Biddle, pp. 50-54.
[33] Michael R. Gordon, "Deadliest Bomb in Iraq is Made by Iran, U.S. Says," *The New York Times*, February 10, 2007.

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